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## **Honduras Refuses To Return Helicopter, Extradite Army Captain Deserter To Nicaragua**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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On Dec. 16, Nicaraguan Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Hugo Tinoco affirmed that the Honduran government's refusal to return an MI-25 helicopter belonging to the Nicaraguan army and its pilot "does not contribute to the climate all Central Americans have tried to create" for the upcoming regional summit meeting. The summit is scheduled for January 15-16 in El Salvador, following a meeting of respective foreign ministers in Managua. On Dec. 7, a Nicaraguan army captain deserted aboard the helicopter in question, and landed on Honduran territory. Nicaraguan authorities officially requested the return of the aircraft and the extradition of the pilot on the same day. Since then, the Honduran government has said only that it is "investigating" the incident. Nicaraguan Defense Minister Humberto Ortega said that the delay in returning the helicopter is becoming a "provocation." He expressed his hope that the Honduran government will "act responsibly." On Dec. 15, Honduran armed forces chief Gen. Humberto Regalado suggested in statements to reporters in Tegucigalpa that his government has no intention of returning the helicopter nor the pilot to Nicaragua, at least in the foreseeable future. (Basic data from Notimex, 12/16/88)

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