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Arrangements On Track For Jan. 15-16 Central American Summit Despite World Court's Decision To Hear Nicaraguan Suit

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On Dec. 20, the International Court of Justice at The Hague, Netherlands, agreed to hear a formal Nicaraguan complaint against Honduras over the Nicaraguan contras' presence in that country. The World Court decision prompted Honduran President Jose Azcona Hoyo to threaten to boycott the Central American summit unless Nicaragua dropped its case. The summit is scheduled for Jan. 15-16 in San Salvador. In addition, Azcona Hoyo threatened to file a countersuit against Nicaragua before the World Court charging Sandinista army troops with repeated incursions into Honduran territory. The World Court's decision opened a trial phase that is expected to take place within the next year. Dec. 21: Honduran Foreign Minister Carlos Lopez Contreras said that the decision by the International Court of Justice "gravely endangers" prospects for peace in the region. He said it signified the "possible burial" of peace efforts. Lopez said, "The ruling effects and interferes with the political process launched by the five Central American presidents because it establishes a judicial precedent totally incompatible with peace negotiations. The finding is a mistake. It is highly charged politically and has a destructive effect on the process of good-faith negotiation." The Honduran Ambassador to the Netherlands was recalled immediately for consultations. In San Jose, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Rodrigo Madrigal Nieto said, "If Honduras withdraws from the pacification process, the process falls apart." Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega asserted that if Honduras did not accept the World Court's jurisdiction, Nicaragua might review its acceptance of a 1960 ruling by the same court in which a portion of disputed territory was awarded to Honduras. Dec. 31: In a year-end message, Honduran President Azcona Hoyo said that his government would actively participate in the Central American peace process in 1989. He continued by stating that Tegucigalpa would participate in the Central American summit. Azcona Hoyo said he "grieved" over the Nicaraguan government's actions against Tegucigalpa in the International Court of Justice. Managua's decision to obtain a judicial ruling at the World Court, he said, is "a recourse that explains substantial aspects of the crisis in the region." These "aspects" include, said Azcona Hoyo, the war in Nicaragua that continues at the Honduran border, large numbers of refugees resulting from the war, Nicaraguan invasions of Honduran territory, and the transfer of arms across borders in the region. On the same day, Honduran Foreign Minister Carlos Lopez Contreras said he would attend a preliminary meeting of foreign ministers in Managua on Jan. 12-13. Jan. 4: Nicaraguan Vice President Sergio Ramirez announced the formal invitation to Central American foreign ministers to attend a meeting in Managua on Jan. 12-13 to prepare the agenda for the later summit in San Salvador. Ramirez mentioned that Salvadoran Foreign Minister Ricardo Acevedo Peralta formally confirmed the summit meeting on Jan. 16-16 in San Salvador. (Basic data from New York Times, 12/24/88, 01/02/89; Xinhua, 01/02/89, 01/04/89)

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