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Central American Foreign Ministers Meet At U.N. To Request Peace Treaty Inspection Force

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Feb. 6, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto told reporters that he and counterparts from El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Honduras had reached basic agreement on an international inspection team to verify compliance with selected provisions of the 1987 regional peace plan. The diplomats, said d'Escoto, had discussed the viability of requesting the United Nations to send inspectors on surprise visits when they met for presidential inaugurations in Mexico and in Venezuela. An informed source told AP, on condition of anonymity, that the unarmed civilian inspectors would be from Canada, Spain and West Germany. The team's objective would be to verify that no one of the five treaty signatories was engaged in actions with the intent of subverting neighboring governments. The five ministers were scheduled to meet with UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar on Feb. 8. D'Escoto said he was optimistic that the plan would be acceptable to all parties. Presidents of the five nations sent a letter to the Secretary General in January proposing the inspection team. D'Escoto said that in response to Perez de Cuellar's request for details, the ministers agreed to meet in New York to accelerate the process. The international inspection team would check allegations that one nation was harboring rebels from another nation or supporting a rebellion. On the evening of Feb. 6, d'Escoto suggested a small force, possibly 10 inspectors in each of the five capitals. He said, "They would have to have access to every single part of the country, and they would have to be able to visit every place without prior notification. The element of surprise is essential here." The verification plan developed from recommendations made by a joint U.N.-Organization of American States technical mission that visited Central America in late 1987. At that time, Honduras objected to the plan by refusing to allow inspections -of military sites. Tegucigalpa has now agreed to request the UN Secretary General to set up the inspection teams, said D'Escoto. On Feb. 8-9, the ministers will also discuss preparations for a summit in El Salvador scheduled for Feb. 14-15. They are also committed to discussing an agreement for monitoring "democratization" provisions of the peace plan. D'Escoto said his government plans to propose an immediate regional open door policy, in which the five nations would invite in the OAS, United Nations, Amnesty International, the International Red Cross and other agencies to monitor human rights. (Basic data from AP, 02/07/89)

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