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## **Nicaragua: Alfredo Cesar On Summit Results, Need For Contras To Participate In Elections**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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At a Feb. 23 press conference in New York, contra leader Alfredo Cesar said that the Nicaraguan Resistance must participate in the 1990 elections. He added that if the Sandinistas do not fulfill their pledge regarding open elections, the contras will have to resume the war "with or without the support of the United States." According to Cesar, the time has come for participation in the electoral process: "These elections will not be a farce such as those of 1984, because there is a major difference: the country is bankrupt and it is known that Nicaragua's only option lies in the construction of a political consensus." Regarding the Feb. 13-14 summit in El Salvador, Cesar said, "We respect the decisions of the Central American presidents." He dismissed the possibility of confrontation between the contra army and the Honduran government in relocating contra forces. Cesar suggested that Washington avoid adopting "unilateral measures such as lifting the trade embargo prior to attaining more global regional security accords." The contra civilian leader said that he would return to Nicaragua when President Daniel Ortega's government has implemented changes affecting the domestic political process as promised in El Salvador. He added that if all goes smoothly, he and others would likely return to the country in late May or early June. Cesar asserted that the contras' electoral platform would consist of offering more efficient government, and rescuing the country from economic bankruptcy. Regarding the role of the Church in the electoral process, Cesar described it as vital since the Church is the only organized non-Sandinista force inside the country. Latin American nations, said Cesar, can assist in the Central American peace process via "silent diplomacy," such as practiced by Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez. He added that Perez has performed a key role in pressuring the Sandinistas to implement the "new changes." (Basic data from Notimex, 02/23/89)

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