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U.S. Complaints About Nicaraguan Electoral Laws, Managua's Intent To Compromise On Make-up Of Supreme Electoral Council

by Deborah Tyroler
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According to report appearing in the New York Times (04/21/89), Danny Lee McDonald, a Democrat who acts as chair of the Federal Election Commission, unidentified State Department officials and unidentified US lawyers, said that the election procedures adopted by the Nicaraguan National Assembly earlier this week "would make it difficult to hold fair elections." McDonald said a law on composition of the Supreme Electoral Council charged with setting up procedures for the February 1990 elections "must be truly balanced, or people won't participate in the process because they have no faith in it." An eight-member delegation of election-law experts, sponsored by Freedom House, visited Nicaragua this month. The delegation said the Nicaraguan government should permit the opposition to operate a television station, and should permit Nicaraguan exiles and members of the country's armed forces should be allowed to vote in the election. Freedom House is a private organization that monitors human rights around the world. Paul S. Reichler, a Washington lawyer who serves as an adviser to the Nicaraguan government, said opposition parties were proposing changes that would, of course, enhance their prospects at the polls. Under the Nicaraguan Constitution, he said, the government could name three of the five members of the Electoral Council. Meanwhile, said Reichler, the Sandinistas are prepared to accept an arrangement under which two members would be selected by the government, two by opposition parties, and the fifth would be "an independent eminent person." (Basic data from New York Times, 04/21/89)

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