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Update On Plan For Dismantlement Of Nicaraguan Contra Army

by Deborah Tyroler

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On May 9 in Managua, Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Hugo Tinoco delivered a report on a draft plan for the voluntary demobilization, repatriation or relocation of the contra army encamped in Honduras. The plan was approved on May 6, he said, at a technical meeting of deputy foreign ministers in Guatemala. The draft provides for the creation of an international commission for support and verification of the dismantlement project. The commission would be headed by the secretaries-general of the United Nations and the Organization of American States or their representatives. Among the commission's principal duties are the receipt of weapons and other war material from contra fighters and verification of the complete dismantlement of camps harboring contra fighters and refugees who accept repatriation or relocation. These activities are to begin 45 days after the commission is established. Next, with the assistance of the International Red Cross and the UN High Commission for Refugees, the commission would be responsible for distributing food, clothing and medical aid and other basic services to the contra fighters and their families throughout the relocation and repatriation processes. Honduran Deputy Foreign Minister Flores Bermudez said the plan addresses the voluntary nature of the contras' repatriation or relocation, but that certain conditions must obtain to implement the plan such as the "genuine democratization" of Nicaragua. Recently, Honduran President Jose Azcona said that his government is willing to support the contra dismantlement program, but that Nicaragua must first drop its suit against Honduras before the World Court. The next steps are approval of the plan by the executive council (foreign ministers) created under the 1987 regional peace accords, and later, by the presidents of El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua. At the Feb. 14 summit in El Salvador, the presidents agreed to reconvene on May 15 to discuss and approve a plan. Salvadoran President-elect Alfredo Cristiani requested that summit be postponed until after his inauguration on June 1. On the evening of May 8, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Rodrigo Madrigal Nieto said that he and his four counterparts will meet June 8 for a two-day session in Guatemala to study the first phase of the demobilization project. (Basic data from Notimex, 05/06/89; Xinhua, 05/10/89)

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