6-21-1989

Plans For U.N. Peacekeeping Force In Central America & Contra Demobilization Bog Down

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen

Recommended Citation
https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/3140

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.
Plans For U.N. Peacekeeping Force In Central America & Contra Demobilization Bog Down
by Deborah Tyroler
Category/Department: General
Published: Wednesday, June 21, 1989

On June 19, unidentified United Nations diplomats told AFP that a proposed UN peacekeeping force for Central America appears to be doomed to failure, despite the support of UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar. According to the terms of an agreement signed by the region's five presidents in March, the UN force was to be deployed along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border "to verify the end of activity of irregular forces and insurrectional movements." The diplomats said that since the plan was signed, obstacles continue to crop up. First, Honduran Foreign Minister Carlos Lopez Contreras conditioned approval on Nicaragua's withdrawing a suit before the World Court at The Hague against Honduras for its support for the contras. Nicaragua has refused to withdraw the complaint. The next presidential summit, scheduled for late June in Tegucigalpa, is the last chance to overcome the obstacles, said diplomatic sources. Regarding the February summit agreement on demobilization of the Nicaraguan contra forces in Honduras, Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani has insisted the regional peace plan should not be limited to demobilizing the Nicaraguan contras, but that the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front should also be dismantled. On June 15, Honduran Foreign Minister Carlos Lopez Contreras placed another pre-condition on contra demobilization: the Nicaraguan government must enter into direct talks with contra leaders. This new condition was presented after Vice President Dan Quayle toured Central America, excepting Nicaragua. In February the five presidents agreed to elaborate a plan by May 15 the date for the next summit for the demobilization, repatriation and relocation of the contras. Nicaragua pledged to release "political prisoners," including former National Guardsmen, and to hold general elections in February 1990, earlier than previously scheduled. There were no conditions, prior to, simultaneous with, or otherwise, contained in the February summit agreement regarding contra dismantlement. Since the February summit, Nicaragua has released nearly 2,000 former Guardsmen, and passed a variety of media and electoral reform laws to facilitate equal participation of opposition parties in the upcoming elections. Invitations have been issued, and a variety of plans drafted for verification teams from throughout the world to observe the campaign process and the elections. Meanwhile, a "bipartisan consensus" in Washington led to approval of another package of humanitarian aid to maintain the contra forces until after the February elections. A clause in the legislation indicated that if the contras entered Nicaragua and carried out military operations, the aid flow would be terminated. The Nicaraguan government has delivered numerous reports of contra kidnappings, civilian deaths and injuries, and material damage since the US Congress approved the aid bill. Thus far, there has been no appreciable action in Congress to investigate the reported attacks, much less terminate the aid flow. Next, statements and promises by contra leaders to release prisoners and kidnapped civilians have not yet been met, with a few minor exceptions. The Nicaraguan Human Rights Commission estimates that about 8,000 Nicaraguan civilians kidnapped by the contras remain in the Honduran camps. (Basic data from Xinhua, 06/16/89; AFP, 06/19/89)