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Nicaraguan President: U.S. Blocking Contributions To Finance Elections

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Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, September 15, 1989

On Sept. 10, a delegation of US congresspersons and Janet Mullins, Asst. Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs, met with President Daniel Ortega and Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto to express their concerns about the February 1990 elections. The congressional delegation consisted of four members of the House. Mullins asked Ortega if the government would permit an official US government delegation to observe the Feb. 25 general elections. The president said that as a condition for permitting such an observer team, the US must halt its efforts to preserve the contras as a fighting force. Money earmarked for their preservation, he said, should be used instead to finance their repatriation or relocation. Next, Ortega said Washington must stop trying to block Nicaragua's efforts to get money from Western European countries. Paul S. Reichler, a Washington lawyer who represents the Nicaraguan government, was quoted by the New York Times as saying: "This is the first time a Bush administration official has met with President Ortega and held substantive talks. It's a very positive step. The climate was amicable. I hope it leads to more direct contacts between the administration and the government of Nicaragua, and ultimately to the normalization of relations." In its Sept. 13 issue, Barricada quoted President Ortega as saying that the Bush administration is blocking contributions from Europe and Latin America to finance the February 1990 elections. Estimates of election costs are $25 million, and foreign aid is essential to cover at least part of the expense. Ortega said Washington's problem is whether to maintain or not its economic embargo of Nicaragua, but it can't obstruct the inflow of funds to cover the elections." Next, the president reiterated that if US congresspersons want to come to Nicaragua as election observers, they must first support a Central American peace plan to dismantle the contra army by Dec. 8. (Basic data from AP, New York Times, 09/13/89)

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