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Nicaragua To Spend $10.6 Million For Electoral Process; Supreme Electoral Council Estimates $25 Million Required

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On Sept. 5, the Nicaraguan National Assembly approved a 2.7 billion cordoba (about US$10.6 million) budget for the 1989-90 electoral process. The Supreme Electoral Council estimates that a total $25 million expenditure is required. Of the 2.7 billion cordobas approved by the Assembly, 17.4 million cordobas ($695,000) were allocated for campaign spending to be distributed to all parties and coalitions running candidates in the February elections. Opposition parties represented in the Assembly complained that the campaign allocation is wholly inadequate. The loudest objections were raised by the Democratic Conservative Party (PCD) which claims it needs at least $2 million for campaigning. PCD Deputy Enrique Sotelo said, "It's like being invited to a party when there's not even enough to pay for the music." A deputy representing the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) suggested that opposition parties request financial assistance from foreign sources for their campaigns. According to CRIES, some opposition candidates will receive financing from US-based organizations linked to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). CRIES cites a New York Times report on a planned contribution by the National Democratic Institute. A breakdown of the Institute's contribution has $500,000 going to aid democratic and civic political organizations, $550,000 for communications activities, $200,000 for opinion polls, and $35,000 for international election observers. Next, since Nicaraguan organizations such as Via Civica are effectively fronts for opposition parties, it can be assumed that some of the funds they receive from the NED and other sources will be channeled to opposition candidates' campaigns. (Basic data from 09/12/89 report by Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research of Central America and the Caribbean-CRIES, Managua)

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