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Nicaragua: Notes On Second Round Of Voter Registration

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On Oct. 7, an unidentified Supreme Electoral Council (SEC) source told Notimex that about 350,000 Nicaraguans were expected to register to vote on Oct. 8, the second of four consecutive Sundays this month scheduled for registration of approximately 1.92 million eligible voters. The SEC has set up 4,934 registration precincts throughout the country. The SEC source said that on Oct. 1, a total of 370,000 registered, or about 19% of the electorate. Earlier the government reported that registration was hampered in some areas due to contra activity. On the first Sunday, 130,000 of an estimated 600,000 eligible voters in Managua registered. Another 200,000 were expected to do so on Oct. 8. Another SEC source told Notimex that because "leaving everything until the last moment" is a Nicaraguan idiosyncracy, the Council expected to see larger numbers of people attempting to register on the last two Sundays. Prior to Oct. 1, radio stations began broadcasting information about registration several times per day. Included in the announcements are instructions regarding the location of precincts, and instructions regarding the procedure. On Oct. 8, SEC officials told AP that the registration proceeded without incident. In Leon, a representative of the National Opposition Union (UNO) told AP by telephone that the group will present complaints about alleged irregularities committed by registration officials. There were no details. On Oct. 9, at a meeting with representatives of the Center for Democracy and the European Parliament, Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) directorate member Bayardo Arce said that some contras inside Nicaragua have registered to vote, while others are attempting to disrupt the electoral process by violence. The Center for Democracy emerged after the US "bipartisan" accord on contra aid between the Democrats and Republicans in Congress. Delegates from the Center and the European Parliament acted as observers of registration activities on Sunday. The European delegation was headed by Jannis Sak Ellariou of West Germany's Social Democrat Party, and Francisco Olivas, a member of Spain's Socialist Party. Olivas said it was important for his delegation to make clear that they have seen no evidence of fraud or other wrongdoing in the Nicaraguan electoral process, not only before the European Parliament and in other international forums, but also in Nicaragua itself. (Basic data from Notimex, 10/07/89, 10/09/89; AP, 10/08/89)

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