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Nicaragua: President Ortega Presents Plan, Meeting At U.N. On Contra Demobilization, Resumption Of Cease-fire Begins

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On Nov. 8, President Daniel Ortega told a press conference that the suspension of the cease-fire had opened the way to peace between the Nicaraguan government and the contras. He then announced a 15-point plan to be presented by the Nicaraguan government delegation at the talks on demobilization and resuming the cease-fire scheduled for Nov. 9-10 at the UN. (See CAU 11/08/89.) Ortega urged the US to divert what remains of \$49 million in non-lethal aid to the contras authorized by Congress in March to demobilization. The Nicaraguan plan repeats certain provisions of the Aug. 7 summit agreement and sets forth the role of the International Commission for Verification and Support (CIAV). Next, the government offers to withdraw its troops from routes the contras use to travel between Honduras and Nicaragua so that contras inside Nicaragua can return to their Honduran camps, and to reinstate the cease-fire Nov. 30. Another point in the plan is an offer to release all imprisoned contras and contra collaborators under a general amnesty after at least half the contras have been demobilized and any Nicaraguans kidnapped by the contras have been released. Ortega said Nicaragua would terminate all weapons imports until April 25, 1990, if the plan was accepted. The new government to be elected on Feb. 25, 1990, is to be installed on April 25. Ortega said he would demand a meeting of the Central American presidents to discuss the situation if the contras rejected the government offer. He added that he had instructed his government's five-member delegation not to leave the meeting at the UN in New York without a signed agreement. Nicaraguan ambassador to the UN, Alejandro Serrano Caldera told reporters that for the government, contra demobilization is the major agenda item for the meeting. He added that the Nicaraguan government has fulfilled to date its pledges contained in the Aug. 7 Tela agreement, and is asking other parties to the agreement to fulfill their own. Serrano said that the Social Welfare Minister Reynaldo Antonio Tefel will present a \$35 million plan for the relocation of contras and their families in Nicaragua at the meeting. In statements broadcast by Radio Catolica, contra military chief Enrique Bermudez described Ortega's offer as "propaganda," asserting that it is necessary first to establish a new cease-fire verified by a "responsible commission." He added that the proposal violates the regional peace accords. According to Bermudez, the pledge to cut off arms shipments is temporary, and implies the government's intention to continue importing weapons. Bermudez, who will head the contra delegation at the meeting in New York, said that the contras will submit their own proposal which is dissimilar on all points with that announced by President Ortega. Nov. 9: The meeting at the UN began Thursday afternoon. Participants included UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar and Organization of American States Secretary General Joao Baena Soares. Representing the CIAV are UN undersecretary Alvaro de Soto, and OAS official Hugo de Sela. The Nicaraguan delegation is headed by Ambassador to the UN, Alejandro Serrano Caldera. Other delegation members are Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Hugo Tinoco; Social Welfare Minister Reynaldo Antonio Tefel; head of the military joint chiefs Joaquin Cuadra; intelligence chief Ricardo Wheelock; and, Mauricio Herdocia of the Foreign Ministry. Heading the contra delegation is former National Guard colonel Enrique Bermudez. The delegation includes four

other contra commanders. Honduras is attending the meeting as a witness, although President Jose Azcona allowed that "if the parties to the conflict agree, we will be able to carry out a more relevant role" in the talks. The Honduran delegation is headed by Tegucigalpa's ambassador to the UN, Roberto Martinez Ordonez. Nicaraguan Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo is attending as a witness on invitation by President Ortega. Secretaries general Perez de Cuellar and Baena Soares opened the meeting, then turned the mediation effort over to aides. The contras insist on resumption of the cease-fire, a general amnesty and a visit by a contra delegation to Nicaragua to "ensure" that it is safe for the contra fighters to return to the country. At a press conference prior to opening the talks, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto said that the three things demanded by the contras "are met by what we are offering." Of the government proposal, the minister said that it was not an "ultimatum," and that the Nicaraguan delegation was willing to stay in New York beyond the two days allotted for the talks and would be flexible. D'Escoto emphasized that "the meeting with the contras is not to re-establish the cease-fire, but to end the war." In lifting the 18-month-old cease-fire on November 1, Mr. Ortega said that in the previous few weeks more than 1,000 contras had infiltrated Nicaragua to launch attacks and disrupt the campaign leading up to elections due February 25. Ortega's peace plan includes a proposal he made last month urging the US Congress to divert to the demobilization efforts what remains of 50 million dollars in non-lethal aid to the rebels. In Miami, the contra leadership announced formation of a new "civilian-military commission" to replace the old directorate, several of whose members have resigned and returned to Nicaragua. Contra military spokesperson Alejandro Acevedo said the delegation in New York headed by Bermudez had recognized the new commission, which includes only one of the former directors, Aristides Sanchez. Unidentified sources cited by Xinhua said that Nicaragua is seeking \$8 million from international sources to support the first phase of relocating 36,168 contras and their family members. Social Welfare Minister Tefel was cited in the FSLN newspaper Barricada as saying that the first stage of the relocation program consists of the reception, relocation and settlement of repatriated contras and families. The second three-year stage consists of reintegration of the repatriated into the nation's social and economic life. Tefel said that if an agreement is established in New York, the government would permit the contras to return home through the border posts of Las Manos, El Espino, Teotecacinte, Leymus and Puerto Cabezas. (Basic data from Notimex, AP, 11/08/89, 11/09/89; AFP, 11/09/89)

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