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## **Update On Talks Between Nicaraguan Government & Contras On Demobilization, Resumption Of Cease-fire**

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[On Nov. 9 at United Nations headquarters in New York, a meeting organized for the purpose of resuming the Nicaraguan cease-fire and establishing logistics and a definitive timetable for the Nicaraguan contra demobilization began. (See CAU 11/10/89.) 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 was comprised of Ambassador to the UN, Alejandro Serrano Caldera; 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. Contra delegation chief is former National Guard colonel Enrique Bermudez. Honduras is attending the meeting as a witness. Its delegation in New York was 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.] Nov. 10: Talks resumed at 10 a.m. The contra delegation insisted on 10 government actions before discussions on demobilization could begin, including a bilateral cease-fire, and a "total, unconditional and general" amnesty. The government asserted that demobilization must begin and be completed by Dec. 5. Its delegation has said that Managua seeks conditions for a definitive peace by means of contra demobilization, rather than concentrating on a cease-fire, described as a part of the broader problem. According to AP, the two sides were making progress on Friday, and scheduled a resumption of the talks on Monday in Washington, headquarters of the Organization of American States. Bermudez said, "We are negotiating now our return to Nicaragua in accord with the Tela agreement, and we are ready to go back once there is a meeting of minds between the Sandinistas and our side." Next, Bermudez claimed the Nicaraguan government had not presented a genuine amnesty but merely offered to release political prisoners from jail, while not restoring their civil and political rights. Prior to the meeting, Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto said that key contra demands would be met if demobilization began by the end of November. Documents obtained by AP showed the contras' opening position called for an immediate truce, followed by the government granting a "total amnesty" to the contras by Nov. 20. The next step would be the movement of armed contras camped in Honduras to Nicaragua to join colleagues already inside Nicaragua in secure zones. At this point, discussion of contra army dismantlement would begin. Nov. 13: In Washington, participants at the talks said little progress had been made. Tinoco said the cease-fire will be resumed when the contras return to their camps in Honduras. Bermudez asserted that if the "Sandinistas establish minimum conditions for democracy," the armed resistance would end within 24 hours. Tinoco said that the government has established sufficient conditions for the dismantlement, demobilization and repatriation of the Nicaraguan contras, "as verified by the missions of the UN and the OAS." Nov. 14: Nicaraguan government sources said they had "moderated" their demands, by seeking separate treatment of the cease-fire and demobilization. Government spokespersons said Managua was willing to resume the cease-fire

if the contras leave Nicaragua through designated routes and under supervision by international observers. Next, the government has offered a new amnesty for persons who have not benefitted under previous decrees, once demobilization of 50% of the contras has occurred. Bermudez reiterated the need for a "verifiable" cease-fire. Nov. 15: The government delegation was reportedly amazed when Bermudez called for a weeklong recess in the talks just when government negotiators said an agreement appeared to be within reach. Nov. 16: At a news conference, Tinoco told reporters that the contras' decision to call a recess on Wednesday evening "shows clearly the contras have no interest in peace, no interest in a cease-fire, no interest in demobilization." Bermudez told reporters at noon the contras would be willing to return to the talks only if the Sandinistas accepted a cease-fire without conditions. At that point, he said, details of the duties and makeup of a verification commission to monitor compliance could be worked out. On Thursday evening, talks were resumed after the contra delegation withdrew its proposal for a seven-day break. Bermudez called on the Nicaraguan government to accept a proposal offered by Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, the main feature of which is a cease-fire in place. Obando y Bravo had left Washington Wednesday night to keep an appointment elsewhere. He was expected to return for the Thursday evening talks. Nov. 17: Talks were recessed for the weekend after a two-hour session. Participants said little progress had been made on conditions for resumption of a cease-fire. Spokespersons for both delegations said the principal sticking point was the contras' refusal to agree to a demand by the Nicaraguan government for the withdrawal of contra forces from Nicaragua to Honduran base camps. Tinoco indicated he was perplexed by the contra delegation's refusal to consider moving their fighters back to Honduras. He noted that US-supplied food and shelter are available to them in Honduras. In addition, he said, the contras could take their arms with them back to Honduras and they would reserve the option to return with their arms to Nicaragua if the peace process breaks down. (Basic data from Notimex, 11/10/89, 11/13/89, 11/14/89; Xinhua, 11/10/89; AP, 11/10/89, 11/13/89, 11/16/89, 11/17/89)

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