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Nicaragua Plans To Call Central American Summit To Discuss Contra Demobilization

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Nov. 21 in Washington, Nicaraguan Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Hugo Tinoco announced plans to call a Central American summit to discuss contra demobilization following the collapse of talks with contra leaders. He said the five presidents "will have to decide what to do" with the contras, who he said had no willingness to negotiate or advance the Central American peace process. The government delegation left the talks after the contra delegation, led by military commander Enrique Bermudez, made "a totally absurd" response to a government peace proposal, Tinoco said. Under Managua's plan, presented Nov. 20, the Nicaraguan army would observe a cease-fire if 2,300 contra fighters of a total 5,000 inside Nicaragua withdrew to camps in Honduras. The contra delegation refused to withdraw fighters from Nicaragua, and pledged only that their numbers inside the country would not be increased, said Tinoco. Under the Nicaraguan government's proposal, the demobilization deadline would be extended until Dec. 31 and both sides would implement a truce until that date. Tinoco said 2,300 was the number of contras who had infiltrated Nicaragua in recent weeks. The contra withdrawal would take place along specially designated corridors and be supervised by a 620-strong UN peacekeeping force due to travel to Central America shortly. The proposal presented Monday involved a concession, since Nicaragua had previously demanded a total withdrawal of all contra forces from the country. Bermudez reiterated opposition to withdrawal of contras from Nicaragua, saying such action would be tantamount to a retreat and would make a ceasefire unnecessary. The contra delegation also reiterated its demand for a cease-fire, and claimed that there has been no significant increase in contras operating inside Nicaraguan territory in recent weeks. Tinoco pointed out that even the US State Department admits that an infiltration by 2,000 contras occurred between August and October, raising total numbers in Nicaraguan territory to 5,000. Alvaro de Soto, a representative of UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, said there were no immediate plans to resume the talks. (Basic data from AFP, 11/21/89)

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