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Nicaragua Responds To Salvadoran Accusations Before U.N. Security Council, O.a.s. Permanent Council

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Nov. 30, at the request of the Salvadoran government, the UN Security Council and the Organization of American States Permanent Council convened in special sessions, in New York and Washington, respectively. The purpose of the sessions was to hear Salvadoran accusations against the Nicaraguan government regarding Managua's alleged weapons support to the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). At both sessions, only Salvadoran and Nicaraguan representatives spoke. (See CAU 11/29/89 for coverage of a crashed plane and its cargo in El Salvador, preceding the Salvadoran government's suspension of diplomatic and trade relations with Nicaragua, and calls for the UN and OAS special sessions.) Salvadoran ambassador to the UN, Ricardo Castaneda, presented a video tape of the aircraft which crashed near Usulután on Nov. 25. He asserted that the aircraft had taken off from Nicaragua on a mission to deliver land-to-air missiles to the FMLN. Castaneda also displayed one of the Soviet-made SAM-7 missiles found in the plane. Castaneda accused the Nicaraguan government of implementing a "policy of intervention and aggression" against his government, constituting a "serious violation" of the Central American peace accords. Castaneda asserted that Nicaragua has "continuously" provided arms to the FMLN. Nicaraguan UN ambassador Alejandro Serrano Caldera presented a video tape of Salvadoran civilians killed by death squads. The tape included a news report by ABC News on the murder of the six Jesuit priests on Nov. 16. Serrano said the real issue is El Salvador's "pathetic" history of abuses by "insensitive" oligarchies allied with "repressive armies." He stated that when the Church disassociated itself from this alliance it became a target of institutionalized repression and violence. The Nicaraguan ambassador added that the Salvadoran government's abuses, and those of the death squads allied with the military, have been documented and condemned by innumerable international organizations. Next, Serrano asserted that the Salvadoran government's complaint against Nicaragua is nothing more than an attempt to obscure and divert attention from the tragedy of the Salvadoran people who are victims of systematic and ruthless exploitation and repression by their own government. He added that San Salvador uses every possible excuse to disrupt the regional peace process. Castaneda demanded a UN inquiry into the origin of the plane and the weapons. Serrano Caldera dismissed Castaneda's request, saying, "the missiles could be from anywhere and they prove absolutely nothing. I am not going to get into a discussion on this point because it is not essential." He added, "The first one to introduce surface-to-air missiles in the region was the US government when it introduced them to the (Nicaraguan) contras in the middle of the decade." The Nicaraguan government has denied allegations that it is arming the FMLN. The Security Council took no action on Thursday. In New York, prior to the Security Council meeting, FMLN representative Francisco Altschul told reporters that the rebels procure arms in the Central American black market. He pointed out that the rebels have purchased weapons from the US-supplied Nicaraguan contras. Other weapons sources are confiscation from the Salvadoran military, and the rebels' home-made manufactures. In Washington, Salvadoran OAS ambassador Mauricio Granillo appeared at the permanent council meeting with a SAM-7 surface-to-air missile launcher. He asserted that Nicaragua is threatening the regional peace process by intensifying and

regionalizing the war against the FMLN. Nicaraguan OAS ambassador Victoria Castillo put down El Salvador's accusation as a "vulgar smoke screen to divert international attention and hide the bloody repression of the victim: the Salvadoran people." Alluding to the presentation of the missile launcher, Castillo said that it was not possible "to present...the corpses of the six Jesuits assassinated by the death squads." Because of procedural requirements, Nicaragua was obligated to withdraw a resolution proposing that the Inter-American Human Rights Commission send a special delegation to El Salvador. Castillo said her government reserved the right to call a new special session of the Permanent Council to discuss the Salvadoran situation. After Thursday's OAS permanent council session, Castillo told Notimex that Nicaragua will persist in its attempt to introduce the resolution calling for a special Commission delegation visit to El Salvador. (Basic data from Notimex, AFP, Xinhua, 11/30/89)

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