

12-13-1989

Central American Summit: Chronology Of Developments & Reactions

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Central American Summit: Chronology Of Developments & Reactions." (1989).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/3603>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Central American Summit: Chronology Of Developments & Reactions

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, December 13, 1989

Dec. 9: In San Jose, foreign ministers from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua prepared the agenda for the summit meeting, to take place in San Isidro de Colorado, five km. from San Jose. The four major agenda items defined by the ministers were relations between Nicaragua and El Salvador, the Salvadoran civil war, Nicaragua's decision to reactivate a suit against Honduras before the World Court, and demobilization of the Nicaraguan contras. The Costa Rican government prepared a proposal for the termination of hostilities in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The proposal included the following points: 1) The Salvadoran government and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) are called on to establish a cease-fire prior to a resumption of peace talks. 2) The FMLN is urged to terminate its military offensive and hostile actions. 3) The United Nations Security Council is requested to expand the mandate of the UN Central America peacekeeping force (ONUCA) toward verification of peace agreement provisions in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and the definitive end of hostilities in both countries. 4) Immediate installation of UN peacekeeping forces at borders of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras and the Gulf of Fonseca to verify the termination of Nicaraguan arms shipments to the FMLN. 5) Creation of a 45-day peaceful coexistence pact among Central American nations to reduce tensions. 6) Resumption of dialogue between the Nicaraguan government and the contras to finalize contra demobilization plans. 7) During the contra demobilization process, contra fighters would remain in Honduras under international supervision by UN peacekeeping forces charged with verifying delivery of humanitarian aid and preventing incursions into Nicaragua. 8) Nicaragua is called on to cease military actions against the contras, and to restore the unilateral cease-fire suspended Nov. 1. 9) Nicaragua is requested to withdraw its suit against Honduras. 10) Rebel groups are urged to adhere to peace agreement provisions, and to participate in domestic democratization processes. Dec. 10: On the first day of the summit in Costa Rica, the five presidents agreed to discuss the possibility of expanding the mandate of the UN peacekeeping forces in Central America (ONUCA). The Costa Rican government proposed that ONUCA act to supervise cease-fires in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and to verify that Nicaragua has terminated arms shipments to the FMLN. Next, President Oscar Arias's government proposed a truce in El Salvador from Dec. 12 through Jan. 15 "to give the FMLN and the government time to begin negotiations for a permanent cease-fire." Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega was supportive of an expanded ONUCA role in the region, but proposed that its new role include powers and personnel to commence disbanding contra forces. The other option suggested by Nicaragua is to have Honduras demobilize the contras. Honduran officials have said they want to see the contras removed from national territory, but will not use their army or shed Honduran blood to accomplish the demobilization. Ortega rejected Costa Rica's suggestion that the ONUCA be relegated in a first phase to "supervising" deliveries of humanitarian aid to the contras camped in Honduras since the dismantlement "must begin immediately." He added that assuming the demobilization begins immediately, Managua would consider resumption of its unilateral cease-fire and "technical talks" with contra leaders. Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani reiterated accusations against the Nicaraguan government for providing arms to the FMLN, and Nicaragua

denied them. President Ortega in turn accused the Salvadoran government of widespread human rights violations and aerial bombardments of densely populated civilian areas. On the same day, the FMLN announced in a communique that it was willing to enter into an immediate cease-fire with on-site verification organized by UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar. The rebels asked for the dismissal of seven high-ranking military officers and "full respect for human rights and democratic liberties of political and social organizations." The FMLN also proposed lifting the state of siege, repeal of the government's "anti-terrorist" legislation, and the release of political prisoners. Next, according to the rebels, the Roman Catholic Church, opposition political parties, and civic organizations should be included in peace talks. The Salvadoran government rejected the FMLN truce proposal, offering instead a cease-fire plan consisting of a unilateral rebel cease-fire for five days prior to resumption of peace talks in Caracas, Venezuela. The government's plan said nothing about terminating government troop attacks, such as bombardments and other operations against civilian residential areas in cities and the countryside. There was no immediate FMLN reaction. At the summit, Cristiani insisted that his counterparts must first censure the FMLN for its latest offensive. In statements to reporters, Salvadoran Justice Minister Oscar Santamaria said the presidents did not discuss the FMLN proposal for an immediate cease-fire. [A Notimex report indicated that contradictory statements among members of the Salvadoran delegation abounded. For instance, regarding the rebel cease-fire proposal, Defense Minister Gen. Humberto Larios said, "There is nothing to negotiate, nor is there reason to give guarantees to a handful of delinquents." Later, the minister said, "We cannot anticipate a categorical rejection of the FMLN initiative." In response to a question about air force attacks against civilian residential areas in San Salvador and other cities, the defense minister said, "We have not realized any bombardment. The air force has participated only in centralized actions defined by the president...to avoid damage to the civilian population." President Cristiani said his government was willing to participate in a new round of talks with the FMLN in Caracas, Venezuela. The justice minister dismissed Cristiani's suggestion. Santamaria said, "We are not going to participate in talks so that they can repeat previous actions. While we were engaged in talks the last time, [the FMLN] was preparing the November offensive."]

Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto told reporters that Costa Rica's proposal for the installation of UN peacekeeping forces to prevent alleged arms shipments from Nicaragua to the FMLN will not be accepted until contra demobilization is underway. To emphasize this position, said the minister, Nicaragua resumed its World Court suit against Honduras in which Tegucigalpa is charged with harboring contra military forces in national territory to launch attacks against Nicaragua. The minister said his government is not willing to accept a long-term extension of the contra dismantlement process with the objective of somehow fulfilling the Tela agreement. D'Escoto asserted that Nicaragua has become the exclusive focus of the entire regional peace process. He added, "We cannot continue this situation in which only Nicaragua fulfills regional peace accords, while the rest ignore them." Nicaraguan Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Hugo Tinoco said, "Nicaragua did not come to the summit to suggest a new calendar for the disarticulation of the resistance. We are here to establish a deadline for repatriation..." Tinoco added that his government is willing in principle to accept the presence of international observers in Nicaraguan territory to obstruct arms shipments to the FMLN. Salvadoran government spokespersons said the Cristiani administration is willing to accept ONUCA supervision, but did not clarify if this included verification of a cease-fire. In comments on the presidents' discussions, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Rodrigo Madrigal said, "We must face the reality" that the superpowers' help is needed. He added that regional agreements will not have much validity in those places where parties in the conflicts have close ties to the US or the Soviet Union. After the day's session had

ended, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister D'Escoto told reporters, "Nothing has been done... The demobilization of the contras must be complied with. The United Nations must begin to function in Nicaragua." Dec. 11: Sources in the Nicaraguan, Salvadoran and Costa Rican delegations said an agreement to keep the peace process going was likely. Salvadoran Justice Minister Santamaria told AP that his government was willing to reestablish normal relations with Nicaragua. In a letter to the five Central American presidents, UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar suggested that they consider the possibility of including in the peace process "states with special links in the region." Perez de Cuellar did not identify the "states," but it was understood he was referring to the US, Cuba and the Soviet Union. The secretary general said solutions to the current crisis may once again turn out to be "ephemeral," unless full collaboration is obtained from the states in question. Next, Perez de Cuellar said that it would be possible, under certain conditions and if the UN Security Council approves, for the ONUCA to verify cease-fires in El Salvador and Nicaragua. In a message to Arias, Pope John Paul II noted the summit comes "during a time of new tensions and painful conflicts" in Central America and said: "I wish to express my fervent hope that this meeting, through a sincere and constructive dialogue, contributes to rediscovering the road of peace." Late Monday, Honduran President Jose Azcona Hoyo left the meeting after arguing with President Ortega over the handling of a statement on the World Court case Nicaragua has lodged against Honduras for harboring the contras. Four hours later, he returned to the meeting after reaching an agreement with Nicaragua. The two governments agreed to establish a bilateral commission to resolve the dispute "extra-judicially." Managua agreed to suspend suit proceedings for six months. Dec. 12: Early Tuesday morning, the presidents concluded the summit, and issued a joint communique. Highlights of the communique are summarized below: * The presidents called for the demobilization of the FMLN and the Nicaraguan contras. The UN's International Commission of Support and Verification (CIAV) is requested to "begin immediately its actions for the demobilization of the FMLN." * The US government is urged to funnel its non-lethal aid to the contra army into the CIAV to achieve contra dismantlement, repatriation and relocation. * "Armed activities and terrorism by irregular forces in the region" are condemned, and the FMLN is urged to resume talks with the government, and to enter into a cease-fire. * The FMLN is called on to "end immediately and effectively the hostilities in that brother country and reincorporate itself in the dialogue already begun." The presidents "energetically demand that the FMLN publicly renounce every kind of violent action that directly or indirectly affects the civilian population." * The agreement expressed support for the Salvadoran government, describing it as "born out of a democratic and pluralistic process." * UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar was requested to attempt to revive peace talks between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN. * Nicaragua was called on to stop arms shipments to the FMLN. * The UN is requested to arrange more direct participation in the peace process by governments with interests in the region. * The presidents of Guatemala, Costa Rica and Honduras urged El Salvador and Nicaragua to resume normal diplomatic and trade relations. * The UN is requested to provide increased support in order to end "the armed activities and terrorism" of all rebel groups in Central America. * The presidents urged the Nicaraguan contras to cease all actions against the civilian population and those which disrupt the electoral process in that country. * The next regional summit will take place in Managua in early 1990. The FMLN's top commanders distributed a statement Tuesday expressing "indignation" and rejection of the presidents' communique. The summit conclusions, said the FMLN, are contrary to the dynamic of the international community..., and unconditionally support the principal violator of human rights in the region, a government that has assassinated and persecuted clerics and has bombed the civilian population." The FMLN commanders said that

the respect shown to the Cristiani government at the summit "does not contribute to the possibility of negotiation a solution" to the Salvadoran civil war. The statement rejected demobilization as contrary to the desires of "all the democratic, social and church forces" of El Salvador. The FMLN declared that it will not demobilize simply because of "agreements among governments," since the Front "constitutes a legitimate force with popular roots throughout Salvadoran territory." According to the FMLN, the summit's main focus was on saving the Salvadoran government from extreme political and military crisis and from international isolation, in exchange for new pledges for the immediate demobilization of the Nicaraguan contras. The FMLN commanders said they continue to support mediation by the UN Secretary General to initiate serious peace talks with the participation of all political and social forces. The rebel leaders stated that the Central American peace effort appears committed to "continue sacrificing itself to...resolving the Nicaraguan problem" alone. For the first time since the summits began in August 1987, the five presidents chose to apply the same treatment to the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan conflicts, relegating the FMLN to the same status as the anti-Sandinista counter-revolutionaries. Finally, the FMLN called for international solidarity because the Salvadoran people "run the risk of suffering an escalation of [violence], result of the [government's] fascist policy supported by the declaration of the Central American presidents." In statements to reporters, President Cristiani said he was willing to resume talks with the rebels after the FMLN renounces all actions affecting the civilian population as articulated in the summit communique. He added that a cease-fire would not be necessary before the talks begin. Prior to leaving San Jose, President Ortega reiterated an offer to the contras that if they repatriate before Feb. 5, they would be able to register and participate in the Feb. 25 elections. In San Jose, Yuri Yu Nosenko, representative of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Latin American affairs department, said that Central American governments should establish arms and military personnel limitation agreements. He said that the Soviet government believes that bringing Cuba into such negotiations is necessary to obtain some type of commitment from Havana on reducing arms shipments to Central America. Nosenko said that Moscow has insisted that the United States sign an agreement on suspending arms shipments to Central America. He noted that Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's most recent proposal consists of establishing a freeze on existing Central American armed forces; terminating arms and military equipment shipments; and, prevention of intra-regional weapons contraband and "donations." The Soviet diplomat said Washington has not recognized Gorbachev's proposal, asserting that it has "commitments" to regional allies. White House spokesperson Marlin Fitzwater reiterated Washington's insistence that the contra demobilization be "voluntary," and that Nicaragua has not created conditions appropriate to contra repatriation. Fitzwater said the US supports the creation of a UN peacekeeping force, and that it could have an important role in monitoring the continuing Sandinista aid to the Salvadoran guerrillas. State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher said critical proof for the success of the voluntary demobilization and repatriation program continues to be the creation of democratic conditions in Nicaragua. He said that the humanitarian aid to the contras has always been available for repatriation, but that the legislation does not specify how it is to be channeled. (Basic data from several reports by Notimex, 12/09-12/89; AP, 12/10-12/89; DPA, 12/11/89, 12/12/89; Xinhua, 12/10/89, 12/12/89; and, New York Times, 12/11/89)

-- End --