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Nicaragua: U.N.o. Officials Accuse Government Of Holding Up U.S. Funds For Their Campaign

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

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On Jan. 11, campaign manager for the Nicaraguan Opposition Unity (UNO), Antonio Lacayo, said that the government is delaying release of monies approved by the US Congress in October allocated for the training of poll watchers. The Supreme Electoral Council (SEC) approved the deposit of \$3,584,370 in the Central Bank on Dec. 20. The amount is part of the \$9 million congressional appropriation. Most of the \$9 million is to be channeled into the Nicaraguan election process through the National Endowment for Democracy. Under Nicaraguan law, foreign donations in cash must be split evenly between the recipient party and the SEC's Fund for Democracy, to help defray the cost of the elections. According to Lacayo, UNO and the Fund for Democracy are to receive \$1.8 million each from the \$9 million. An additional \$1.5 million is to be split between the Fund for Democracy and an institute founded by UNO members to help train poll watchers and promote civic education. SEC secretary Rosa Marina Zelaya said only \$400,000 of the \$1.5 million figure has been deposited in the Central Bank. Lacayo argued that half of the deposited sum is for UNO's Institute for Electoral Promotion and Training. He added, "Our donors said there would be no more money until we could see how that would go through." Lacayo said a snag developed in trying to get permission from the Ministry of External Cooperation to release the \$200,000 from the Central Bank. During the weekend, La Prensa reported that a government minister had agreed to release the money. (Basic data from AP, 01/11/90, 01/15/90; Notimex, 01/11/90)

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