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U.N.o. Complains Again About Delay In Receiving U.S. Congressional Monies

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Jan. 23, National Opposition Union (UNO) campaign chief, Antonio Lacayo, said in a radio interview that unless the government releases US congressional monies earmarked for UNO, the opposition could not accept electoral victory by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Lacayo complained that the government was obstructing release of some \$3.5 million in direct US aid to UNO, and the associated Institute for Electoral Promotion and Training (IPCE). UNO was planning to use the money for lawyers to monitor the Feb. 25 elections, he said. The US Congress approved the funds last October. Most of the funds have not been disbursed due to administrative delays in the US and in Nicaragua. Spokespersons at Nicaragua's Central Bank said the money was deposited there in the form of checks which have not yet cleared. As of Jan. 23, the IPCE had received \$200,000, said the spokespersons. (See CAU, 01/19/90 for details on previous complaints by UNO.) In a Jan. 14 report on the delays in releasing the US monies, the Institute for Media Analysis (Washington, DC) pointed out that the funds were held up in the United States until the Christmas break. Since Nicaragua effectively shuts down during the holidays, action could be taken on the funds only after Jan. 1. Officials at the Central Bank said procedures on depositing checks, clearing checks, and then depositing the monies in accounts were being followed. Some officials were perplexed because the IPCE is a for-profit organization, and thus, was technically not eligible to receive donations channeled through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). In statements to journalists on Jan. 20, FSLN spokesperson Bayardo Arce said that government officials had decided to permit the Central Bank to pay out an advance of \$200,000 to the IPCE prior to the conclusion of banking procedures. This decision was taken, said Arce, to avoid providing UNO with a pretext which, added to others, would be used to justify its withdrawal from the elections. According to Arce, it is up to the US government to facilitate the financing of the opposition by wiring money and otherwise smoothing banking transactions. [Basic data from AFP, 01/23/90; Xinhua, 01/20/90; 01/14/90 report by Institute for Media Analysis, Washington, DC]

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