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## **Update On Nicaraguan Contra Demobilization: No Deadlines, No Schedules**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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March 4: In Tegucigalpa, contra spokesperson Alejandro Acevedo said that before the contras demobilize, the Sandinista People's Army (EPS) must disappear and be replaced by a civilian police force. Representatives of the contra army, he said, would meet with Francesc Vendrell, on March 5 to discuss an eventual demobilization. Vendrell heads the UN Support and Verification Commission (CIAV), responsible for supervising in the contra dismantlement process. Next, according to a communique released in the Honduran capital by contra leaders: "The resistance is conscious that there will be an authentic democratization process in Nicaragua. For that reason, it is willing to change its role of insurgent army to one of civic and political positions...We have begun to take the necessary steps to demobilize our combatants in search for mechanisms and guarantees appropriate to the current situation in Nicaragua." The statement said the speed of demobilization of the contras and repatriation of the fighters and their families would depend on the guarantees and logistics. The communique said that the contras have ordered "an absolute halt in hostilities" and asked UNO and the CIAV "to apply a special policy of persuasion" to the 4,000 contras estimated to have gone into Nicaragua since September. The contra statement followed three days of talks between contra military leaders and Harry Shlaudeman, President Bush's special envoy. Archbishop of Managua, Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo said he would send two representatives to Honduras to discuss demobilization plans with the contras. In addition, the National Opposition Union (UNO) has scheduled a visit with contra representatives during the week. March 5: Honduran Foreign Minister Mario Carias Zapata said that CIAV chief Frances Vendrell returned to New York after meeting with Honduran and Nicaraguan government officials. He said there is no fixed date for contra repatriation, since this depends on conditions inside Nicaragua after Violeta Barrios de Chamorro is inaugurated on April 25. Carias Zapata said that several European countries have offered assistance in the repatriation effort. The minister said his government believes that the new UNO administration will withdraw the suit filed by the Sandinista government before the World Court at the Hague against Honduras for permitting the contras to use its territory in their attacks against Nicaragua. March 6: In a speech in Managua, President Ortega said, "Why has the government of the United States delayed ordering the transfer of humanitarian funds to the United Nations or the Organization of American States to speed up demobilization and repatriation of the contras? Why is Honduras delaying a decision to expel the contras from its territory?" Ortega stated that he had fulfilled his pledge in terms of democratizing Nicaragua, and "now it's (Washington's) turn" to contribute with the disarmament of the contras to complete the democratization process. He added that it is up to the US to take on the responsibility of disarming the contra and providing assistance for their relocation and repatriation since the US created the contra army and financed them for the past nine years. The president spoke before US and Latin American publishers at a meeting of the Inter-American Press Association. In a report on the Nicaraguan electoral process released in Washington, Organization of American States Secretary General Joao Baena Soares asserted that disarmament of the contras is necessary to guarantee a smooth and peaceful transition

from Sandinista to UNO rule, and to support Nicaragua's economic recovery. (Basic data from Notimex, 03/04-06/90; AP, 03/04/90, 03/06/90; Xinhua, 03/03/90)

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