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U.N. Secretary General: U.S. Obligated To Pay Dues Regardless Of General Assembly Vote

by John Neagle

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On Nov. 28, United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar said the US is obligated to pay its UN dues even if the General Assembly votes Dec. 1 to recognize the PLO as the nation of Palestine. On Nov. 27, the Palestine Liberation Organization said Arab nations plan to push a resolution through the General Assembly recognizing the PLO as an observer nation. The State Department immediately threatened to cut off all US support for the UN if the General Assembly approved the resolution. Washington is assessed \$216 million annually, one-fourth of the UN budget. Perez de Cuellar told reporters: "Contributions are not linked to what happens in the General Assembly, but are an obligation under the UN charter...Sometimes I have the impression that the Americans think that they're making a loan. The Americans ought to pay what they owe...What I don't understand is the link, how they link the two things together." The PLO wants its status as a permanent observer mission raised from that of organization to nation, like North Korea and South Korea, Monaco, the Vatican, San Marino and Switzerland. Observer nations do not have voting rights and can speak only if invited by the assembly. Upgrading the PLO's status would take a simple majority vote of the 159 General Assembly members. As a member of the 102-member Non-Aligned Movement, the PLO has more than enough votes to prevail. The US has paid only \$65 million of its \$216 million assessment for the year, and is still more than \$307 million in arrears to the regular budget from withholding UN dues during the Reagan administration. President Reagan ordered US dues withheld until the UN trimmed its budget and bureaucracy. In 1988, Reagan said he was satisfied with the UN's progress in reform and ordered full repayment of US dues. Congress has not authorized payment of the arrears, citing budget deficits. Following the declaration of a Palestinian state November 1988 in Algiers and its recognition by 117 countries, the PLO's strategy was to have the new state recognized by all international organizations. Riyadh Mansour, who heads the Palestinian delegation at the UN, said that each time the PLO approached an international organization Washington threatened to cut off its financial contribution. The US Congress recently passed a foreign appropriations bill that requires the administration to cut off funding to any group that moves to recognize the PLO or upgrade its status. Last year, the PLO declared the existence of a state of Palestine in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the PLO says 117 nations have recognized it. (Basic data from AP, AFP, 11/28/89)

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