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Nicaragua: Basic Agreement Said To Exist On Full Transfer Of Control Over Security Forces

by Deborah Tyroler

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In an interview with Mark Uhlig of the New York Times, on March 20 in Managua, president-elect Violeta Barrios de Chamorro's chief negotiator, Antonio Lacayo, said that he believes a basic agreement exists with leaders of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) on the full transfer of control of the military and security forces to the new government on April 25. Lacayo said the most serious problem faced by the new government at the moment is the existence of contra army. He said the contras could "inflict a cost on all Nicaraguans" if not quickly dismantled. He stated that the continued existence of the contra forces could exacerbate tensions and delay the new government's plans in several areas, ranging from economic recovery to control over the army and security forces. "There is no reason for the contras to remain armed now that the elections have taken place," he said. Lacayo said that the FSLN was concerned that the new government would bring in civilians or contras to join the army, and take charge of the rank and file. He said, "We have been very clear to indicate to them that this is not the case. We are going to respect the institutions as they are the constitution, but at the same time we are going to adjust the size of the army to meet the needs of the country." The new government plans to appoint civilians to head the defense and interior ministers, and to abolish interior ministry combat units. "There is no need for the existence of a second army. We will have a national army, and a civilian police a civilian ministry of the interior, not combat forces." (Basic data from New York Times, 03/22/90)

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