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Contras Establish Conditions For Demobilization Agreement; Thousands Leave For Nicaragua

by Deborah Tyroler

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March 23: At the Toncontin air base outside Tegucigalpa, Nicaraguan contra representatives signed an agreement to begin demobilization in Honduras, and to repatriate by April 20. Contra negotiator Oscar Sovalbarro, head of the contra army's psychological operations, and Antonio Lacayo, representative of president-elect Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, signed the document. Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo served as witness. Participants included a five-member contra military delegation headed by Israel Galeano; three members of the contra political commission headed by Aristides Sanchez; Antonio Lacayo and Emilio Alvarez, representing president-elect Barrios de Chamorro; and, Cardinal Obando y Bravo. A communique released after the seven-hour talks said the contras agreed to demobilize because the Feb. 25 elections had "established a process of democratization" in Nicaragua, and that the contras inside Nicaragua would move into security zones supervised by the Cardinal, the UN Central America Observer Force (ONUCA), and the International Verification and Support Commission (CIAV), organized by the UN and the Organization of American States. The communique called for an immediate cease-fire in Nicaragua supervised by Obando y Bravo and the UN. The president-elect's government agreed to provide pensions to contra widows and orphans, and to wounded contras in "recognition of their patriotic labors." The new government also agreed to "assure the rehabilitation and social readaptation" of persons affected by the war, and to seek humanitarian and medical aid for the duration of the demobilization. Conditions reportedly desired by the contra leaders for their demobilization include the following: * Simultaneous demobilization of the Sandinista Popular Army, and in the same proportion as the contra army. * Returning contras may reclaim or be compensated for property confiscated by the government since 1979. * Separation of the two sides via confinement to barracks of Nicaraguan government troops, and contras to established security zones. * Compliance with constitutional political, economic and social guarantees. * Strengthening of the judicial branch of the government. * Authorization of a contra commission to supervise demobilization in Nicaragua. * Contra participation in the National Reconciliation Commission created under the Central American peace plan, and in a national agency to manage funds for demobilization. * Humanitarian aid for contras and relatives in security zones inside Nicaragua, and in Honduras. * Continued "special assistance" for contras and dependents for five years. * Tax exemptions for repatriated contras for the first year of the new government. * The right to reclaim or receive compensation for property confiscated by the government since 1979. * A national referendum on modifying the structure of the armed forces. President Bush has requested Congress to approve a \$300 million aid package for Nicaragua that includes \$45 million to demobilize and relocate an estimated 42,000 contras and relatives. March 26: UN officials arrived in Managua for meetings on how to execute the "plan" signed Friday for supervising contra dismantlement. Barricada reported that Deputy Defense Minister Maj. Gen. Joaquin Cuadra Lacayo proposed to UN force chief Gen. Agustin Quesada Gomez of Spain that the zones inside Nicaragua should be small, limited in number, and not located in remote regions. US officials say the number of contras in Honduran camps has remained relatively stable at about 10,000 men. In interviews last weekend with the New York Times, contra

commanders asserted that thousands of their men had left the Honduran camps to infiltrate into Nicaragua. Under a proposal forwarded to the UN Security Council by Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar on March 15, the UN force would be expanded to include a full battalion of 800 Venezuelan troops now leaving similar duties in Namibia. The group's mandate would be expanded to cover the role of receiving the weapons from the demobilized contras in Nicaragua and at the Honduran camps. The expanded mandate has not yet been approved by the Security Council. There is concern that even another 800 troops will not be sufficient to supervise security problems involved in establishing protected enclaves. No concrete plans have been formulated on the location and size of the enclaves, the nature of "incentives" to attract contras into the enclaves, and whether the contras will be permitted to retain weapons inside the protected zones. Oscar Sovalbarro said 2,000 contras had returned to Nicaragua since the accord was signed. March 27: AP reported that journalists who have visited the camps in Honduras since Friday say that most of the contras have left for Nicaragua. (Basic data from AP, 03/23/90, 03/26/90, 03/27/90; New York Times, 03/24/90, 03/27/90)

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