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LETTER DATED 20 SEPTEMBER 1983 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF HONDURAS TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to draw your attention to a statement made in the Security Council by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Víctor Hugo Tinoco Fonseca, at a meeting on 13 September.

The meeting in question was convened at the request of the Government of Nicaragua, under the item "Letter dated 12 September 1983 from the representative of Nicaragua on the Security Council addressed to the President of the Security Council".

The purpose of convening the Council was to deal with an accusation levelled at another State in connection with the stepping-up of bellicose activities by the Nicaraguan forces which are fighting against the Government of that country. This notwithstanding, the representative of Nicaragua alluded to Honduras. In referring to the air attacks carried out in Nicaraguan territory, he stated: "On ... 9 September, at 5.30 a.m., two T-28 type airplanes painted in camouflage colours and originating from Honduran airspace violated our national airspace and attacked the port of Corinto". He added: "One of the airplanes was hit by national anti-aircraft defence fire and headed south; the other one retreated towards Honduran airspace". Lastly, he stated: "On the same day, two T-33 aircraft originating in Honduran airspace penetrated all the way into Matagalpa Department on reconnaissance missions".

Previously, on 9 September, the International Information Office of the Government of Honduras had published the following bulletin: "The report that aircraft from Honduras have attacked Corinto in Nicaragua is completely false; it is not known why a news agency has been misinformed about this and the International Information Office repeats anew, on behalf of the Government of Honduras, that our country and our Government desire peace. Honduras has never allowed, and will never allow, aircraft to take off from our territory in order to attack a neighbouring country."

On 13 September, the day on which the Security Council held the aforementioned meeting, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras answered a communication addressed to him by the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua. The reply read as follows:

"I am writing to you with reference to your communication of 9 September concerning the alleged attack against objectives in the port of Corinto, Republic of Nicaragua, which was apparently carried out in the early hours of that day by two aircraft of the opposition to the Sandinist régime. The Government of the Republic of Honduras firmly repudiates the accusation which you rashly made in your note when you stated, without proof of any kind, that the aircraft in question took off from Honduran territory, even though, perhaps through an awareness of the real facts, you mentioned in your note "counter-revolutionary aircraft", which after the action headed south. Our Government cannot, moreover, accede to the request for an immediate investigation of the alleged events, because at no time have aircraft left Honduran territory in order to attack a neighbouring country."

Added to the foregoing is the fact that the opposition to the Nicaraguan Government, through the office of the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) and the supreme leader of that Alliance, Mr. Edén Pastora, former Deputy Minister of the Interior and former Commander of the people's militia of the Sandinist Front, had already claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that the aircraft had taken off from the airports which that armed opposition movement has in the south of Nicaraguan territory itself.

In the light of such statements by the very Nicaraguans who are fighting inside their own country, the attempts to involve other countries of the area in the internal conflict of Nicaragua are extremely disturbing.

Evidence of this, and of the tendency to give the impression that the conflict is spreading or being internationalized, is the assertion made at the international level by the Government of Nicaragua concerning alleged reconnaissance flights over Nicaraguan territory by aircraft arriving from Honduran airspace. Typical of this tendency to make unfounded accusations was the denunciation of an imaginary air-sea engagement between Honduran and Nicaraguan forces, made by the Government of Nicaragua on 8 September, which prompted the International Information Office of Honduras to issue a bulletin on 9 September stating that the report of an air-sea engagement between Honduran and Nicaraguan forces on the day on which the accusation was made was completely false.

Dealing with the same subject on 13 September, the Acting Minister of Honduras wrote to his Nicaraguan counterpart in the following terms:

"I have the honour to acknowledge your communication of 8 September, in which you lodged your Government's formal protest with the Government of Honduras because of an alleged fishing-boat incident in the Atlantic Ocean at the same latitude as Bismona Lagoon, some 50 kilometres to the south-east of Cape Gracias a Dios. According to information in the possession of the Office of Honduran Secretary of State, on 8 September, two Nicaraguan fishing craft violated Honduran territorial waters, north of the fifteenth parallel, and because of this patrol boats from the Honduran naval force appeared on the scene in order to dissuade the crew members of the craft from withdrawing, without, however, finding it necessary to use firearms. There was no armed confrontation between coast guards and, in particular, there was no

intervention by Honduran aircraft. The Government of Honduras accordingly repudiates the unfounded accusations made and recalls that it has repeatedly denounced to the Government of Nicaragua the latter's irresponsible and hostile conduct towards peaceful fishing activities, as manifested in the instructions to Nicaraguan coast guards and the artillery-bearing boats of the Nicaraguan Fishing Institute to pursue and commit armed aggression against Honduran vessels and crew members, and possibly to seize and attack them, in the territorial and other waters under Honduran jurisdiction. This policy of the Nicaraguan Government is at variance with the elementary principles of civilized coexistence and, because of the loss of life, injuries and other harassment to Honduran citizens and their property which it has caused, we have registered our most vehement protests together with the warning that, in response, our country must redouble its aerial and naval surveillance of the maritime zones under national jurisdiction."

All of the foregoing testifies to a perturbing disorientation campaign, designed to give international opinion the idea that other Central American countries are intervening in Nicaragua's internal conflict or that they have so-called aggressive attitudes towards that brother country. What makes for even greater concern is the timing of those false accusations, most of which were made on 7, 8 and 9 September, the days on which the Fourth Joint Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela (the members of the Contadora Group) and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua was held, for the purpose of finding a definitive solution to the Central American problem.

The Republic of Honduras, for its part, is clearly willing to seek a peaceful solution which is comprehensive, regional and permanent and disposes of all the factors causing tension in the Central American region at one and the same time.

It is relevant to point out that on 13 September the five Central American countries, under the auspices of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), met at Brussels with the development agencies and States of the international community to present jointly, and secure financing for, the Development Programme of the Central American isthmus. In formally announcing this meeting to the diplomatic corps and the international organizations on 17 August at Tegucigalpa, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras, who was the Chairman of the Honduran delegation at the Brussels meeting, stated: "It is my intention to stress that the Government of Honduras has a vital stake in making the greatest success of this joint action, which we regard as a key element of our attempts to internationalize peace in Central America, of the sincerity of our efforts in that direction and of the strong fraternal sentiments of the Honduran people and Government, whose deep-seated conviction is based on the fact that only this broad vision of co-operation in mutual respect and the associated backing of the international community will enable the countries of Central America to live in dignity and develop interdependently".

It should be stated in addition that, on the eve of the Fourth Joint Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Central America and the Contadora Group, the constitutional President of Honduras, Mr. Roberto Suazo Córdova, sent a letter to the Presidents, heads of State and heads of Government of the countries with

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which Honduras maintains relations, in order to describe Honduran contributions to peace in Central America, to urge that the Government of Nicaragua should make an authentic demonstration at that Meeting of its political will to reach the same goal and to state that it would be desirable to give added impetus to the negotiations in progress. In explaining other important concepts and realities of Honduran politics, the President stated the following:

"I can assure you that my Government will resolutely pursue its quest for peaceful solutions in the context of the critical regional situation. Despite the climate of international tension prevailing in Central America, there has been no increase whatever in the nation's military budget over the past two years and we shall maintain that budget at the same level during the coming year. Moreover, the Government of which I am President has decided not to increase the strength of the Honduran armed forces, since we have no hegemonic aims in Central America and our principal desire is to live in peace and freedom; thus Honduras requires nothing more than an army with modern techniques which is capable of repelling an attack and contributing effectively to the stability and development of democracy, as prescribed by our Political Constitution.

"I also wish to reiterate to you the importance which the Government of Honduras attaches to any assistance extended by your Government, through statements at the highest level, for the purpose of adding impetus within the Central American region to the negotiations in progress, with a view to reaching as soon as possible a general peace agreement which takes into account the interests of all the parties and which, above all, provides the basis for a climate of lasting harmony and security in Central America, in order to promote political, economic and social democracy as a foundation for the concord of the peoples of our tormented region."

Outlining similar thoughts and advocating similar actions to secure peace, at the aforementioned Fourth Joint Meeting the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras, Mr. Edgardo Paz Barnica, made a new proposal aimed at expediting the consideration of items on the agenda adopted last May and the approval of any possible monitoring and international surveillance mechanisms that might be necessary. Specifically, he suggested the setting up of working groups to deal with three areas: politics, security and economic and social affairs. Those working groups, according to the Honduran proposal, were to complete their tasks simultaneously and as soon as possible.

Lastly, I would inform you that my Government reaffirms its belief that the Latin American forum constituted by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Contadora Group and five Central American countries is an appropriate one to secure the maintenance of peace and security in the region. In any event, it considers that this matter should be dealt with in the framework of the regional action of the American continent, as provided for in the United Nations Charter and the Charter of the Organization of American States. Similarly, the Government of Honduras expresses its confidence that the Security Council will continue to promote the peaceful settlement of Central American disputes in the aforementioned regional forums.

I request you to arrange for this letter to be circulated as a document of the the Security Council.

(Signed) H. Roberto HERRERA CACERES  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

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