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THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA:
THREATS TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE
AND SECURITY AND PEACE INITIATIVES

Letter dated 15 November 1984 from the Permanent Representative
of Nicaragua to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

On 7 September 1984, during the Seventh Joint Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Contadora Group and of the Central American Countries, held in Panama City, the Contadora Group delivered to the Central American countries the "Contadora Act on Peace and Co-operation in Central America" of 7 September 1984.

On that occasion the Ministers said that, in their opinion and faced with the persistent threat of a breach of the peace, it was "necessary for the Governments of the region to expedite adoption of the commitments assumed in the Contadora Act" and that it was "imperative that other Governments with interests in and links with the area should respect the self-determination of the Central American peoples and declare themselves unequivocally in favour of replacing force with political negotiation". They also expressed their intention of reporting to the international organizations "on the progress made at the important stage culminating with the delivery of the revised version of the Act".

Desiring to contribute so far as possible towards finding peaceful solutions to the serious situation and taking into account the fact that, as stated by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Contadora Group in their letter of 7 September to the Heads of State of Central America, the Act of the same date "reflects the observations and views which the five Central American Governments have put forward concerning the draft Act" and that "this latest version is the result of an intense process of consultation and of a broad exchange of views with all the Central American Governments", the Government of Nicaragua duly announced (see S/16756, annex) its decision to "accept in its entirety and to sign immediately, without any modification, the Revised Act of 7 September submitted by the Contadora Group for the sake of the peace and security of all the Central American peoples".

On 25 September 1984, the Ministers of the Contadora Group met in New York in order to deliver to you this highly important document, together with the request that it should be published as an annex to the report on the situation in Central America which you were going to present both to the General Assembly and to the Security Council. The "Contadora Act on Peace and Co-operation in Central America" of 7 September indeed appears as an annex to document A/39/562-S/16775 of 9 October 1984.

We were perplexed and surprised to see, issued as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 25, document A/39/630 to which is annexed a so-called "Contadora Act on peace and co-operation in Central America - as revised at the meeting of Central American Ministers for Foreign Affairs".

In view of this fact, my Government considers it extremely important to clarify the matter to the international community as follows:

1. The document annexed to the letter dated 30 October from the representatives of Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras to the United Nations (A/39/630) is not an Act of the Contadora Group, because only one Contadora Act exists, namely that dated 7 September 1984, on which our Government has already commented. Neither does the said document represent revisions made at any meeting of the Central American Ministers for Foreign Affairs. If the representatives of Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras are referring to the meeting which took place between their Ministers for Foreign Affairs on 20 October 1984 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, it must be made clear that that meeting could in no way be called a meeting of Central American Ministers for Foreign Affairs as the Foreign Ministers of Guatemala and Nicaragua did not participate in it and, at the same time, the final document was not signed by Guatemala. Nicaragua considers it unacceptable that meetings should be held outside the Contadora framework and independently of or contrary to the process undertaken by that group of countries.

2. If the intention of the representatives of Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras was to make known the views of their respective Governments on the Contadora Act on Peace and Co-operation in Central America of 7 September 1984, that intention accords ill with the procedure used, whereby those countries arrogate to themselves functions which belong only to the Contadora countries and to representations which only the five Central American countries, as a group, can authorize.

3. Concerning the substance of the amendments submitted by the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras, my Government recently set out its position clearly in the declaration which was issued as an official document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council (see A/39/629-S/16815, annex). In that connection, we wish to reiterate that such amendments "constitute in fact a rejection of the Contadora proposal and a complete denial of agreements previously reached by consensus" and also that "they reflect the observations made by the Government of the United States and that they form part of the United States policy of changing the nature of the Contadora Act of 7 September 1984 and of preventing its signature". The accuracy of the latter opinion has been confirmed by the

existence of a document of the United States National Security Council classified "secret/sensitive", which was published in The Washington Post on 6 November; a copy of the article is attached as an annex to this letter.

4. At such a critical juncture for peace in the Central American region we consider it important to reiterate our full support for the efforts of the Contadora countries and, at the same time, we appeal to the Government of the United States to desist from its manoeuvres aimed at frustrating the achievement of a peaceful and negotiated settlement of Central American problems and, consistent with its oral statements, to support the early signature and ratification of the Act of 7 September 1984.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this letter and its annex to be distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 25, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Javier CHAMORRO MORA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Nicaragua to the United Nations

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ANNEX

Excerpt from the Washington Post of Tuesday, 6 November 1984

Document Describes How U.S. 'Blocked' A Contadora Treaty

By Alma Guillermoprieto
and David Hoffman
Washington Post Staff Writers

The Reagan administration believes it has "effectively blocked" what it views as an "unsatisfactory" regional peace settlement in Central America, according to a secret background paper prepared for a National Security Council meeting last Tuesday that the president attended.

The paper also outlines a wide-ranging plan to convince Americans and the rest of the world that Sunday's Nicaraguan elections were a "sham," promoting this view through U.S. embassies, politicians, labor organizations, non-government experts, and public reports.

The briefing paper, marked "secret/sensitive," was obtained by The Washington Post from governmental sources. It provides a detailed look at the administration's approach to the Sandinista government just days before elections in Nicaragua and the United States.

It is not known whether all the items in the briefing paper were discussed. Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Assistant Secretary for Inter-America Affairs Langhorne A. Motley also attended what was described by officials yesterday as a "briefing."

The paper discussed the administration's approach to the draft version of the Contadora peace treaty that was completed Sept. 7. It was negotiated by the foreign ministers of Mexico, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela, who first met for the purpose in 1982 on the small Panamanian island of Contadora.

The treaty's principal thrust is to reduce foreign military influence, establish mechanisms for arms control, and prevent the Central American countries from making or sponsoring war on each other.

On Sept. 21, Nicaragua unexpectedly announced it would sign the 55-page draft treaty. The Rea-

Paper Details Anti-Managua Effort

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gan administration had not publicly criticized it up to that point.

Since the Sandinistas announced their willingness to sign it, three countries—Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica—reversed their previous position of support for the treaty and, along with the United States, sought extensive modifications in the draft to improve verification and execution mechanisms.

The paper declares: "We have effectively blocked Contadora Group efforts to impose a second

draft of a revised Contadora Act. Following intensive U.S. consultations with El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica, the Central American [sic] submitted a counterdraft to the Contadora states on Oct. 30, 1984 . . . [that] shifts concern with Contadora to a document broadly consistent with U.S. interests."

The United States repeatedly has portrayed the decision by Central American countries not to approve the initial draft treaty as one made independently by those countries, despite consultations.

The briefing paper expresses concern that a fourth Central American country, Guatemala, has been reluctant to back its three neighbors in seeking changes in the treaty. "We will continue to exert strong pressure on Guatemala to support the basic Core Four position," the paper says. The "uncertain support" of Guatemala is "a continuing problem," it adds. "Core Four" refers to Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica.

Mexico has been the most insistent promoter of signing the Sept. 7 version of the Contadora treaty. The briefing paper notes that Gua-

temala, because of its problems with guerrilla insurgency along the Mexican border, is seeking closer ties to Mexico, providing a "strong incentive" for Guatemala to lean toward the Mexican view.

But the paper concludes in a summary: "We have trumped the latest Nicaraguan/Mexican efforts to rush signature of an unsatisfactory Contadora agreement, and the initiative is now with the Core Four, although the situation remains fluid and requires careful management."

The paper notes that the administration recently has had "mixed" success in dealing with Nicaragua. "Congressional failure to fund the armed opposition is a serious loss, but our handling of the Nicaraguan

election issue and Sandinista mistakes have shifted opinion against the sham elections," it says.

This was the administration line before and after the election. But the paper outlines ways in which this view should be promoted throughout the world.

It calls for encouraging "sympathetic American intellectuals and academics," "U.S. labor" and "selected U.S. political figures" to lobby their counterparts in Europe and Latin America, seeking critical statements about the election.

Another proposal was for the United States to use "selected embassies" in Europe and the Western Hemisphere to promote administration views.

"Embassy Bonn will approach [West German ex-chancellor] Willy Brandt to determine if he plans to make any public statements" on the election following the withdrawal of a key opposition party.

That withdrawal "has now left the Sandinistas holding a near worthless hand," the paper says.

The document also refers to the bilateral U.S.-Nicaraguan talks hosted by Mexico. At the 6th round, held in September, the U.S. side "tabled" a comprehensive statement by Nicaragua, the background paper says, adding that the Sandinistas have adopted the Sept. 7 version of the Contadora treaty as their negotiating position vis-a-vis the United States as well.