



General Assembly Security Council

Distr.  
GENERAL

A/44/704  
S/20939  
2 November 1989  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/SPANISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
Forty-fourth session  
Agenda item 34

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

SECURITY COUNCIL  
Forty-fourth year

Letter dated 2 November 1989 from the Permanent Representative of  
Nicaragua to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter from President Daniel Ortega Saavedra, published today, 2 November 1989, in The New York Times (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Alejandro SERRANO CALDERA  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Letter from the President of Nicaragua published in  
The New York Times of 2 November 1989

WHY I ENDED THE CEASE-FIRE

On February 25, 1990, Nicaragua will celebrate free, fair and democratic elections. The president, vice president and legislature elected then will take office, with full constitutional powers, on April 25, 1990.

These are my solemn pledges to the Nicaraguan people. I have also made these pledges in the multilateral agreements of the Central American presidents signed this year in Tesoro Beach and Tela.

Last month, 1.75 million Nicaraguans - more than 90 per cent of eligible voters - registered to vote in a process applauded by all international observers. I shall continue doing everything I can to insure that the current electoral process remains democratic and that, as in 1984, our elections are judged free and fair by the international observers.

Regrettably, increased military activity by the contras, aimed at subverting the electoral process, threatens my ability to protect the right of Nicaraguan citizens to campaign openly and vote for the political party of their choice.

That is why I decided reluctantly that the Government's unilateral cease-fire could not be extended.

During October, contra units newly supplied and infiltrated from Honduras closed more than 50 voter registration centers, preventing thousands of citizens from registering to vote. They targeted for assassination known Sandinista supporters - prominent community leaders, party activists and candidates for municipal offices - and slit their throats.

On October 21, the contras ambushed reservists who were on their way to register to vote, killing 19 and wounding six. Last Tuesday, they murdered four farmers at a co-operative near San Miguelito. At my invitation, observers from the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the U.S. embassy visited the scene of the attack to view the corpses and interview survivors.

Why the upswing in contra violence? The success of our electoral process has made them desperate. They fear that free elections, duly recognized by the international community, will end their flickering hopes of continuing the war.

Their only chance, as they see it, is to step up attacks on civilians, forcing the Government to impose necessary security measures. The Government's reaction is then to be presented to the world as evidence of its hostility to democratic elections.

The contras' main supporters inside Nicaragua - the National Opposition Union, which, like the contras, was manufactured, bought and paid for by the U.S. - are already accusing me of plotting to cancel the elections. In fact, this is precisely what they want me to do. They are as convinced as I am that when the elections are held - and they will be - the Nicaraguan people will give the Sandinistas a landslide victory.

My principal goal at the hemispheric summit in Costa Rica last weekend was to obtain the assistance of the assembled heads of state in ending contra violence. I wanted them to use their collective influence to secure full implementation of the Tela Accords, which call for the demobilization and disarmament of the contras by December 5. That is the most effective way to stop contra attacks on our citizens and electoral process.

It is now clear that there is little point in concentrating our peace efforts around the single issue of a cease-fire. We do not consider it an acceptable cease-fire when we cease and the contras fire. For peace to be achieved, the war itself must be stopped. There is no other way to end the war than to start immediately the demobilization of the contras.

President Bush reacted with a torrent of personal invective. He accused me of spoiling the "garden party" in Costa Rica. Well, life in my country is no "garden party". Eight years of war financed and directed by the Reagan and Bush Administrations have seen to that.

Even now, despite the universal praise our electoral process has earned, President Bush has taken steps to increase the suffering of the Nicaraguan people. Last week he renewed for another six months the economic embargo that has strangled all commerce between Nicaragua and the U.S. since May 1985.

Worse, President Bush has blocked all efforts to demobilize and disarm the contras as called for in the Tela Accords. He has kept the contras intact militarily by continuing to provide them with non-lethal assistance. Such direct U.S. aid violates the Tela Accords, which mandate that assistance may be provided only for demobilization, and only through a special commission.

President Bush may not intend to reactivate the contras militarily. Latin American leaders close to him tell me that he, too, wants to demobilize the contras, but not until after Nicaragua's elections. Allegedly, he fears that demobilizing them before the elections would expose him to charges of betrayal from right-wing elements of the Republican Party. Thus, current U.S. aid is supposedly intended to placate these extremists, not to resurrect the contras.

Nevertheless, the contras have used Mr. Bush's aid to increase combat activities and to inflict more death and destruction on our country.

All well-meaning people want two things in Nicaragua between now and February: an end to the fighting and the holding of democratic elections. In spite of everything he has done, President Bush may mean well. He can demonstrate this by supporting prompt demobilization of the contras.

This might expose him to cries of betrayal from right-wing extremists. But the alternative is to continue to condemn the Nicaraguan people to listen to the daily cries of grief from those whose loved ones are slaughtered by the U.S.-created and financed contras.

A truly "big man" would have no difficulty making the right choice.

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