

S E C R E T

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CONTADORA TALKING POINTS

Contadora--because it is a peace initiative and because it was sponsored by respected Latin American democracies--has wide acceptance, but to the Central American countries most threatened by foreign-supported subversion, the Contadora initiative has produced a peace instrument of such imbalance that it augments, not reduces the threat to them. Moreover, the current draft treaty virtually guarantees the survival of Marxist Nicaragua and, thus, the consolidation of Cuban/Soviet influence in the Isthmus. Because Contadora is a peace initiative designed to end the bloodshed in Nicaragua and El Salvador, there is a reluctance to criticize the draft treaty directly. Nonetheless, there is a wide variance between the public and private attitudes of the leaders of the Contadora countries toward the treaty and, with the exception of Mexico, these leaders believe that the treaty provisions are particularly inadequate with regard to verification. This concern persuaded the countries of Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador (Nicaragua was invited but refused to attend) to meet and discuss revisions to the treaty. The result of that meeting was to propose to replace the Additional Protocol with a Protocol of Guarantor States. The meeting also agreed to have only the four original countries (Mexico, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela) sign the Protocol. The Guarantor nations would be limited (suggestions are Brazil, Argentina, Spain and West Germany. France would be welcomed as a guarantor as well).

The following represent an update of our perceptions of the private views of leaders of the Contadora countries toward the process. It is too soon to know the reaction to the latest initiative by the countries of Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras to replace the Additional Protocol.

Mexico:

- Mexican leaders appear more willing to strengthen the verification procedures than their public statements would indicate.
- The Mexican Government is, however, anxious to have a successful conclusion to the Contadora process, even if an imbalanced treaty favorable to Nicaragua emerges. Mexico continues to play the role of a "protector" of Nicaragua.

Venezuela:

- Privately, Venezuelan Government officials express their misgivings about the Contadora process. One official believes the treaty as written would be "unverifiable" and does not provide sufficient guarantees against Soviet/Cuban/Nicaraguan penetration of the region.

Costa Rica:

- Costa Rican officials have strong concerns about the Contadora Treaty as originally revised. They believe their country will have serious problems with Nicaragua, regardless of what happens to the Sandinista regime. Through the Contadora process, Costa Rica hopes to impose an "international big brother" on the Sandinistas.

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