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Central Intelligence Agency

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Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

25 August 1987

The Central American Peace Plan--A Status Report [Redacted]

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Summary

The Central Americans have made little progress in fleshing out the specifics of the peace accord since it was signed on 7 August. The Sandinistas have proclaimed their willingness to comply with the agreement but appear intent on keeping a tight lid on opposition political activity. The Nicaraguan rebels, despite their suspicion of the plan, have announced their support for it and are challenging the regime to hold direct cease-fire negotiations. The Central American democracies say they will press Managua to implement the democratization measures, but only El Salvador has developed a strategy to put the Sandinistas on the defensive. [Redacted]

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Off to a Slow Start

Although the Central American Presidents have complied thus far with the timetable specified in the Guatemala peace accord, little progress has been made to clarify procedures for implementation. All five Foreign Ministers met in San Salvador last week, for example, to install themselves as an Executive Committee to implement the accord, but they failed to achieve the main goal of setting up working committees. Similarly, the brief meeting of the Central American and Contadora Foreign Ministers in Caracas last weekend was limited to establishing the International Verification Commission--in which they all take part--with no effort to discuss its work or to set an agenda for talks on arms control. [Redacted]

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This memorandum was requested by the staff of the NSC. It was prepared by [Redacted] Office of African and Latin American Analysis. Questions and comments are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Middle American-Caribbean Division, ALA, [Redacted]

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Nicaraguan Reactions

Managua says it will comply with the peace accord but appears to be preparing ways to substitute cosmetic reforms for the sweeping political freedoms required by the plan. Regime leaders claim full political rights are guaranteed by the constitution promulgated last January, and they cite an amnesty program begun in January 1985--which they say thousands of rebels and collaborators have already embraced--as proof of their willingness to allow the insurgents back into civilian life. In addition, President Ortega recently went to Havana to enlist Cuban support for the plan. Managua also has given prominent media attention to its initial steps toward implementation, such as inviting the Catholic Church and opposition parties to prepare slates of nominees for the National Reconciliation Commission. Even so, the government has not responded to a request from the newspaper La Prensa for permission to resume publishing. Moreover, Embassy reporting suggests the regime is manipulating opposition efforts to select nominees to the Reconciliation Commission. [REDACTED]

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The government also has kept a tight lid on activities by the internal opposition. Sandinista police used dogs, cattle prods, and proregime crowds to stop two opposition marches on 15 August; four demonstrators, including the director of the independent human rights office, were arrested and are still in prison. Although opposition leaders initially were eager to push for increased political freedoms during the 90-day period before implementation of the plan, their efforts have been set back by the Sandinista crackdown and internal squabbling. Nonetheless, the opposition sent a delegation to meet with Salvadoran President Duarte last weekend and most likely will hold small demonstrations to keep the regime on the defensive.

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For their part, the Nicaraguan rebels, although initially disheartened by the plan, now are trying to turn it to their advantage. At first, the six rebel Directorate members were discouraged because the plan excludes them from peace talks and calls for a cutoff of all outside aid to them. Last week, however, the insurgents announced their support for the plan during a widely publicized official visit to El Salvador to meet with Duarte and challenged the Sandinistas to demonstrate their good will by holding direct cease-fire negotiations. Directorate member Robelo said that he wants the insurgents to begin political activities in Managua soon.

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Attitudes of the Democracies

The leaders of the four democracies generally are satisfied with the peace agreement, convinced it will either achieve peace or isolate Nicaragua by exposing its refusal to accept democratic reform, according to US Embassy reporting. They also are pleased that they have reduced the influence of the Contadora mediators. Costa Rican President Arias and Guatemalan President Cerezo are relishing their personal diplomatic triumphs, and Arias has won his goal of inducing Nicaragua to withdraw its suit in the World Court. For his part,

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Duarte views the agreement as a means of isolating the Salvadoran rebels diplomatically and of putting pressure on Managua to follow his initiatives and conduct talks with the Nicaraguan rebels. [REDACTED]

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Nevertheless, the initial euphoria has faded somewhat with the realization that much work remains, according to Embassy reports. All of the democracies say they want to keep the heat on Managua, but they show no signs of developing a coordinated strategy. Moreover, they are reluctant to be seen as trying to isolate Nicaragua. [REDACTED]

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Only El Salvador has devised an active strategy, by promoting parallel negotiations in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Duarte has challenged the Salvadoran rebels to cease-fire negotiations far in advance of the accord's deadline of 90 days and says Managua should do the same. El Salvador also has announced its willingness to permit Nicaraguan inspections of its territory and made plans for other unilateral moves, such as requesting peacekeeping forces to patrol the Honduran border, where the Salvadoran rebels maintain strongholds. The insurgents have accepted Duarte's offer to talk but have refused his condition that they accept the peace agreement and give up the armed struggle. [REDACTED]

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In contrast to El Salvador, Guatemala has undertaken no initiatives, insisting that its rebels abandon the fight before talks begin. The Guatemalan guerrillas have rejected the plan and are showing no signs that they are sophisticated enough to exploit it for political advantage. In our judgment, Cerezo's main preoccupation will continue to be the Central American Parliament--a pet project that was incorporated into the peace accord--and he is unlikely to devote much effort to pressing Managua to liberalize its policies before 7 November. [REDACTED]

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The accord imposes few immediate burdens on Honduras and Costa Rica, which have no insurgencies and will not form National Reconciliation Committees. The Hondurans appear the most dissatisfied with the accord, and [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] many military officers and some civilian officials are upset with the Foreign Ministry for not securing a stronger agreement. The delayed arrival of the Honduran Foreign Minister at the Central American Foreign Ministers' meeting last week and some public criticisms of the peace plan have fed press reports that Tegucigalpa is footdragging. Azcona is the only leader to have publicly called for contingency funds for the Nicaraguan insurgents [REDACTED]

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Costa Rica's Arias reportedly doubts that the Sandinistas will accept democratization, and his government may seek ways to monitor Nicaraguan compliance. Foreign Minister Madrigal, for example, argued at the Caracas meeting of Foreign Ministers for a specific calendar to measure Nicaraguan implementation. [REDACTED]

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Next Steps

The Central Americans apparently do not intend to pick up the pace of their consultations in the near future. Working-level officials of the International Verification Commission will meet in Managua on 17 and 18 September to discuss verification issues and presumably to begin talks on arms control. The Central American Foreign Ministers also will meet in Managua at about that time, and we expect both sessions will give more detailed attention to the differing interpretations of the cease-fire provisions of the peace agreement. The democracies are likely to devote more attention to Nicaraguan implementation of the commitment to democracy as time goes on, but Managua probably will attempt to deflect their efforts by saying it is unable to adopt domestic reforms until the fighting ceases.

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## **Schedule for the Central American Peace Agreement \***

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### **Signature (7 August 1987)**

- Governments appeal to regional states with insurgencies to reach agreement ending hostilities.

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### **15 Days (22 August 1987)**

- Central American Foreign Ministers met in San Salvador as Executive Committee to regulate compliance and organize working committees.

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### **20 Days (27 August 1987)**

- National Reconciliation Committees to be formed.

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### **90 Days (7 November 1987)**

- Cease-fires take place.
- Governments prevent use of their territories by insurgents and request cutoff of external aid to rebels.
- Governments grant amnesty; rebels release prisoners.
- Democratization provisions take effect, including political freedoms, press freedom, and ending of state-of-siege restrictions.

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### **120 Days (7 December 1987)**

- International Verification and Follow-up Commission analyzes progress made in fulfillment of agreement.

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### **150 Days (7 January 1988)**

- Central American Presidents meet to discuss the report of the Verification Commission.

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### **By First Semester 1988 (30 June 1988)**

- Simultaneous elections for the Central American parliament, with international observation.

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### **No Time Periods Given**

- Arms control talks begin with Contadora mediation.
- Time frame for duration of the agreement.

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\* Approximate dates.

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SUBJECT: CENTRAL AMERICA PEACE PLAN--A STATUS REPORT  
25 August 1987

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