
Defense Report

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The Calm In Nicaragua — Is it Peace or Just an Illusion?

To judge by the outpourings from recent editorials, the Sandinista's who control Nicaragua are hell-bent for democracy. Since the signing of a Central America peace accord, the leaders of Managua's Marxist dictatorship have made a number of symbolic gestures aimed more toward scuttling U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan resistance than they are to the restoration of liberty to the oppressed people of Nicaragua.

A Central America peace plan, signed in August, calls for cease-fires in the several guerrilla wars in the region, removal of rebel military bases in neighboring countries, amnesties, democratic reforms and guarantees of full political freedom in the signatory countries.

In effect, the plan restricts all U.S. military aid to the contras, while permitting the Soviets to continue to support the Sandinista military buildup over and above the \$2 billion they have already poured into Nicaragua.

Before the ink could dry on this agreement, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega rushed to Havana to get advice from his communist mentor Fidel Castro. Upon his return, Ortega announced that he would be in Moscow on November 7, the day the peace plan is to take effect. Within a week of his pledge of pluralism and democracy for Nicaragua, Ortega's police broke up a human rights demonstration, held to test that pledge, and promptly jailed the leader of Nicaragua's Human Rights Commission and the head of the Nicaraguan Bar Association.

To placate anti-contra Congressmen in Washington, and thus block any further assistance to the freedom fighters, Ortega has attempted to create the illusion of freedom by revoking a law that was used to confiscate the property of Nicaraguans living abroad and he pardoned 16 citizens of other Central American countries who are imprisoned for rebel activity. He says he may permit the opposition newspaper La Presna to reopen and he may allow a Catholic radio station to return to the air.

Oretega makes much of the promise he signed in Guatemala to democratize Nicaragua, but the Sandinistas also guaranteed in writing to the Organization of American States that they would implement genuine democracy in Nicaragua. That was eight years ago and that promise too, remains unfulfilled.