

# DAILY NEWS

5/21/86

## Room for Contadora?

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I believe that some balance is in order for the editorial "Dead end in Nicaragua" (Daily News, May 13), which takes Nicaragua to task for refusing to support the latest Contadora peace plan. The editorial also overrates Philip Habib's ability as a peace-maker in Central America.

In 1984 another Contadora peace plan was on the verge of being signed by the five Central American governments. In agreeing to sign, Nicaragua had dropped its earlier sine qua non that President Reagan stop supporting the Contras. A surprised administration then realized that it could not blame Nicaragua for the failure of the Contadora plan. Contra hosts Costa Ri-

ca and Honduras would be required to disallow Contra attacks on Nicaragua from their territory. Accordingly, the administration pressured them to make objections to the plan, and the peace effort failed. The Nicaraguans were then accused of agreeing to the proposal only for propaganda purposes.

In the current round, Habib's letter to Rep. Jim Slattery, promising to "end aid to the Contras" if Nicaragua signs the accord, comes straight out of left field and should be viewed with extreme skepticism.

The administration is even now planning a more efficient two-front war against Nicaragua, made possible by the recent (and long sought) agreement by the Costa Rican-based Contras to cooperate with their Honduran counterparts. This is in cynical disregard for Costa Rican President Oscar Arias' recent attempts to normalize relations with Nicaragua.

The evidence is that the administration disdains the Contadora peace process, and in so doing risks inciting a catastrophic regional war. This is a much greater threat to our national security than Nicaragua will ever be.

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