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PUBLIC FORUM

Should our reply to Ortega be more arms for Contras?

For today's Public Forum, readers were asked to comment on how the U.S. should respond to Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's decision to end the cease-fire between his forces and the Contra rebels.

Americas Watch reports that "since their attacks began in late 1981, the Contras have engaged in a consistent pattern of violations of the laws of war." Since March 1988, when the Sandinistas unilaterally ceased their operations against them, the Contras have continued their violations, killing more than 700 people, wounding 1,200 and kidnapping almost 1,500. "The (Contras act) in reckless disregard of civilian life or with deliberate intent to kill civilians . . ." continues AW.

In early August, the five Central American presidents, including Contra host Jose Azcona of Honduras, agreed that they should be demobilized and relocated by December 7. The agreement provides for a joint commission of the Organization of American States and the United Nations to oversee the relocation plan.

The Sandinistas have every right to resume Nicaragua's defense, and President Bush has only one honorable response open to him: respect and assist the Central American presidents' decision. Contras who have chosen to repatriate have been able to resume life in Nicaragua with remarkable acceptance by their former victims. To foster yet more killing through the resumption of military aid to the Contras would be beyond all reason.

— **Bill Becker**
Woodland Hills

