

resolved through negotiated strength levels arrived at prior to the mission's arrival. A United States acceptance of a peace agreement might well hinge particularly on this aspect of the accord and, given the importance of Washington's acquiescence, verification here would have to allow for matters of concern to be pursued to a conclusion with the full co-operation of the parties involved.

An agreement would also probably include stipulations regarding acceptable levels of certain types of sophisticated weaponry, their control and, perhaps, their disposal. Dealing with such weapons can be easy or difficult, depending on their characteristics. The United States, Honduras and El Salvador have expressed concern over Nicaraguan armoured forces, especially tanks, for example. These, however, should be relatively simple to count and, if they are to be reduced in numbers, their size and distinctive features assist in such a process. High-performance aircraft and helicopters have similar features where reduction verification is concerned. Less easy would be the checking of reductions in light but sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons such as hand-held surface-to-air missiles. Yet these weapons' efficiency and widespread use in the current Central American conflicts ensure the interest of several of the parties in their control. Again, the dispersal and numbers of weapons involved, especially among insurrectional groups, will complicate the verification of these measures in the field.

Related to these matters is the publication and exchange of data on military forces in the Central American region. Doing so should certainly help to build confidence, if the verification of the data involved can be achieved. Secrecy in such matters is a well-established tradition in Central American armies, a practice greatly exacerbated by Nicaragua's perceived "defection" from the conservative camp and the decade of regional war experienced since the mid-to-late 1970s. While, as a result such publishing and exchange of information would be particularly useful as a CBM, it would equally be totally distrusted if not adequately verified. The staff and field arrangements of the observer force would therefore have to be geared to this role.

Easier to verify should be the accuracy of notification of manoeuvres, and the process of inviting observers to such exercises. A mission presence with national defence headquarters in the various republics should be able to ensure relatively simply these provisions. Even now Central American armies must mobilize tremendous resources to undertake the level of manoeuvres mentioned, for example, in the Contadora Act draft. They take time to organize and involve staffing activities of considerable dimensions. Related provisions of a Central American peace accord should not pose excessive hardships on the mission tasked with verifying them.

Verifying the location, type and size of such agreed manoeuvres could prove, however, somewhat more difficult, or at least more time-consuming. It would be one thing for a Central American republic to state its intention to have a particular exercise in a particular place, and with a purpose and size of a given nature. To verify that such exercises were indeed of the proportions, in the area, and for the purpose, stated by the government in question, is of course another