

Secretary of State Shultz most recently in Washington on April 1 and 2. I understand USA security concerns in the region, but have made very clear our concern about the escalation of USA-supported military attacks on Nicaragua. The Government is also concerned, however, about the military support being given by, for example, Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Soviet Union in the Central America conflict.

The mining of harbours in Nicaragua was extensively discussed. I made it very clear that Canada regards the mining as a dangerous escalation of tension and a serious violation of international law. I also referred to the responsibility of the United States for this activity. However, the mining must be viewed within the overall context of events in Central America. This was the perspective taken by the Contadora Group following the meeting of their foreign ministers in Panama, April 8. They analysed the security situation in the area and included mining as one of the serious destabilizing elements that has occurred recently. I entirely support the position adopted by the Contadora Ministers on this matter. I should also point out that the Canadian government first expressed its concern on the mining to the United States on March 26, six days after a Soviet freighter struck a mine when entering a Nicaraguan port.

As so much attention in Canada has centered on Nicaragua, I had a particularly wide-ranging programme in that country. In addition to speaking to Coordinator of the Junta, Daniel Ortega, and Sergio Ramirez, member of the Junta, Ministers and three members of the government directorate, my delegation and I spoke with the Archbishop of Managua, the editor of La Prensa, the leading opposition newspaper, representatives of Canadian non-governmental organizations, trade union and opposition leaders, representatives of the private sector, and the Human Rights Commission. From these discussions, I was able to see that the perceptions both of those in Canada who strongly endorse, and those who just as vigorously oppose the Sandinistas, do not reflect the much more shaded and complex reality.

Elections, of course, are a key issue. I was interested in the detailed explanation of the arrangements for the forthcoming Nicaraguan elections provided by Comandante Carlos Nunez, as free elections will fulfil one of the objectives of the revolution. Because of the intense military and economic pressures of the Contras, it may not be possible to lift for all areas of the country the emergency law which limits freedom of the press and assembly, but I pointed out that an election without genuine and vigorous opposition is a non-event and that it is equally important that governments preparing for elections be prepared to accept the possibility of losing elections. I also emphasized how important it is for the electorate to have confidence in their electoral machinery.