

Figure 1 Joe Clark Meets Oscar Arias in San José, Costa Rica



In November 1987, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs met with Costa Rican President Oscar Arias to review developments in Central America and prospects for the Central American peace process. Canada has long been supportive of the peace process in Central America and has contributed on various occasions to thinking on verification in this context.

It appears to this author that only an observer mission, or at most such a mission with some elements of a peacekeeping force, can be contemplated in Central America. There has never been any discussion of doing anything that any of the regional states did not want done and this will surely continue to be the case. An observer mission is really what is contemplated by Canada and other states interested in moving the peace process along. Nonetheless, the possible requirement for a peacekeeping force to stand between government forces and insurgents, especially in the early stages of an agreement, cannot be excluded. In this context it should be said that this sort of tasking is not appreciated greatly by peacekeeping forces who would normally be seen in a position of separating the regular armed forces of states, forces responsive to central governments party to the regulating accord and disciplined in a normal fashion. Canada, with its long peacekeeping experience, has been particularly careful on this point and with reason.