

Central American republics to reiterate his proposal. To convince them of the seriousness of his offer, Clark took with him Lieutenant-Colonels Don Ethell and Jerome Thompson, both specialists in peacekeeping operations. On the strength of their experience in various hot spots of the world, the Department of National Defence had earlier prepared a document of some twenty pages on the possible organization of a peacekeeping force. The draft was intended for consideration by the International Verification Commission, and while it raises more questions than it answers, it gives some idea of Ottawa's concerns. Among the major points made were:

The government should assess both the military and political considerations before taking a commitment to provide troops to the Commission.

From a political standpoint, Ottawa should ensure that there is a sincere desire by all parties to participate in the peace process.

The peacekeeping endeavour should be associated with an agreement for a political settlement, or at least a reasonable expectation of a negotiated settlement.

It is essential that the Commission report to an international and neutral executive authority, such as the United Nations, the Organization of American States or the Contadora Group. It should have a "clear and well-defined" mandate with adequate power to fulfil its assigned function with total freedom.

A ceasefire agreement must be reached in principle and in fact.

In light of the waverings of the five presidents and the hesitations of some governments to allow inspection of their territories, it would appear that a consensus has not yet been reached that would satisfy these conditions. The peacekeeping mission has not been clearly defined; a task which must become a priority for the governments involved. One possibility the Canadian report mentions is a monitoring and observation force, which would simply "report on violations." Another is a force given the job to "restore or to keep peace." A monitoring and obser-

vation force would restrict its activities to inspection of territories, while peace restoring and peacekeeping forces could "interpose themselves between opposing factions and even use force."

The military analysts went on to

assess the strength of the force required for such operations and the equipment necessary to guarantee the contingent's autonomy. While noting that "it is impossible at this stage to determine precise numbers without knowing the



The following is excerpted from the International Verification and Monitoring Commission report on compliance with the Central American peace plan. The Commission was composed of the foreign ministers of the Contadora and Support Group countries (Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina), United Nations and Organization of American States representatives and members from each of the five Central American countries party to the agreement.

The Commission was disbanded after presenting its report to the five Central American presidents at their summit meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica, 15 and 16 January. Responsibility for future verification and monitoring is in the hands of the five Central American foreign ministers sitting as the Executive Committee of the peace plan.

The demise of the Verification Commission has not affected Canada's position on peacekeeping. According to the Department of External Affairs, the government will examine an invitation to participate in peacekeeping when and if it receives one, and make a decision based on the merits of the case at that time.

The section of the report excerpted below deals specifically with efforts to achieve a cease-fire in areas of hostility. — The Editor

There has been no success with the appeals to irregular forces or insurgent movements in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua to agree on a cease-fire or to avail themselves of the amnesty and join the political process in their respective countries, as foreseen in the Guatemala Procedure.

In spite of the exhortation of the Central American presidents the government of the United States of America maintains its policy and practice of providing assistance, military in particular, to the irregular forces operating against the government of Nicaragua. The definitive cessation of this assistance continues to be an indispensable requirement for the success of the peace efforts and of this Procedure as a whole.

At the same time we have received the accusation of the government of El Salvador that Nicaragua secretly sends help to the irregular forces in its country and that the suspension of this aid is an indispensable prerequisite for the success of the peace efforts of the Procedure as a whole. The International Commission on Verification and Follow-up has received the denial given by the government of Nicaragua in relation to this accusation.

...the International Commission has noted accusations by certain governments of the region and the testimony of non-governmental sources about the aid to irregular forces or insurgent movements which other Central American governments are providing and the use of territory of certain states to attack others. In this sense, it has received accusations by El Salvador against Nicaragua and by Nicaragua against Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica. . . . The International Commission is still not in a position to verify what was said above because to date it has no power to set up mechanisms for on-site inspection.

actual number of military installations and sensitive areas requiring fixed teams," they put forward some suggestions. The organization chart annexed to the document envisages headquarters in the five countries, a minimum of 300 officers, eleven helicopters, 289 vehicles and an indeterminate number of transport aircraft.

In conclusion, Lieutenant-Colonel Ethell reiterates the urgent need to define clearly the mandate of the peacekeeping force, to make it accountable to a neutral organization and to make provision for independent financing.

THERE IS STILL A LOT TO BE accomplished if the various parties to the peace plan are to fulfil their engagements. Honduras, for example, has taken no action so far to expel the Contra mercenaries from its territories and cut their lines of supply. El Salvador has actually established a National Reconciliation Commission, but with no participation from the insurgents. The government seems to have abandoned any inclination to negotiate with them. Meanwhile, the death squads continue their sinister work with impunity.

The government of Guatemala has only met once with the guerrilla forces to demand, purely and simply, their surrender. Meanwhile, political assassinations attributed to the army continue to decimate the opposition. Nicaragua has complied with most of the conditions of the Arias Plan, but has not yet sent back its Cuban or Soviet military advisors, arguing that action must first be taken by Honduras.

Some military observers believe that it would be unthinkable to establish a peacekeeping force or an observer mission until there is a complete halt in the fighting that is tearing the region apart. In view of the behaviour of the various opposing groups, this seems a sensible conclusion. Intervention by peacekeepers of any kind, at this point, would be pure folly.

If Canada were to risk such a venture at a later time, it would be important for Canadians to know whether this "temporary" operation would last as long as the one in Cyprus. □

Blair Clark