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UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER GROUP IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Report of the Secretary-GeneralIntroduction

1. On 7 November 1989 the Security Council adopted resolution 644 (1989), the operative paragraphs of which read as follows:

"1. Approves the report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/20895;

"2. Decides to set up immediately, under its authority, a United Nations Observer Group in Central America and requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to this effect in accordance with his above-mentioned report, bearing in mind the need to continue to monitor expenditures carefully during this period of increasing demands on peace-keeping resources;

"3. Further decides that the United Nations Observer Group in Central America shall be established for a period of six months, unless the Security Council decides otherwise)

"4. Requests the Secretary-General to keep the Security Council fully informed of further developments."

2. The original mandate of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA), which was based on a series of requests by the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, was to conduct on-site verification of the undertakings in respect of security contained in the Esquipulas II Agreement (5119085, annex), namely (a) the cessation of aid to irregular forces and insurrectionist movements and (b) the non-use of the territory of one State for attacks on other States. As indicated in paragraph 1 above, that mandate, which was described in detail in my report to the Security Council of 11 October 1989 (5120895, paras. 5 and 8), was approved by the Council in resolution 644 (1989).

3. On 27 March 1990, the Security Council, by adopting resolution 650 (1990), decided to authorize, on a contingency basis in accordance with proposals contained in a report which I had submitted to the Council on 15 March 1990 (S/21194), an enlargement of the mandate of ONUCA and the addition of armed personnel to its strength in order to enable it to play a part in the voluntary demobilization of the members of the Nicaraguan resistance.

4. Subsequently, following the signature in Managua on 18 April 1990 of a series of agreements setting out modalities for the voluntary demobilization of the Nicaraguan resistance, the Security Council, by adopting resolution 653 (1990) of 20 April 1990, approved my proposals (S/21257 and S/21259) concerning the addition of new tasks to ONUCA's mandate, as requested by the Nicaraguan parties. These additional functions related to the monitoring of the cease-fire that had come into effect in Nicaragua on 19 April 1990 and the separation of forces expected to result from the withdrawal of Nicaraguan government forces from certain "security zones" that had been established in that country to facilitate the demobilization. In the same resolution the Security Council requested me to report to the Council on all aspects of ONUCA's operations before the expiry of the current mandate period on 7 May 1990.

5. The present report contains an account of ONUCA's operations and related developments since the arrival of the advance party in Honduras on 2 December 1989 and the establishment of a temporary headquarters at Tegucigalpa. An addendum covering the latest developments will be submitted to the Council in time for its consideration of the recommendation contained in the present report.

Command, composition and deployment

6. ONUCA is under the command of the Chief Military Observer, Major-General Agustin Quesada Gomez (Spain) (see S/20981 and S/20982).

7. As of 27 April 1990, the military strength of ONUCA was 995, made up as follows:

United Nations military observers

Canada	34
Colombia	12
Ecuador	21
Ireland	31
Spain	49
Venezuela	<u>22</u>
Total	169

Other military personnel

Venezuela	702
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Air unit

Canada	<u>124</u>
Total	<u>995</u>

In addition to the above, **six** civilian medical officers, seven medical assistants and **three** pilot⁸ provided by the Federal Republic of Germany have assisted ONUCA from **the beginning of its mission.**

8. A total of 64 military **observers** from Brazil, India and Sweden are expected to arrive in **the mission area** in the coming day⁸ and there will be further additions to **ONUCA's** military strength **when** the crew⁸ of the four patrol boats provided by Argentina (**see** S/21232 and **S/21233**) arrive in a few **weeks'** time.

9. **One** hundred and seventy-four **staff members** - 85 of whom are international **staff** and 89 recruited locally - are in the mission area at present. In addition, there are 10 civilian **aircrew** and maintenance personnel for 4 medium helicopters chartered from a commercial firm. The Secretariat has proceeded prudently in filling the international posts authorised for **ONUCA** to meet operational needs as **these have arisen.** Although the number of locally recruited staff has now reached **the maximum authorized,** there **is** a need for additional local posts in many areas,

10. As indicated in paragraph 5 above, ONUCA began its activities in the region on 2 December 1989 with the arrival of an advance party in Honduras. As anticipated in the original concept of operations, General Quesada has since established **ONUCA's** headquarter⁸ in the Honduran capital and five liaison offices, headed by **officers** in the rank of colonel, have been established in the capitals of the five **countries concerned.** The Tegucigalpa liaison office is temporarily co-located with **the Group's headquarters.** In addition, verification centres, each with a strength of up to 10 **observers,** have **been set up** in 13 localities, including the **5 capitals.** Two operational posts have also been established in Honduras and one in Nicaragua.

11. The **table below** shows the deployment of ONUCA as at 27 April 1990.

	<u>Liaison offices</u>	<u>Verification centres</u>	<u>Operational posts</u>
Costa Rica	San José	San José El Platanar	
El Salvador	San Salvador	San Salvador	
Guatemala	Guatemala City	Guatemala City Esquipulas	
Honduras	Tegucigalpa	Tegucigalpa Choluteca Danli Santa Rosa	Las Trojes Mocoron
Nicaragua	Managua	Managua Esteli Ocotal Chinandega	El Tanque

The deployment of ONUCA as of April 1990 is shown in the annexed map.

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Operations

12. ONUCA's original mandate, as approved by the Security Council in resolution 644 (1989) of 7 November 1989, was to verify compliance by the five Central American Governments with the undertakings in respect of security contained in the Esquipulas II Agreement, namely cessation of aid to irregular forces and insurrectionist movements operating in the region and the non-use of the territory of one State for attacks on others (see para. 2 above). In order to carry out that mandate, I recommended that ONUCA should be deployed in phases, as stated in paragraph 23 of my report of 11 October 1989 to the Security Council (S/20895).

13. The timetable for deployment of the first three phases was in general adhered to, with the advance party arriving in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, on 2 December 1989 (D-5), phase II being completed by 18 January 1990 (D+42) and phase III by 4 March 1990 (D+89). It did not however prove possible to deploy the full complement of personnel and equipment envisaged for phases II and III. There were two main reasons for this. First, some of the troop-contributing Governments found themselves unable to provide all the military observers requested of them; this problem is now on the way to being solved (see para. 14 below). Secondly, it proved unexpectedly difficult to find a Member State able to supply the four fast patrol boats, together with their crews, required for patrolling the Gulf of Fonseca; this problem has now been solved with the assistance of Argentina, as reported in my letter of 29 March 1990 to the President of the Security Council (S/21232). It has been decided that the patrol boats will be based at San Lorenzo, Honduras.

14. In my report of 11 October 1989 (S/20895, pars. 23 (d)), I recommended that the timing of phase IV of ONUCA's deployment should be determined in the light of the progress and results achieved during the first three phases and other relevant factors. On 15 March 1990 I reported to the Security Council (S/21194, para. 9) that I believed that the implementation of phase IV should begin as soon as possible. The Security Council approved that report in its resolution 650 (1990) of 27 March 1990. Four additional Member States (Brazil, Ecuador, India and Sweden) agreed to contribute military observers and a reply is awaited from a fifth (S/21261). With these additional contributions it will be possible during the coming days to raise ONUCA's strength of military observers to the 260 originally mandated by resolution 644 (1989).

15. Liaison offices and verification centres were established in the capitals of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua during phase I, as planned. In El Salvador, however, it was necessary, for security reasons, to delay ONUCA's deployment in San Salvador until 17 January 1990.

16. Under the concept of operations described in my report of 11 October 1989 (S/20895, para. 12), ONUCA was to verify the five Governments' compliance with the security undertakings in the Esquipulas II Agreement by means of mobile teams of military observers working from verification centres "located as close as possible to sensitive areas where violations of the undertakings ... might be most likely to occur but taking into account the situation on the ground, the security of the military observers and their need for tolerable living conditions". Possible

location⁸ for **such** verification centres in each of the five countries had been identified by the reconnaissance mission that was dispatched to the area in September 1989.

17. In further reconnaissance after ONUCA's deployment, the Chief Military Observer decided that some of those locations should be revised, given the nature of the terrain and the existing road networks, most of which run in a north-south direction and do **not** therefore facilitate lateral movement along the borders, General Quesada concluded that better results would be achieved by establishing fewer and larger verification centres at a greater distance from the sensitive areas, with smaller operational posts, manned on a rotational basis, being established in forward areas where living conditions are difficult. This revised concept has produced satisfactory results and will be further developed following the deployment of phase IV. It explains why the number of verification centres so far established by ONUCA is fewer than envisaged **in** my report of 11 October 1989.

18. In other respects, the verification centres have operated in the manner foreseen in that report, with those in the capitals providing a reserve of mobile teams when short-notice verification is required. **Patrolling has been carried out daily by land and air and occasionally by river.** It has been concentrated in those areas where activities that may be contrary to the security undertakings in the Esquipulas II Agreement are most frequently alleged to occur. **These are the areas adjacent to the borders between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, between Honduras and Nicaragua, between Honduras and El Salvador and between Guatemala and El Salvador, together with the north-eastern part of Nicaragua and the south-western part of Honduras.** ONUCA's patrols have confirmed that in many of these areas the nature of the terrain is such that it is very difficult for the local authorities to prevent, and for international observers to detect, clandestine movement of armed personnel and military supplies across the borders. Vegetation is dense, metalled roads are few and far between, earth roads become impassable during the rainy season and many of the border areas are believed to be mined. **While specific breaches of the security undertakings in the Esquipulas II Agreement have not been directly observed by ONUCA patrols,** cross-border movements have undoubtedly taken place during the period under review, especially a major movement of members of the Nicaraguan resistance from Honduras into Nicaragua during March and early April.

19. Subject to the Security Council's renewal of its mandate, **ONUCA will maintain and enlarge its patrolling programme** during the coming months. This will be facilitated by the additional military observers who will become available under phase IV, as soon as the officers concerned can be released from the temporary duties to which they will be initially assigned (see para. 26 below).

20. As foreseen in my report of 11 October 1989 (S/20895, para. 19), **ONUCA has maintained informal contacts with the principal irregular forces and insurrectionist movements in the region, namely the Nicaraguan resistance and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) of El Salvador.** The purpose of these contacts has been to **seek the two groups' co-operation in facilitating the implementation of ONUCA's mandate** and to ensure that no threat is presented by either of them to the security of ONUCA personnel. Both groups have expressed reservations about ONUCA's original mandate, which they see as being

~~directed~~ against their interests. In the case of the Nicaraguan resistance it was only in early March that ONUCA began to obtain access to their camps in Honduras. This problem was, however, resolved after agreement was reached on the voluntary **demobilization** of the members of the Nicaraguan resistance. For its part, FMLN has assured the Chief Military Observer that all its personnel have **received** orders not to undertake any hostile action against ONUCA verification centres or patrols and has suggested certain steps which ONUCA can take (and has taken) to **reduce** the risk of accidental confrontations. The hostilities in El Salvador have, nevertheless, limited **ONUCA's** ability to patrol in that country and no verification **centre** has so far been set up outside the capital.

21. As envisaged in paragraph 11 (c) of my report of 11 October 1989 (S/20895), ONUCA has received and investigated complaints from two of the five Governments about alleged violations of the security undertakings in the Esquipulas II Agreement. In each case the complaint was communicated to the Government complained against, which was asked to extend to ONUCA the co-operation needed to enable it to investigate the complaint. The details are as follows:

(a) On 18 January 1990, the Chief Military Observer **received** a letter from the Nicaraguan authorities complaining about the **alleged presence of members of the Nicaraguan resistance on Costa Rican territory close to the border** between the two countries on 12 and 14 January 1990. The Nicaraguan authorities also addressed this complaint directly to the Costa Rican authorities which, having carried out their own investigation, informed ONUCA that no evidence had been found to substantiate the Nicaraguan complaint and that the Joint Border Commission set up by the two countries was continuing to function **well**;

(b) On 15 March 1990 the Chief Military Observer received a letter from the Salvadorian authorities alleging the presence on Nicaraguan territory of:

- (i) A radio transmitter used for military purposes by **FMLN**;
- (ii) **An FMLN** command post;
- (iii) A garage used for the construction of secret compartments in vehicles **for smuggling arms** into El Salvador;
- (iv) A printing press used for FMLN propaganda.

ONUCA immediately began to monitor the radio frequency complained **about**; apart from one transmission of coded material on 19 March 1990, nothing was heard. On 4 April 1990 ONUCA transmitted the Salvadorian complaint to the Nicaraguan authorities and **sought their co-operation** in obtaining access to the buildings that were the subject of the complaints referred to in subparagraphs (ii), (iii) and (iv) above. Access was obtained on 7 April. Nothing was found at any of the three sites to substantiate the Salvadorian complaint. The results of the investigation were transmitted to the two Governments concerned.

(c) On 11 April 1990, the Chief Military Observer received a letter dated 9 April 1990 from the Salvadorian authorities alleging the existence of two **FMLN**

"safe houses" in Managua, one of which was allegedly used as a command post. The complaint was transmitted to the Nicaraguan authorities on 16 April 1990 and ONUCA obtained access to the two properties three hours later. Nothing was found in either to substantiate the Salvadorian complaint. The results of the investigation were transmitted to the two Governments concerned.

22. One other incident merits mention in this context. On 10 April 1990, ONUCA learnt from the media that three days previously the Honduran authorities had intercepted, close to that country's border with El Salvador, a truck in which arms and explosives had been hidden. The Honduran authorities have been asked to ensure that in any future such incident ONUCA should be given immediate access so that it will be in a position to verify whether or not a breach has occurred of the security undertakings contained in the Esquipulas II Agreement.

23. Developments in Nicaragua, following the elections there on 25 February, have brought about two enlargements of ONUCA's mandate during recent weeks. Given the desire of all the parties concerned in Nicaragua that ONUCA should be responsible for the military aspects of implementation of the Tela Accord for the voluntary demobilization of the members of the Nicaraguan resistance, I submitted my report of 15 March 1990 (S/21194) to the Security Council. In that report I sought the Council's urgent approval, on a contingency basis, for an enlargement of ONUCA's mandate and the addition of armed personnel to its strength so that it could take part in the voluntary demobilisation of the members of the Nicaraguan resistance. The purpose of that request was to ensure that I would be in a position to deploy the required personnel and material resources to the area as soon as the necessary political conditions were fulfilled, namely an agreement by all concerned on the voluntary demobilization. In its resolution 650 (1990) of 27 March 1990 the Security Council approved that report and gave me the requested authority. The Venezuelan Government agreed to make available an infantry battalion and hold it on stand-by, pending the achievement of the necessary political agreement.

24. On 5 April 1990, I was able to report to the Security Council that agreement had been reached on the demobilisation of the two principal groups of the Nicaraguan resistance remaining in Honduras on 16 and 18 April respectively; I had accordingly requested the Government of Venezuela to make available the first company of its battalion for deployment to the region. That company arrived in Honduras on 10 April 1990. On 16 April it demobilized 260 members of the Atlantic Front (Yatama) of the Nicaraguan resistance at La Kiatara in eastern Honduras and destroyed their weapons and military equipment. At their summit at Montelimar, Nicaragua, on 3 April 1990, the five Central American Presidents had agreed to my proposal that the weapons and other equipment received from the members of the Nicaraguan resistance should be destroyed by ONUCA. On 18 April, at the main Nicaraguan resistance camp at Yamales in Honduras, large quantities of weapons, most of them obsolete and unserviceable, were handed over to ONUCA for destruction. In the event, no personnel were demobilized on this occasion as all active combatants previously located at Yamales had apparently left for Nicaragua or other destinations.

25. Meanwhile, intensive negotiations were taking place between the Nicaraguan Government, representatives of the President-elect and the leadership of the

Nicaraguan **resistance**, with the participation of the **Archbishop** of Managua, Cardinal Obando y Bravo, in order to reach agreement on modalities for the voluntary **demobilization** of the **members** of the Nicaraguan resistance **inside** Nicaragua. The Chief Military Observer of ONUCA and my Alternate Personal Representative for the Central American peace process took an active part in these negotiations. I had instructed them to **emphasize** my concern that the demobilization should be genuine, in the sense that each combatant would voluntarily hand over his or her weapon, and that there should be an agreed timetable for the completion of demobilization.

26. As reported earlier (see **para. 4** above), on the night of **18-19** April the Nicaraguan **parties**, in the presence of my representatives, signed a complex of agreements relating to the voluntary demobilization of the members of the Nicaraguan resistance during the period from 25 April to 10 June 1990. As a result they requested that ONUCA should monitor both a cease-fire that came into effect at 12 noon local time on 19 April and the separation of forces that would result from the withdrawal of the Nicaraguan Government's forces from certain "security **zones**" which were to be established in Nicaragua to facilitate the demobilisation. On this basis, I sought the Security Council's approval of a further enlargement of ONUCA's mandate to cover these functions (**S/21257** and **S/21259**). That approval was granted by resolution 653 (1990) on the following day.

27. At the time of writing, ONUCA has only just begun to monitor the cease-fire and the separation of forces inside Nicaragua. I accordingly intend to present to the Security Council, shortly before the expiry of the present mandate on 7 May 1990, an addendum to the present report containing an up-to-date account of ONUCA's performance of these functions and of the progress of demobilisation.

Relations with the parties

28. As with all peace-keeping operations, an essential condition for ONUCA's ability to fulfil its mandate is that it should receive the full co-operation of the parties, especially as regards the freedom of movement and communications and other facilities needed to carry out its duties. It will be clear from the preceding sections of the present report that the five Governments concerned have extended excellent co-operation to ONUCA, although in some cases some practical questions remain to be resolved. In this respect, it is hoped that those Governments that have not yet found it possible to do so will soon be in a position to accept the proposals that I made last November, in the form of an exchange of letters, concerning the status of ONUCA in each of the five Central American countries.

Financial aspects

29. By its resolution 44/44 of 7 December 1969, the General Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for the operation of ONUCA at a rate not to exceed \$4,524,100 gross (\$4,389,500 net) per month, with the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), for the 12-month period beginning 7 May 1990, should the Security Council decide to renew the mandate of ONUCA beyond the period of 6 months authorised under its resolution 644 (1969). If the Council decides to extend ONUCA beyond its current mandate period, the costs to the United Nations for maintaining the Group during the extension period will be within the commitment authorised by the Assembly in its resolution 44/44. As regards the costs resulting from the enlargement of the mandate of ONUCA and the addition of armed personnel to its strength, the necessary commitment authority is being sought from ACABQ.

30. As at 24 April 1990 unpaid assessed contributions to the ONUCA Special Account amounted to approximately \$2.6 million.

Observations

31. Although ONUCA was initially established with the limited mandate of verifying only one aspect of the Central American peace process, it was from the beginning my hope that it would evolve incrementally and that the very presence of a United Nations peace-keeping operation in the area would encourage the five Central American Governments to ask the Security Council to give ONUCA additional functions as the peace process developed. As the members of the Security Council are aware, this is what has happened. During the first six months of ONUCA's existence, its mandate has twice been enlarged to enable it to play a part in assisting the parties concerned to control and resolve the complex of conflicts which have plagued the region for too long. It is my earnest hope that, as foreseen in the statement issued at Geneva on 4 April 1990, I will before long approach the Council regarding the monitoring of a cessation of the armed confrontation in El Salvador.

32. It is equally, of course, my hope that ONUCA's mandate will from time to time be adjusted as tasks assigned to it evolve. For instance, the Nicaraguan parties concerned have agreed that the voluntary demobilisation of the members of the Nicaraguan resistance should be completed by 10 June 1990. This agreement, of which the Security Council took specific note in its resolution 653 (1990), clearly implies that ONUCA's tasks related to the cease-fire and demobilisation will also be completed by that date. It is therefore my intention to repatriate the Venezuelan battalion in mid-June, which will accord with the time-scale envisaged in paragraph 12 of my report of 15 March 1990 (S/21194).

33. The view has also been expressed that recent and prospective developments in Central America, notably the elections in Nicaragua, the imminent demobilisation of the members of the Nicaraguan resistance and the early start of talks under my auspices between the Government of El Salvador and FMLN, have rendered obsolete ONUCA's original mandate to verify the five Governments' compliance with their

undertakings to cease aid to irregular forces and insurrectionist movements and not to allow their territory to be used for attacks against neighbourly States. I share the hope that this task will soon become unnecessary. But I hesitate to recommend that the Council delete it from ONUCA's mandate at the present stage. I believe that the above-mentioned developments need to be followed up and consolidated and that more time is required to assess the consequences of what has happened and is happening in Central America. It would be prudent therefore to leave ONUCA's mandate and military observer strength unchanged for the time being. I am strengthened in this belief by recent consultations with the five Central American Governments, all of which have expressed the wish that on this occasion the Security Council should extend ONUCA's mandate in its present form.

34. I accordingly recommend that the Security Council extend ONUCA's mandate, as defined in resolutions 644 (1989), 650 (1990) and 653 (1990), for a further period of six months. This recommendation is made on the understanding that, in accordance with the agreements signed by the Nicaraguan parties concerned, ONUCA's tasks of monitoring the cease-fire and separation of forces in Nicaragua and demobilising members of the Nicaraguan resistance will lapse with the completion of the demobilisation process not later than 10 June 1990 and that shortly thereafter the Venezuelan battalion will be repatriated. I shall present a progress report to the Security Council at that time. I shall also, of course, inform the Council immediately if, at any other time, a change in ONUCA's mandate appears to be called for.

35. Finally, I should like to pay tribute to the Chief Military Observer of ONUCA, Major-General Agustin Quesada Comes, and to all the men and women under his command, both military and civilian, for the part that they have played in establishing ONUCA. Despite the uncertainties and shortages that accompany the start of any peace-keeping operation, they have shown great skill and determination in establishing ONUCA's operations in the five countries where it is deployed, as well as great flexibility in responding to two successive enlargements of its mandate. Their performance of their duties has reflected great credit on themselves, on their countries and on the United Nations.

