

# Shultz Plans Central America Mission

*Trip May Signal U.S. Focus on Diplomatic Rather Than Military Aid*

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Secretary of State George P. Shultz, renewing U.S. diplomatic efforts to reverse a deteriorating situation in Central America, will be in the region June 28 to July 1 to confer with leaders of the four democratic nations near Nicaragua, the State Department announced yesterday.

The announcement of the Shultz mission came as a senior State Department official virtually ruled out any new administration request for lethal aid to the Nicaraguan contras. However, the official said Shultz and the administration are exploring other ways to shore up the contras' bargaining position in preparation for possible resurrection of their collapsed peace talks with Nicaragua's leftist government.

"Obviously, we are not going to get military aid from Congress," said the official who has been deeply involved in discussions of what to do after the breakdown of the Nicaragua peace talks June 9. He said principal aims of the Shultz mission are to demonstrate U.S. concern about deepening problems in Central America and to work out ways to cooperate with the four countries Shultz will visit—El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica.

Shultz's mission, on the heels of a visit to the same countries last week by State Department counselor Max M. Kampelman, suggests that administration thinking is turning toward diplomatic efforts with widespread regional and congressional backing as the next step in Central America rather than military responses.

A new package involving an extension of humanitarian aid for the contras and renewed political backing for democratic reforms is reported to be still under consideration within the administration for possible submission to Congress, with some of-



GEORGE P. SHULTZ  
... to talk with four nations' leaders

officials predicting a decision may be made before Shultz's trip.

Shultz met yesterday morning with Kampelman, who returned to Washington Friday night from a weeklong visit to the area. Then Shultz and Assistant Secretary Elliot Abrams went to Walter Reed Army Hospital for what the State Department described as "long, productive discussions" with Salvadoran President Jose Napoleon Duarte, who underwent stomach surgery June 7 and has been diagnosed as having incurable cancer.

The Shultz mission, according to the State Department announcement, comes at a time when President Reagan is "increasingly concerned about the prospects for peace and democracy in Central America" following the breakdown of the armistice negotiations, which the administration has blamed on Nicaragua's Sandinista government. Shultz "will discuss these issues at length and reaffirm the unwavering commitment of the United States to peace, democracy and respect for human rights in the region," the announcement said.

Reagan, in his weekly radio address, called the House rejection of his contra-aid program Feb. 3 "a dangerous gamble" that has led to the impasse in the Nicaragua talks.

"The Sandinistas have proved repeatedly that they will not democratize without pressure. . . . Peace talks for them are just political theater, a way to weaken the democratic resistance while consolidating their militant communist regime," Reagan charged.

State Department sources said Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his Nicaragua peace initiative, is eager to resurrect the negotiations and made this clear in his discussions with Kampelman. "We want [the Arias plan] to work too," said a senior U.S. diplomat, indicating the tack that Shultz is likely to take.

At the same time, Arias and other Central American leaders are said to be concerned about Soviet arms shipments to Nicaragua, more energetic Nicaraguan and Cuban assistance to leftist guerrilla forces in the region and the uncertain nature of U.S. efforts now.

According to the sources, Shultz will find Honduras seriously worried about the fate of the contras, 11,000 of whom are reported to have moved back across the Honduras border, leaving about 5,000 troops inside Nicaragua.

In El Salvador, Duarte's illness is only the latest of several recent setbacks. The situation in Guatemala is also less stable than before, due to rumors that the military is plotting a coup on grounds that the civilian government is not doing enough to fight leftist guerrillas.