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Final Report

Nicaragua Civil-Military Relations

NED-AID Grant 94-53 (2490)

NED-AID Grant 95-166 (2501)

Submitted April 1997



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and
NED-AID Grant 95-166 (2501)**

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I. Summary

One of the most difficult challenges facing Nicaragua since the historic 1990 elections has been to establish legitimate and accountable civilian control of the armed forces. The Nicaraguan military has always been an intimate part of the country's political fabric. In fact, Nicaragua has never had a neutral, professional army under the oversight of an elected civilian government. The country's democratic development has long been hindered by unhealthy civil-military relations that stem from this history of politicized armies and authoritarian regimes.

The 1990 democratic transition of power from the Sandinistas to the coalition government of Violeta Chamorro gave Nicaraguan political leaders an opportunity to end their country's legacy of military involvement in the political sphere. This task, however, would be a significant challenge. The new president inherited an army that had been an intimate part of what was now the political opposition. Following the elections and intense negotiations between the new government and the Sandinistas, the army retained many of its ties to the party, including its politically-charged commander-in-chief, General Humberto Ortega, and its politically-charged name, the Sandinista Popular Army (Ejército Popular Sandinista -- EPS).

The army's continuing political ties to the Sandinistas created bitter disputes about civil-military relations and the role of the army during the first years of the Chamorro government. The president's decision to retain Ortega as head of the army ruptured the coalition government. The Defense Commission of the National Assembly did not meet for months on end. Critics of the military, including Vice President Virgilio Godoy and a new civil society movement called the Civilian Movement (Movimiento Civilista), called for the complete elimination of the army. Gen. Ortega, for his part, declared he would stay as commander-in-chief until 1997 and would not permit any tampering with the military structure.

In 1992, Nicaraguan political leaders requested the help of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) in decreasing tension and changing the country's legacy of misguided military traditions, rigid societal divisions and narrow understanding of the respective roles of military and civilian sectors in a democratic society. Referring to these requests for assistance, President Chamorro said,

I have asked the National Democratic Institute to sponsor a civic education process to achieve, on the one hand, the people's respect for the army; and, on the other hand, the army's respect for the people's decisions and their political and legal statements; and to bring the military closer to civilians in government posts or with legislative duties.²

In response, NDI began a three-year NED-funded program to help strengthen civilian oversight of the military, to promote communication between civilian and military leaders, and to train civilians in security affairs. The premise of the program was that agreement on issues

² Army Day Speech, September 3, 1993.

concerning national defense and internal security must be the result of a broad social and political consensus. Through the program, NDI also sought to help Nicaraguan political leaders overcome specific challenges to democratic civil-military relations, including:

- resolving symbolic issues, such as changing the army's politicized name and the retirement of General Humberto Ortega;
- developing comprehensive military reforms and legislation to institutionalize civilian oversight of the armed forces;
- creating the country's first civilian-led ministry of defense and training civilians to staff it;
- increasing the role of the National Assembly in defense affairs; and
- empowering local nongovernmental organizations to promote dialogue, consensus and civilian oversight of the armed forces.

When an NDI delegation first traveled to Nicaragua in December 1992, the mood was tense and debate over civil-military relations highly contentious. Since the various sectors involved in the civil-military debate would not agree to meet together, NDI held separate meetings with all parties, the government and the army. Given this environment, persuading members of the various sectors to sit at the same table -- let alone getting them to discuss civil-military relations in an open and constructive manner -- was a significant challenge.

NDI spent months building trust with key political and military actors, persuading them that it was in their self-interest to meet publicly to discuss civil-military relations and assuring them that no one would be criticized or attacked for expressing their views. NDI's efforts first bore fruit in April 1993 when the Institute managed to bring together Nicaragua's key political and military leaders to discuss openly the role of the army for the first time in history. Although the tension and conflict of the first years of the transition were echoed by participants in this and other initial NDI forums, and the consensus-building process required concessions from both the civilians and military officials involved, channels of communication did open, and the Nicaraguan political, civic and military leaders who participated in NDI's activities began to come to a new understanding of each other's respective roles and responsibilities in their country's new democratic society.

Following the groundbreaking April 1993 forum, NDI civil-military relations advisers met frequently with Nicaraguan political leaders to provide a wide range of information on how other countries have developed mechanisms and institutions to promote constitutional control of the armed forces consistent with legitimate national security concerns. The Institute published two detailed assessment reports, both of which contained practical recommendations for making the country's civil-military relations more democratic, and sponsored five national and four regional forums in Nicaragua that brought together international experts and Nicaraguan political and military leaders to discuss publicly ways to improve Nicaragua's fractured civil-military relations.

The Institute also helped establish the Nicaraguan Center for Strategic Studies (Centro Estudios Estratégicos de Nicaragua -- CEEN), Nicaragua's first citizens' group dedicated to

improving relations between the military and civilians. And NDI provided advice and comparative legislation to the country's legislature as it took a more active role in defining the new role of Nicaragua's army.

"Graduates" of NDI seminars now serve in leadership or policymaking positions in the National Assembly, the government and civic organizations. The president of NDI's local partner, the CEEN, was appointed Nicaragua's first civilian vice minister of defense in history as a result of his prominent role through the CEEN in helping to define the country's new framework for civil-military relations. Half a dozen other regular NDI program participants have served on the Defense Commission of the National Assembly, including two of its former presidents. The legal adviser to the Defense Commission for more than ten years attended all of NDI's events since 1993. And the current foreign minister was a dedicated participant in many of NDI's seminars and graduated from an eight-day course sponsored by the CEEN, the Defense Commission and NDI in September 1995. These and other political leaders -- most of whom have played a key role in guiding the development of Nicaragua's new civil-military relations framework -- had almost no exposure to defense issues and the role of the military in a democratic society before participating in NDI's program.

Nicaragua's civil-military relations have improved significantly since the tense years immediately following the 1990 the political transition. The National Assembly passed groundbreaking military legislation and constitutional reforms that changed the name of the army and paved the way for Gen. Ortega's retirement, the army appears to be on a path toward professionalization, and civilian and military leaders now consult regularly with each other. NDI's civil-military relations program is credited by many Nicaraguans and international observers as having contributed directly to these improvements.

The following evaluation report will analyze these advances and the role that NDI played in helping to address Nicaragua's legacy of troubled civil-military relations. Section II addresses the methodology used to evaluate the program. Section III offers an assessment of the overall impact of the program. A detailed summary of program activities is contained in the first section of the attachments.

II. Evaluation Methodology

Before beginning an assessment of the program's impact, it is useful to make some general observations about the methodology used in this evaluation. First, given the highly qualitative nature of democratic development work, particularly when it pertains to building consensus, it is difficult to draw an absolute correlation between positive political developments and program activities. NDI does not claim that its programs were the only factor, or even the principal factor, behind the many recent advances in Nicaraguan civil-military relations. Only the Nicaraguans can take credit for facing up to the issues, informing themselves and taking the decisive steps during the past several years. This evaluation will attempt to avoid what democracy assistance analyst Thomas Carothers of the Carnegie Endowment describes as a tendency in some quarters to,

“trumpet small successes as major breakthroughs . . . and to rewrite independent achievements of locals as the fruits of assistance.”³

This said, NDI does consider that the program informed and facilitated democratic processes and reforms being introduced by Nicaraguans, lending important support -- even “ammunition” in a certain respect -- to Nicaraguan political reformers and providing practical knowledge and examples from other transitional countries that enriched the Nicaraguan debate and educated Nicaraguan policy makers about basic -- and new, in Nicaragua’s case -- concepts and principles of civil-military relations in democracies. As this evaluation will show, the support and many visits of civil-military experts who volunteered their time to participate in the NDI program had a substantial positive impact on Nicaraguan civil-military relations.

Second, in addition to noting quantitative benchmarks (i.e., number of persons trained, number of meetings held, etc.), this assessment will evaluate the qualitative and anecdotal impact of the program. For example, many of the Nicaraguan participants in the program commented to NDI that the post-seminar receptions, which facilitated informal contact between military officials and civilians, were one of the most important aspects of the program because they provided an opportunity for the two groups to mix in a social setting and helped to break down barriers between the two distinctly different cultures. While this impact would be impossible to communicate in quantitative terms, Nicaraguans and others have uniformly recognized the important qualitative benefits of NDI’s activities. Whenever possible, this evaluation verifies the correlation between NDI activities and positive results by citing third parties in a position to assess the program. These third party assessments were gathered from written reports made by international experts and others, and from interviews conducted with Nicaraguans about the program during January 1996 and January 1997.

Finally, an increase in dialogue among policy makers and access to information are, in themselves, valuable impacts regardless of possible legislative outcomes or reforms that are beyond the control of NDI. Without access to the information provided by NDI, most of which was otherwise not available in Nicaragua, civilian policymakers would not have been able to make as informed decisions about the direction of Nicaraguan civil-military relations. Therefore, access and exposure to new information is directly related to an increase in “expertise.”

Although NDI’s overall goal was to promote dialogue and communication among key political and military actors, the Institute also sought to achieve more specific results in terms of enhancing the role and expertise of civilians and providing information and resource materials. The following evaluation sections will examine the program in terms of both overall goals and specific issue “benchmarks.” Some of these objectives and benchmarks were included in NDI’s first proposal; others formed part of the evaluation sections of subsequent workplans.

³ Thomas Carothers, *Assessing Democracy Assistance: The Case of Romania*, Carnegie Endowment, 1996, p. 115.

III. Overall Program Impact

NDI's 1992 proposal to the Endowment outlined the following objectives:

- *The program will provide information on mechanisms, institutions and practices necessary to increase the ability of civilians, and particularly members of the National Assembly, to develop security policy and promote a nonpolitical role for the armed forces; and*
- *The program will familiarize Nicaraguan military officers with the nonpolitical role of the armed forces in a democratic society.*

As the following evaluation shows, NDI's program not only met its original objectives of providing information about democratic civil-military relations and the non-political role of the armed forces to civilian and military leaders, but also contributed to the creation and passage of comprehensive military reforms, the creation of the country's first-ever civilian-led ministry of defense and the resolution of symbolic issues relating to the political history of the army.

NDI's strategy to achieve these objectives had four primary areas of focus and anticipated impact: 1) promoting dialogue and consensus; 2) prompting public commitments to reform from the army and political leaders; 3) building civilian expertise in security affairs; and 4) empowering local actors to promote communication and training.

A. Promoting Dialogue and Consensus

Given Nicaragua's history of divisiveness, one of NDI's first and primary goals was to bring opposing sides together at the same table for a public discussion of the highly contentious issue of civil-military relations. As Woodrow Wilson Center Program Director for Latin America Joseph Tulchin notes in a 1995 Wilson Center report, bringing the various political tendencies together to meet was an extremely difficult task when NDI began the program in 1992,

The (1990) elections did not end Nicaragua's political difficulties; in many respects, they made them more complicated. The armed struggle had forced people to take sides. Now, sides split and split again and leaders accustomed to violent struggle with outside intervention seemed ill suited to compromise and political give and take. After a brief honeymoon . . . both the executive and the legislative branches of government slowly ground to a halt.⁴

⁴ Cynthia Arnsion, Joseph Tulchin and Bernice Romero, "Nicaragua's Search for Democratic Consensus: A Conference Report," (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Latin American Program, August 1995).

NDI entered this environment in November 1992. As Tulchin points out, at the time, various political sectors would not agree to meet together publicly. The mood was tense, and debate over civil-military issues highly contentious. Nicaraguan Commander-in-Chief General Humberto Ortega had declared that he would not permit the government to tamper with the military or to reduce its budget. Ortega also said he would remain as commander of the armed forces until 1997. Critics of the military demanded the replacement of Ortega, and many called for the complete elimination of the army. Initially, therefore, NDI sought to break down the barriers between the Nicaraguan military, civil society and the new democratic government.

Members of NDI's first civil-military relations assessment team traveled to Managua in December 1992 and met individually with political and military actors to encourage them to meet together publicly to discuss civil-military relations and to try to reach a consensus on basic principles. The strategy NDI used for engaging the various actors involved building trust regarding NDI's intentions and demonstrating to each how participating in such discussions would be in their self-interest. Political and military leaders were also assured that NDI would provide a neutral setting for the discussions. After several months of intense discussions with Nicaraguans, NDI received commitments from key political and military leaders to participate in a public forum in April 1993.

The April forum represented the first time that key actors such as Gen. Humberto Ortega, then-Minister of the Presidency Antonio Lacayo, Sandinista congressional leader Sergio Ramírez, then-President of the National Assembly Luis Humberto Guzman and Vice President Virgilio Godoy had appeared together publicly for a discussion of civil-military relations. This was no small accomplishment. Referring to the difficulty of getting key political actors to meet together publicly, Tulchin observes,

The critical issues were whether or not senior members of the government would sit down at the same table with members of the opposition . . . We had tried to put together a similar conference in 1992, but had failed miserably, given the depth of distrust and division in Nicaragua.⁵

Referring specifically to NDI's initiative, Luis Eduardo Tibiletti, senior adviser to the Argentine Ministry of Defense and NDI trainer in Nicaragua, said,

In the first place, I would like to communicate my surprise at the great number of people and high level of representation of the various sectors that participated in the panels and workshops during the [NDI] program. I was even more surprised given two elements that seemed to constitute an insurmountable barrier to this having happened: 1) the high level of political tension among the institutional actors, all of whom seemed inclined to maintain

⁵ The Wilson Center eventually organized a forum on political consensus with Nicaraguan political leaders in May 1993.

intractable positions at whatever cost; and 2) the fact that the National Assembly was in recess and in political crisis.⁶

Discussion in NDI's initial forums in April and August 1993 started slowly, especially among members of the military, but participants spoke more freely as the program progressed. Although debate was tense at times, participants generally resolved disagreements or reached compromises by debating the issues during the course of the moderated forums. During one workshop, for example, a former contra and an army officer hostilely presented their opinions. By the end of the workshop, which was facilitated by an NDI international expert, the two had reached a relative compromise and were no longer attacking each other. In another workshop, a National Assembly member who initially supported abolishing the military advocated an adequate defense budget after listening to comments from army officials and learning more about the legitimate needs of a professional military. In general, the personal contact between civilians and military officials that resulted from the workshops and post-seminar receptions helped to decrease tensions and personal attacks and bring the civil-military dialogue to a more professional level.

NDI's role in stimulating this civil-military dialogue was critical. The Institute served as a neutral catalyst in bringing the various actors together publicly to address their differences. National Defense University Senior Fellow Erik Kjonnerod observed that,⁷

During the workshop sessions of the conference, it became clear that without the catalytic intervention of 'outsiders,' the Nicaraguan participants were principally interested in berating each other or musing idealistically about a 'military-free' Nicaragua. However, with coaching and assurances that no one would be penalized for expressing independent thought, participants revealed a surprising ability to grapple impartially with such issues as military subordination to civil authority, fiscal oversight and juridical responsibility. This was the first time that the majority of non-academic representatives in attendance had engaged in such an interactive session.

Describing the consensus building process employed at the seminars, Kjonnerod continues,

As expected, the military members (ranging in rank from Captain through full Colonel), were at first reluctant to speak. After hearing their fill of civilian revilement and condemnation, however, they also mounted a vigorous defense of their institution, its past roles and performance, and the need for a different "army of the future." In the closing session of the conference, following many heated and impassioned discussions, a modest consensus emerged.

⁶ Luis Eduardo Tibiletti, *Report on the Seminar "The New Role of the Armed Forces in Nicaragua,"* August 24, 1993. (See attached "evaluations and reports from international participants.")

⁷ The following excerpts are taken from the report, *Nicaraguan Civil-Military Relations and the U.S. Strategy of Democratization*, L. Erik Kjonnerod and Gabriel Marcella, March 1, 1994, pp. 5-26.

The public nature of the forums spurred the army react to charges from political leaders to make concessions and to become more "proactive." Kjonnerod, notes for example,

The fact that the interventions from military participants came at roughly the same time in both seminars, and that the views expressed were identical, indicated that the group as a whole had caucused during the break, and decided that they should abandon their defensive crouch and go on the offensive.

The civilians also changed posture during the initial seminars:

Those members of the National Assembly who had initially been hostile came to recognize the need for a "professional" military. They expressed support for an adequately equipped army, with funding levels sufficient to afford members a decent standard of living, educational opportunities and respect from the citizenry. EPS officers, including some who had been fighting since before the revolution, settled their differences with the civilians present and supported a final resolution for "complete and effective subordination of the military to civilian authority." . . . [Nicaraguan] Civilians had never viewed civil-military relations other than from the most negative perspective. They now agreed that this equation has two parts, each requiring consideration by the other, and that better, freer communications ought to exist between civilian and military officials, enhanced by professionalization seminars and conferences like this [the NDI] one.

Kjonnerod concludes that,

In short, each side moved from a fundamental ignorance of the other to improved understanding and tolerance.

NDI was able to promote this first-ever public exchange between political and military leaders by providing the Nicaraguans with an opportunity to speak with each other in a neutral environment and to explore civil-military relations in the context of other countries' processes. Independent evaluators from Management Systems International (MSI) who were contracted by USAID to review NDI's program concluded in 1995 that,

NDI's program on civil-military relations in Nicaragua has been successful in bringing together the highest level civilian and military leaders to discuss the nature of civil-military relations in Nicaragua . . . NDI's seminars and conferences offered a "non-threatening" forum for both civilians and military to discuss openly these delicate issues.⁸

Nicaraguan military officials also recognized NDI's breakthrough in building channels communication and opening dialogue between the two sectors. General Auditor of the Army, Col. Denis Moncada Colindres, judged the seminars to be "very productive" and said that the program,

⁸ Management Systems International independent evaluation of the NDI civil-military relations program in Nicaragua, March 1995, p. A-19.

opened a path, which was very difficult, and created the base for more serious and fluid communication between civilians and the military. This was something that had not previously existed . . . Communication was made possible and . . . institutionalized.

Moncada added that,

The result was that the various sectors were sensitized and no longer thought in black and white . . . The program helped to get rid of prejudices and made the debate more "institutional" and not as personal . . . Those aren't the same people we saw in the first seminars.⁹

And Colonel José García, head of international relations for the army, said that before NDI's program,

there was no channel for expressing opinions [about civil-military relations], especially for the civilians.¹⁰

The positive response to this public dialogue-building process from the public, the media and civil society to the forums showed Nicaraguan political and military leaders that it was in their self-interest to come together publicly to discuss civil-military relations and maintain open channels of communication (See attached newspaper articles). As a result, hardline positions on both sides became more moderated and communication is now more productive. Army officials who once scoffed at civilian involvement in security affairs now admit that civilians have a right to oversee defense policy. And several key members of the Civilian Movement who had once advocated abolishing the military entirely now recognize that a nonpolitical and professionalized Nicaraguan army could have a legitimate role in Nicaragua's new democracy.¹¹

In addition to prompting progressive public statements and commitments to reform from political and military leaders, the NDI program spurred the first public declarations from the army about its internal structure, training curriculum and promotion schedules. At the time, Nicaraguan political leaders expressed surprise and optimism to NDI that the program triggered this unprecedented openness from the military (see attached copies of the Nicaraguan Army's presentations). And one army official said that the program helped "open" the military academy in Managua to the outside world by enhancing communication.¹² Since 1994, five NDI international experts have given guest lectures at the Academy about the role of the military in a

⁹ Interviewed February 3, 1997.

¹⁰ Interviewed January 31, 1997.

¹¹ See, for example, a series of September 1995 *La Prensa* editorials by Emilio Alvarez Montalvan, one of the Civilian Movement's founders (attached).

¹² Colonel José García, interviewed January 31, 1997.

democratic society and NDI's local partner, the CEEN, cosponsored an unprecedented event for the press at the Academy. For the first time in Nicaraguan history, the army has felt compelled "present" itself to civilians and has grown more comfortable and effective at so doing.

Finally, in addition to promoting consensus and opening channels of communication in Managua, in 1995 NDI sought to begin to expose military officers and local political leaders in the interior of the country to the educational process that political and military leaders in Managua had gone through during the previous two years of NDI's program. Seminars in Esteli and Matagalpa brought together local civilian and military leaders to discuss their relationship and began an unprecedented dialogue in those conflict ridden areas. Following the first forum in Matagalpa, the leader of a Nicaraguan human rights group in Matagalpa said to the regional commander military commander, with whom she had never before spoken, "before today I had been in terror whenever I saw you."¹³ A former Resistance leader at the same forum marveled having the opportunity to sit next to the regional military commander and commented that before the program he would have been afraid of being "attacked."

B. Prompting Public Commitments to Reform

Not only did the NDI forums begin a national dialogue among political and military leaders, but the program served as a platform for groundbreaking public announcements and agreements on reform from civilian leaders and the military. The reform of Nicaragua's military code, the agreement on the creation of a civilian-led ministry of defense and the change in the politically-charged name of the army were all among the initiatives and points of consensus announced publicly for the first time at NDI seminars.

In prompting public commitments to reform from political and military leaders, NDI relied extensively on the experiences of other countries. During the seminars, international experts from half a dozen transitional countries described the role of professional and modern militaries in those countries, as well as how their democratic societies structure civil-military relations. Military and civilian international experts emphasized the integral relationship between civilian control and military professionalism. A consistent message about civil-military relations in other countries helped to emphasize to the Nicaraguan military its "odd man out" status. Given the barrage of examples of from other countries, the Nicaraguan army was faced with the choice of either committing publicly to the basic principles governing the role of a modern, professional military in a democratic society or appearing to be an unprofessional holdover from another time. Once the Nicaraguan military had made public declarations -- either in its presentations, during question-and-answer sessions, or in workshop resolutions -- supporting principles such as civilian oversight, the need for a civilian-led ministry of defense and the importance of a non-political role for the army, Nicaraguan political leaders could then use these declarations to push forward legislation and reform.

¹³ Conversation between Matagalpa ANPDH leader and VI Region Military Commander, NDI roundtable in Matagalpa, September, 1995.

NDI used this approach to contribute to tangible advances in Nicaraguan civil-military relations, the most critical of which were the creation of comprehensive military legislation governing the role and functions of the army and the resolution of symbolic issues, such as changing the name of the army and setting a fixed term for military commanders. NDI's first assessment report had identified the lack of this legislation as a key impediment to civilian oversight of the military in Nicaragua. The report also cited the political nature of the *Ejército Popular Sandinista* (Sandinista People's Army - EPS) as a major barrier to improved civil-military relations. Two major symbolic issues surrounding this issue were: 1) the politically charged name of the army; and 2) the continuing presence of Gen. Humberto Ortega, the army's politicized leader, as commander-in-chief.

When NDI first brought together Nicaragua's key political and military leaders in April 1993 to discuss the conclusions of the Institute's assessment report, the participants, who included Gen. Humberto Ortega and Minister of the Presidency Antonio Lacayo, were asked to address each of the report's conclusions in their presentations. When confronted with NDI's observation that, "resolving symbolic issues, such as the name of the army, will be particularly important in signaling to the public at large that efforts are underway to alter the civil-military relationship," Ortega pledged publicly -- for the first time ever -- to support a change in the name of the army should the National Assembly legislate such a change. Prior to NDI's April 1993 public forum, the Nicaraguan army, and in particular, Gen. Ortega, publicly and adamantly opposed all efforts to change the politically-charged name of the armed forces. In response to Ortega's declaration at the NDI forum, the Sandinista party newspaper, *Barricada*, ran a page-one headline the following day announcing that the army would change its name (see attached newspaper articles, April 1993).

The NDI report also raised concerns about Ortega's continuing presence in the army. In response, Ortega publicly announced during the April 1993 seminar that his departure would be in accordance with whatever new military law the National Assembly passed. Ortega, who was considered by many to be the most visible symbol of the politicization of the Nicaraguan armed forces, had never before been flexible regarding his departure.

The issues of the lack of comprehensive military legislation and the continuing political impact of army's name and Gen. Ortega's retirement were raised again during NDI seminars in August 1993 and April 1994, and during numerous consultations in between. At each subsequent public seminar, and in private meetings, NDI emphasized the need to resolve symbolic issues and reform existing military legislation. In response to direct requests in November 1993 for assistance regarding potential military reform legislation from Minister of the Presidency Antonio Lacayo and President of the National Assembly Luis Humberto Guzman, NDI experts also provided technical advice about possible provisions and reforms, as well as comparative legislation from other countries.

A groundbreaking moment occurred during NDI's April 1994 seminar when then-Minister of the Presidency Lacayo and Gen. Ortega used the seminar as a platform to announce agreement

on military reform legislation called the *Código Militar de Organización, Jurisdicción y Previsión Social Militar* (Military Code of Organization, Jurisdiction and Military Social Security -- Military Code). Headlines of the principal newspapers the next day covered the seminar extensively and heralded, "Agreement EPS-Government" (see attached newspaper articles, April, 1994). Among other things, the legislation presented at the NDI seminar contained provisions resolving both of the symbolic issues -- Ortega's retirement and the name of the army -- that NDI had identified as primary challenges to improving civil-military relations.

Following the seminar, the executive branch sent this reform package to the National Assembly. After some modification, the Military Code was passed by Assembly on August 21, 1994. Ortega ultimately retired from military service on February 21, 1995, the day specified by the law. The EPS's name was also changed to the more neutral "Army of Nicaragua."

NDI's insistence during two years about both the change in name of the army and Ortega's retirement raised awareness about the importance of the two symbolic barriers to improved civil-military relations and prompted public commitments to reform from the army. It is also significant that political and military leaders used the NDI forums to announce ground breaking agreements on both of these issues.

Nicaraguans have judged NDI's assistance as critical in helping to move the reforms forward. Luis Humberto Guzmán, former president of the National Assembly, called NDI's program "indispensable" to these advances.¹⁴ Minister of the Presidency Antonio Lacayo also recognized NDI's role in a May 19, 1994, letter to NDI President Kenneth Wollack about the military code in which Lacayo thanks NDI for "the support that has begun bear fruit."¹⁵ Dr. Auxiliadora Acosta, senior legal adviser to the Defense Commission of the National Assembly, commented to NDI after the August 1995 passage of the Military Code,

"[The program] created a climate . . . that permitted us to reach a consensus among the civilian and military sectors during the process of discussion and approval of the new military legislation."¹⁶

Independent evaluators from MSI also recognized the program's impact:

Both civilian leaders and the highest military commander utilized these fora to express in public changes in positions which previously had been intransigent. In 1994, a new military law was passed by the National Assembly. In 1995, a transition to a new commander of the armed forces is to take place in accordance with that law. *The cultivation of this transition*

¹⁴ Interviewed February 3, 1997.

¹⁵ See attached significant correspondence for a copy of the full correspondence.

¹⁶ Interviewed January 15, 1996.

*was assisted directly by the private consultations and the public seminars of the NDI civil-military program (italics added).*¹⁷

And USAID concluded in a 1996 project paper,

Seminars sponsored by the National Democratic Institute established a dialogue among key political actors and a framework for the discussion that contributed significantly to the development and passage of a reformed military code which takes important steps toward civilian control and a more circumscribed role for the military in Nicaragua . . . After the series of conferences on civil-military issues, a general agreement on a new Military Code was worked out between the military and executive branch, and was subsequently passed by the Assembly.

Guzmán also specifically pointed to NDI's role in providing positive reinforcement to Gen. Ortega regarding his decision to retire. In particular, Guzmán mentioned a meeting in April 1994 when a group of NDI international experts -- including former Ministers of Defense of Argentina and Chile, Horacio Jaunarena and Patricio Rojas, and Portuguese Gen. (Ret.) Guilherme Belchior Vieira -- discussed with Ortega the positive and historic role he could play for both Nicaragua and the military institution itself by retiring and helping to establish a democratic system of civil-military relations in the country. Retired U.S. Maj. General Bernard Loeffke and Gen. Vieira emphasized the duty that professional military officers have to retire when mandated by their "commanders" -- the civilian political leaders. Loeffke, who returned to have lunch with the General the next day, discussed his own retirement and noted the variety of roles that former military leaders can play after leaving the service. Ortega admitted that he would have to leave at some point in the near future and joked that he could be "Nicaragua's first civilian minister of defense."¹⁸

According Guzmán, who was present at one of the extended private meetings with Ortega and who had extensive contact with Gen. Ortega during the negotiations on the Military Code, the international experts' meeting with the General had an impact that, although impossible to measure quantitatively, was significant. Guzmán emphasized to NDI that the extended meetings with and "friendly persuasion about leaving the army" from the former defense ministers, and in particular with U.S. Maj. Gen. Loeffke who spoke about his own accomplishments and contributions following retirement, provided important examples and positive reinforcement for Ortega in the final stages of contemplating his retirement through what would eventually become the Military Code.¹⁹

¹⁷ Management Systems International independent evaluation, p. A-19.

¹⁸ Meeting with NDI, April 9, 1994, Managua, Nicaragua.

¹⁹ Interviewed February 3, 1997, Managua, Nicaragua.

Although the Military Code does have weaknesses that grew inevitably out of the negotiation process with the army, most international defense experts judge its adoption to be a step forward for Nicaraguan civil-military relations. Provisions that paved the way for Gen. Ortega's retirement, establish a five-year term for military commanders and change the name of the army constituted substantial advances in light of the tense political context. Then-Foreign Minister Ernesto Leal summed up the impact of the military legislation,

An army and police force that had belonged to a single political party are now at the service of the entire nation, and for the first time headed by a commander appointed for a fixed term of five years peacefully and through legal mechanisms. This is normal in democratic countries, but it is not normal in Nicaragua.²⁰

Larry Rohter of the *New York Times* observed in an article published shortly after the change went into effect,

The metal name plate has been removed from the wall outside military headquarters, new shoulder patches are being made for soldiers, and the commander general is having a revised set of business cards printed. Just short of the 16th anniversary of its triumphal march into Managua, the Sandinista People's Army has ceased to exist.²¹

And USAID concluded that,

Passage of [the] new military code, and the constitutional reforms, represent a major step in building consensus among major political blocs and reducing polarization about the basic governing principles in Nicaragua.²²

Both the initial concessions by Gen. Ortega on key symbolic issues and the military code that would make these changes take effect were prompted by and first announced publicly at NI seminars.

C. *Building Civilian Expertise in and Oversight of Security Affairs*

The third principal strategic focus of the program was to provide information on mechanisms, institutions and practices necessary to increase the ability of civilians to develop security policy and to promote a nonpolitical role for the armed forces. As Gabriel Marcella, professor in the department of National Security and Strategy at the U.S. Army War College, emphasizes,

²⁰ Rohter, July 15, 1995.

²¹ Larry Rohter, "Nicaraguan Army's Makeover: Basic or Cosmetic?" *New York Times News Service*, July 16, 1995.

²² *Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project Paper*, 1996, pp. 2, 5 and 8.

None of these initiatives [to reform civil-military relations] will be very successful in terms of democratic objectives we set out for ourselves unless the civilian sector of Nicaraguan society takes on its full responsibility to govern the country and prudently and effectively control the military. The military will not accept subordination unless civilian competence grows -- this is the principal lesson of modern civil-military relations in Latin America.²³

NDI believes the basic training provided during the program was crucial in preparing civilians for the security affairs policy making and oversight roles they are now beginning to play in a more democratic environment. At the same time, military officials were educated about human rights, the nonpolitical role of the military in a democratic society and principles of civilian oversight.

1. Educating Civilians about Security Affairs

All of NDI's seminars had educational and training components. Initial forums focused on basic principles and concepts. Later activities, such as an eight-day security affairs course in September 1995 taught by experts from five countries, exposed Nicaraguans to more technical issues such as the operation and management of a civilian ministry of defense, principles of oversight of military intelligence and the role of a defense committee, among other topics. NDI also provided participants with thousands of pages of resource materials and comparative legislation during the course of the program. This training and provision of written information not easily attainable in Nicaragua helped familiarize civilian political leaders with the mechanisms to strengthen civilian oversight, as well as aided them in defining a new nonpolitical role for the army.

Military officials -- who are often the toughest judges of civilian competence -- recognize the educational impact of NDI's program. Lt. Col. Colindres judged that during the span of the program, civilian knowledge of defense affairs went from "zero to three" on a scale of 10. He commented that civilians are now publishing more serious articles on civil-military relations. Colindres added that NDI's events were,

... characterized by very qualified international experts and Nicaraguan panelists ... Broad and diverse sectors attended the forums.²⁴

Outside evaluators from MSI concluded in their review of NDI's program that,

The Nicaraguan participants interviewed for this evaluation commented repeatedly that the exposure to the experiences of other militaries and governments undergoing democratic

²³ Kjonnerod and Marcella, p. 24.

²⁴ Interviewed February 3, 1997.

transitions such as Spain, Argentina and Chile provided valuable insights to the problems at hand in Nicaragua.²⁵

“Graduates” of NDI seminars now serve in leadership or policymaking positions in the National Assembly, the government and civic organizations. José Adán Guerra, a participant in NDI’s activities since 1995, a graduate of the September 1995 NDI training course and the former president of NDI’s local partner organization the *Centro de Estudios Estratégicos de Nicaragua* (Nicaraguan Center for Strategic Studies -- CEEN), was appointed to be Nicaragua’s first civilian vice minister of defense. Half a dozen other regular NDI program participants have served on the Defense Commission of the National Assembly, including former congressmen Roberto Urroz and Andres Robles, who served as presidents of the commission, and Omar Cabezas, who was the only member of the commission to serve more than twice (he was reappointed to the commission for five consecutive years). Auxiliadora Acosta, the legal adviser to the Defense Commission for 11 years has attended all of NDI’s events since 1993. Emilio Alvarez Montalvan, who attended several of NDI’s seminars and graduated from the September 1995 course, is now serving as Nicaragua’s foreign minister. These and other political leaders -- most of whom have played a key role in guiding the development of Nicaragua’s new civil-military relations framework -- had almost no exposure to defense issues and the role of the military in a democratic society before participating in NDI’s program.

2. Strengthening Institutions to Oversee the Armed Forces

In addition to familiarizing Nicaraguan civilians with security affairs, NDI also focused on supporting the development of civilian institutions. In this respect, the Institute was instrumental in advancing the creation of the country’s first civilian-led ministry of defense. NDI also trained and helped bolster the image of the Defense Committee of the National Assembly by cosponsoring several seminars and providing the Committee with advice, resource materials and comparative legislation on a regular basis.

a. Creation of a Civilian-Led Ministry of Defense

The creation of a civilian-led ministry of defense has been a key issue for the NDI program. Until January 1997, Nicaragua was one of two countries in the western hemisphere that did not have a ministry of defense. NDI’s program played an integral role sewing the seeds for the creation of this institution.

NDI’s first assessment mission in December 1992 concluded that Nicaragua needed to begin, “the process of creating a ministry of defense and training civilians to manage it.” The delegation noted that Nicaragua was far from beginning this process; the country had no civilian security affairs experts, no concrete plans to train any and no initiatives on the table to create a

²⁵ Management Systems International independent evaluation of NDI civil-military relations program in Nicaragua, March 1995, p. A-19.

civilian ministry of defense. In addition, the army publicly rejected any notion of a minister of defense other than Humberto Ortega and manifested strong opposition to any attempt to move forward on the issue.

NDI's program advanced the issue by: 1) educating political and military leaders about the role of a ministry of defense in a democratic society, the organization and structure of a ministry of defense and processes to establish ministries of defense in other countries; 2) increasing awareness about the importance of the creation of a civilian-led ministry among Nicaraguan political and military leaders and the public in general through the media, seminars, individual meetings and reports; and 3) boosting the efforts of political reformers by prompting public commitments of support from the army regarding the creation of a civilian-led ministry.

NDI's program addressed the creation of a civilian-led ministry of defense and contributed to the development of civilian expertise in this area on the following occasions:

- NDI's April 1993 assessment report on civil-military relations in Nicaragua made strong recommendations regarding the creation of a civilian-led ministry of defense. The report prompted General Ortega's first public acceptance of this fundamental civilian political institution. The report and its conclusions received extensive coverage by the Nicaraguan news media, which helped to bring the issue to a wider audience;
- In NDI's April 1994 seminar, more than 250 Nicaraguans participated in workshops on the creation of a ministry of defense led by former Argentine Defense Minister Horacio Jaunarena, former Chilean Defense Minister Patricio Rojas and retired U.S. Maj. Gen. Bernard Loeffke, among other international experts. In addition, both Rojas and Jaunarena made plenary presentations about the structure of their countries' ministries and the challenges they faced establishing civilian control of the armed forces. NDI also provided seminar participants and members of the Defense Committee of the National Assembly with copies of laws establishing ministries of defense in other countries, as well as reports discussing the role of a civilian minister of defense;
- In April 1994, NDI held private meetings with Gen. Ortega, during which the former defense ministers of Argentina and Chile, along with other high-level experts, discussed the issue with the General and urged him to lend support to the creation of a ministry. Ortega again pledged that the army would not oppose a legislative initiative in this area;
- During the September 1995 security affairs training course, more than sixty Nicaraguans participated in several four-hour sessions on the structure and organization of a ministry of defense led by Jaunarena and retired U.S. Lt. Col. Erik Kjonnerod. Participants received extensive briefing materials on the subject. High level military officials who participated in the course again stated publicly that the Army would support a decision of the legislative body to create a ministry;

- On several consultation missions, NDI adviser José Manuel Ugarte met privately with political leaders and members of the Defense Commission of the National Assembly to discuss strategies for creating a ministry. On several occasions, NDI responded to requests for information about legislation creating ministries in other countries by providing the Commission with legislation from Argentina, Chile, Spain, Mexico and the United States;
- In June 1995, NDI published and distributed within Nicaragua a second report with strong recommendations calling for the creation of a civilian ministry of defense. The report's conclusions were widely reported in the Nicaraguan press and again prompted a public debate of the issue²⁶;
- In June 1995, Ugarte analyzed the new Military Code and wrote a report for NDI. Ugarte's analysis, which criticizes the Code for giving the Army many of the powers normally reserved for a civilian minister of defense in a democracy, received wide press coverage and put further pressure on the government and the army by emphasizing that the lack of a ministry of defense was one of the primary reasons why the Nicaraguan Army remained a traditional Latin American autonomous "state within a state" military.

These activities had the following concrete impacts with regard to the ministry of defense issue:

- *The program prompted the army to agree publicly to the creation of a civilian-led ministry of defense.* The army made its first public commitments to the creation of a civilian-led ministry of defense during NDI forums. Representatives of the Army High Command pledged publicly on numerous occasions that they would support a legislative initiative to create a ministry of defense if it were approved by the National Assembly. In addition, workshops on the issue during NDI's April 1994 seminar prompted Alonso Porras, an orthodox Sandinista legislator and secretary of the Defense Commission, to publicly call for the immediate creation of the ministry;
- *The program increased awareness about the issue among Nicaraguan political and military leaders and the public at-large.* NDI's program spurred more than a dozen news articles about the subject in the print media alone. In 1993, the issue was sure to incite an inflammatory debate; by NDI's fifth public forum in September 1995, what once was a contentious issue was being discussed calmly and matter-of-factly by political leaders, military officers and the press;

²⁶ The impact and continuing relevance of the report was demonstrated when the Nicaraguan news weekly *El Seminario* published in January 1997 -- almost three years after the original publication of the report -- an article about the new ministry of defense that reprints almost verbatim significant sections of the executive summary of the NDI report (see attached news articles, *El Seminario*, January 31, 1997).

- *The program educated a core group of civilians about basic technical issues regarding the function and structure of a ministry of defense and provided these civilians with the knowledge they will need to begin to design and staff a future ministry. Between 1993 and 1996, more than 300 Nicaraguans participated in technical sessions and received written materials about the structure and role of a ministry of defense during the NDI program. In addition, NDI provided National Assembly staff members and deputies with numerous technical articles and sample legislation from Chile, Argentina, Spain, Portugal and the United States that address the structure, organization and role of the ministry. The president of the NDI-sponsored CEEN was appointed Nicaragua's first vice minister of defense. Several of the likely "drafters" of the legislation to formally create the ministry of defense are "graduates" of NDI's seminars.*

b. Strengthening the National Assembly

The Institute has paid special attention to the role that the National Assembly and the Defense Commission of the National Assembly can play in promoting democratic civil-military relations. As more legislation is developed to restructure Nicaragua's civil-military relations, the Defense Committee has taken on an increasingly important role in the country's defense affairs.

When the NDI delegation first visited Managua in 1992, Sandinista and UNO legislators on the National Assembly's Defense Commission refused to meet together, and the Defense Commission barely functioned. The National Assembly had a history of having little or no role in developing Nicaragua's security policy and legislation; this had traditionally been the domain of a strong executive branch and the commander-in-chief of the army.

Civil-military experts who participated in NDI's program noted other weaknesses in the National Assembly's ability to oversee the military and develop defense legislation:

Although in favor of professionalizing the military, they [members of the defense commission] were unaware of the establishment of a military academy in Managua, and remained poorly informed on military matters across the board. Regrettably, they lacked an understanding of what powers they had or could exercise over their own military institution. It was clear that they wanted to exert influence over the army, but saw little in the way of encouragement from the other side.²⁷

Over the past three years, the ability of the National Assembly to take an active role in Nicaragua's security affairs has improved significantly. In 1992 and 1993, the Defense Commission met infrequently at best, and most often one political side or the other would refuse to participate. By the time NDI's April 1994 program took place, however, the Defense Commission was not only conducting weekly meetings with all members participating, but organizing seminars on defense issues and actively taking part in the civil-military debate. Recent

²⁷ Kjonnerod and Marcella, 1994, p.10.

Commissions have followed in this active vein as well. The 1996 commission had five major security affairs-related legislative projects on its schedule, ranging from a new police law to reforms on military justice and civil defense. Recent commissions have scheduled hearings on legislative projects, solicited comments from a variety of sectors, requested testimony from military officials and actively approached NDI for legislation from other countries and comments from the Institute's security affairs experts. This is in sharp contrast to pre-1994 defense commissions, which,

... had never met with the military hierarchy ... [and had] never invited members of the military to appear before them. [The Commission] doubted that any would appear, even if invited.²⁸

In general, legislators from various political parties have shown an increased willingness to join a constructive dialogue about strengthening civilian oversight of the military. Discussions about extending civilian control are no longer considered threatening to the Sandinistas in the National Assembly. In this respect, it is clear that the various political factions in the Assembly are finding it easier to reach consensus on the subject. The two clearest examples of this were the passage of the military code and the agreement on the constitutional reforms on defense, which were passed with little controversy. As previously discussed, the former president of the National Assembly, *diputados* and Assembly staff members have all recognized NDI's role in building the consensus, and, as mentioned previously, many of the deputies who served on the Defense Committee have been regular participants in NDI's program.

As previously noted, USAID also recognized NDI's role in this process in a 1996 project paper:

Seminars sponsored by the National Democratic Institute established a dialogue among key political actors and a framework for the discussion that contributed significantly to the development and passage of a reformed military code which takes important steps toward civilian control and a more circumscribed role for the military in Nicaragua ... Passage of [the] new military code, and the constitutional reforms represent a major step in building consensus among major political blocs and reducing polarization about the basic governing principles in Nicaragua.²⁹

Not only has consensus been developed, but the quality of the Assembly's participation has also improved. According to Ugarte, the Assembly made important substantive improvements to the Military Code project that it received from the executive branch.³⁰ And,

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.10.

²⁹ *Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project Paper*, 1996, p. 8.

³⁰ Ugarte, *Análisis del Código de Organización, Jurisdicción y Previsión Social Militar de la República de Nicaragua*, NDI, May 25, 1995, sections B and C.

Ugarte and other civil-military relations experts contend that the constitutional reforms on defense, which were almost wholly of the Assembly's design, are some of the most democratic in Latin America. This stands in sharp contrast to the Assembly's traditional role of "rubber stamping" legislative projects submitted by the Presidency.³¹ In another positive development that indicates acceptance of NDI's recommendations regarding the need for civilian expertise, the former president of the Defense Commission, Roberto Urroz, recognized to NDI that it is in the commission's best interest to retain members that have defense-related experience; before 1996, only one member of the commission had been on a previous commission. The 1996 commission had several veterans, including five members who participated regularly in NDI's program.

With regard to the military's relationship with the Assembly, the army has recently become more responsive to the legislative branch. In interviews, several members of the commission told NDI that the army has begun to cooperate more frequently, providing documents and testimony and briefing the commission members on a variety of defense related issues. In 1995, for example, Gen. Cuadra organized for the first time in history a public briefing for the commission about the defense budget and the army's structure, as well as took members on a tour of the military installations in Managua. Several members of the commission told NDI they were "shocked" to have been allowed into the military's high command facilities.

Staff members of the Defense Commission report to NDI that military officials now consult regularly with the commission on new legislative projects.³² During NDI's January 1996 seminar with the CEEN, for example, the Institute received requests for information from two mid-level army officials who were in the midst of reviewing civil defense legislation with Assembly staff members. The commission's legal adviser and other members of the Assembly have told NDI that staff level contact between the two institutions is increasing. This level of contact between the Nicaraguan military officers and civilian legislators and staff members is unprecedented in the country's history. The army's new responsiveness has been reinforced by some positive experiences with the Assembly -- the army is attacked less by congressmen and actually received a small increase in its budget in 1995 after approaching the Defense Commission to explain its budget needs. Gen. Cuadra now routinely refers to the National Assembly when talking about negotiations on future military legislation (in previous years the army only considered negotiating directly with the presidency), and former President of the Commission Robert Urroz has told NDI that the army has approached the commission more frequently to offer information about its plans and activities.³³

³¹ Sanchez and Wong, *Diagnostic of the Nicaraguan National Assembly*, Checchi and Company Consulting, Inc., March 1996, p.ii.

³² Dr. Auxiliadora Acosta, interviewed January 29, 1997.

³³ Interviews with NDI, January 28, 1997, and January 1996.

3. *Empowering Local Actors*

Finally, NDI sought to provide sustainability to the new dialogue and training by empowering Nicaraguan civilians to promote communication and civilian oversight. To this end, NDI was integral in the development of the Nicaraguan Center for Strategic Studies (Centro de Estudios Estratégicos de Nicaragua -- CEEN), Nicaragua's first multipartisan nongovernmental organization dedicated to familiarizing civilians with security affairs and promoting better relations between the armed forces, the government and civil society.

During the first three years of the program, NDI organized dialogue-building forums and meetings directly from Washington or in partnership with the multipartisan National Assembly; partisan leanings of existing Nicaraguan nongovernmental organizations prevented NDI from working with local nongovernmental partners. In early 1995, however, a group of Nicaraguans from diverse ideological and political backgrounds came together in an unprecedented fashion to form the CEEN, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to strengthening civil-military relations and training civilians in security affairs.

Shortly thereafter, NDI began working with the group. With NDI's assistance, the CEEN developed from a group of four Nicaraguans who met occasionally to discuss civil-military relations following a USIA trip to the United States into a dynamic multipartisan nongovernmental organization that:

- organizes monthly forums and roundtables on defense issues;
- publishes reports and a newsletter that are read by relevant civilian and military contacts throughout Nicaragua and in the United States and Latin America;
- provides suggestions and comments on legislative projects to the National Assembly and the new minister of defense;
- serves as a unique nongovernmental channel of communication between the Army and political leaders;
- has a multipartisan board of directors that meets weekly and participates actively in CEEN programs; and
- counts among its current and former board members active Nicaraguan policymakers, including the vice minister of defense, the president of the Defense Committee of the National Assembly and two representatives in the Central American parliament.



Between September 1995 and March 1996, NDI and the CEEN organized an intensive eight-day training course for CEEN members and political and civic leaders, a seminar on military justice and three forums about reconciliation and democratic civil-military relations in the interior. The Institute also provided the group with extensive advice on

organizational structure and political balance. The CEEN, which received a direct grant from USAID following the close of NDI's program with the Endowment in 1996, has continued with NDI's assistance to organize activities to strengthen civil-military relations to this day.

NDI's support and technical advice has been crucial to the group's development, especially considering that the CEEN's members, including its executive director, had no previous experience in nongovernmental organizations. Former president of the CEEN and current vice minister of defense, José Adán Guerra, wrote to NDI in 1997,

I would like to send you my deepest gratitude for the invaluable job and continuous support received from the National Democratic Institute in developing programs for the straightness of democracy in Nicaragua. I have been appointed by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, Dr. Arnoldo Alemán, to hold the honorable position of the first civilian as vice minister of defense. I also recognize that my personal contribution to Nicaragua is due part to the close work of the National Democratic Institute, especially with Dr. Santiago Canton, Mr. Kirk Gregersen and Miss Sandra Zacarias, when I was in charge of the Presidency of the Centro de Estudios Estratégicos de Nicaragua (CEEN).³⁴

The CEEN is in a position to play an important role in Nicaraguan civil-military relations for a number of reasons. First, given its track record to date, the CEEN is well regarded as a local resource and forum for discussions on civil-military relations. Because of the activities the CEEN has conducted during the past year, members of the CEEN are now frequently contacted by representatives of the Nicaraguan government, the news media and others about their opinions on civil-military relations and security affairs in Nicaragua. Second, through NDI, the CEEN has access to international security affairs experts and resource materials that can help Nicaraguan policymakers as they work to strengthen civil-military relations. Third, current and former members of the CEEN -- as well as CEEN program participants -- are in high level positions in the newly established ministry of defense and in the National Assembly. And finally, the CEEN is a uniquely multipartisan organization in a polarized civil society filled with politicized civic groups. As a result, the CEEN is one of a few organizations in Nicaraguan society that has good relations with both the Army and political parties on the political right. In this respect, the group can serve as an important channel of communication and mediator.

Specifically, several developments that occurred following the close of NDI's program with the Endowment demonstrate the long term impact that the creation of the CEEN has had:

- Reflecting the growing prestige of the CEEN, the group's president, José Adán Guerra was appointed Nicaragua's first vice minister of defense. Guerra, who has spent substantial time in NDI civil-military workshops and consultations with NDI security affairs experts, brings to the new ministry a firm knowledge of the role of the military in a democracy and the basic principles of democratic civil-military relations. In his new

³⁴ Letter from José Adán Guerra to NDI Chairman, Paul G. Kirk, Jr., January 28, 1997 (see attached significant correspondence).

position, Guerra should have substantial input in the creation and operation of the new civilian-led ministry of defense.

- CEEN board member Carlos Hurtado, who has also participated in NDI's program since 1993, will join the Defense Committee of the National Assembly as a newly-elected *diputado nacional*. As a member of the commission, Hurtado will be in the position to make improvements to new military legislation and will serve as a key channel of communication between the CEEN, NDI and the National Assembly.
- CEEN board member Sergio García Quintero, who was elected to the Central American Parliament in October 1996, will bring to the group new opportunities for contact with other Central American civil-military relations actors, and will be able to gather comparative information about military law more easily as a result of his participation in this body.



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