

Latin American peace plan 'falls short,' Reagan declares

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WASHINGTON — President Reagan, in his harshest criticism to date of a Central American plan for ending the conflict in Nicaragua, said Saturday that the plan "falls short" of the requirements for attaining a lasting peace there.

In his weekly radio address, the president appeared to be sending a signal to Central American leaders to

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bring their proposal more in line with one advanced by Reagan and House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, or risk U.S. repudiation of their efforts.

The peace plan was signed Aug. 5 by five Central American presidents, including Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, only days after the Reagan-Wright plan was announced. But unlike the Reagan-Wright proposal, it does not demand the termination of Soviet involvement in Nicaragua and Soviet assistance to the Sandinista government.

During the broadcast from Camp David, Md., Reagan pledged his "unswerving commitment" to the Contras opposing the Sandinistas. He also

used some of his strongest language in months to denounce the Sandinistas for "creating a totalitarian Marxist-Leninist dictatorship to satisfy their own personal lust for power and to give the Soviet Union a beachhead on the mainland of this continent. . . ."

By contrast, he said, the Contras have acted "in the best tradition of our Founding Fathers" to form "a democratic resistance against tyranny" that "pressured" Ortega into signing the Central American peace plan, a proposal that Ortega, Reagan charged, is now seeking to subvert.

Together with the announcement Thursday that Reagan will ask Congress for \$270 million in new aid

to the Contras, the president's remarks Saturday were intended to telegraph his growing doubts about the "workability" of the Central American plan, according to a White House official. Up to now, Reagan had said only that he "welcomed" the Central American plan, a word he also used Saturday.

But while the president in his speech did not specify how the plan fails to meet his expectations, his tone reflected the fact that "has a lot of problems with it," according to the official, who asked not to be named.

"The steps to implement it are not at all clear," said the official, who is familiar with the administration's thinking on Central America. "There is no enforcement mechanism, nor are there any penalties if the Sandinistas fail to meet the requirements for democratization in Nicaragua."

Reagan also is "quite concerned about a provision that requires the United States to terminate military assistance to the Contras, but does not rule out Soviet

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assistance to the Sandinistas. There's not a damn thing in it about Soviet military aid," the official said.

The official said Reagan is not prepared now to give up entirely on the Central American plan.

Also Saturday, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, who crafted the Central American peace plan, urged Reagan to hold off seeking new aid for the Contras.

"You won't find one single Latin American nation . . . who would be in favor of military support for the Contras, who would be openly in favor of a military solution in Nicaragua," Arias said in an interview on John McLaughlin's "One on One" program. The show was taped before Reagan's speech.