When I retired from the U.S. Army in 1980 after a relatively brief and unspectacular career as a lieutenant colonel, Latin American area specialist, I felt that I had left things military behind me. As I began my civilian academic career at the School of International Service and the Department of Language and Foreign Studies of the American University, I concentrated on teaching the Spanish language, translation, and Latin American area studies. Geographically, I focused on that part of the Western Hemisphere that is physically, culturally, and politically as far from Central America as one could imagine: South American Antarctica and the islands of the far South Atlantic.

But somehow Central America and things military interrupted my concentration on the far South Atlantic. As the Central American crisis heated up in the early 1980s, the army asked me to consider returning to active duty to serve in that area. (They dropped the request when I said I would return only if I could abstain from shaving and shining.) At the same time, it seemed as though almost every Latin Americanist I knew was devoting increasing time and attention to Central America, and I felt I too had to weigh in. The question was what contribution I, as a non–Central Americanist, could make in an increasingly crowded field. After a brief flirtation with activist peace groups, I settled on a very satisfying and productive working relationship with the International Peace Academy (IPA), a nongovernmental educational organization closely associated with the United Nations that stresses conflict resolution techniques, mediation, third-party neutral intervention, peacekeeping, and confidence building. Through most of the decade of the 1980s, I consulted for the IPA, wrote papers and edited books for them, and attended numerous conferences, workshops, and off-the-record sessions sponsored by them, which eventually involved most
of the important actors in the Central American peace process. General (retired, Indian Army) Indar Jit Rikhye, the founding president of the IPA, and Richard Millett, the IPA's principal Central American consultant, were friends, colleagues, and inspiration in these fascinating years, when the IPA quietly worked to help the parties to the conflict, the Contadora representatives, and numerous other "helpful fixers" to understand the potential, and the limitations, of military peacekeeping and confidence building.

These two concepts, "peacekeeping" and "confidence building," appealed to me because they provided practical ways in which the military could make an important positive contribution to peace. A third concept, "zones of peace," was especially interesting to me because it had a Latin American origin and provided a bridge between my Central American and Antarctic interests (the Antarctic Treaty is in effect the constitution for the largest zone of peace in the world).

In 1989 a generous grant from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) permitted me to bring my involvement in the military aspects of the Central American peace process under more systematic research and study. For two-and-a-half years, the USIP grant provided me with funds for two research assistants, some release time from my university duties, and the opportunity to travel to Canada and Central America. In June 1991 I joined the Latin American Studies Association's "Nicaragua Field Seminar," led by the indefatigable Tom Walker of Ohio University, in an opportunity to interview Nicaraguans from all walks of life as well as key international-organization officials in Managua and the hinterland. I am very grateful for the assistance provided by Lieutenant Colonel Dermont Early (UN Headquarters), as well as Fernando Castañon and Colonel Gustavo Lazcano of ONUCA and Santiago Murray and Juan Castagnino of CIAV-OAS.

This book, along with several articles and conference papers, is the culmination of this decade of work with the IPA and the USIP. (The ideas and opinions expressed here are, of course, my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the IPA or USIP.) The book would not have been possible without the steady support of these two institutions, and of many friends and colleagues along the way. Chief among these are my two principal research assistants, Jonathan Darling and Sarah Howden. My work-study assistants in these years did much of the thankless work of chasing down and photocopying materials; they include Shelly Sweeney, Fernando Alvarez-Tabío, Dauri Sandison, Jill Kzewina, Nadja Reger, Kelly Bundy, Joe Clougherty, Julio Medina, Flora Calderón, Ramona Bock, Ivelisse Bonilla, and Marcela Ghiggeri. As in the past, Salvador Vélez and Gioconda Vallarino of the Inter-American Defense College were most helpful.

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Jack Child