

REAGAN EXPECTED TO SEEK INCREASE IN SALVADORAN AID

EXTRA \$100 MILLION CITED

Military and Economic Total Is Put at \$235 Million in 1982 and \$300 Million in '83

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 30 — The White House will ask Congress to increase military and economic aid to El Salvador by about \$100 million this fiscal year and will seek further increases in the next fiscal year, according to Administration officials.

Military aid for the current fiscal year stands at \$25 million and all forms of economic aid total about \$110 million. The economic and military aid request for the next fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1, will be in the President's budget presentation next month and is expected to be about \$300 million.

The officials also said that an additional \$25 million would be needed to replace aircraft and helicopters lost in a guerrilla attack this week that destroyed about half of El Salvador's air power. Officials said this money would come from funds now earmarked for other countries.

Existing Policy Affirmed

The attack prompted a State Department announcement that the Administration would ask for more aid but the amount was not mentioned.

Administration officials said the moves were an affirmation of existing policy, which is to support the Government of President José Napoleón Duarte, to urge political and economic changes on his Government, to resist guerrilla demands for direct negotiations and to build toward general elections in March to strengthen the political center.

Above all, they reiterated, Administration policy was to stem the expansion of Soviet, Cuban and Nicaraguan influence in Central America.

Administration of Ignorance

Behind this reaffirmation lie considerable differences in the Administration over whether the situation in El Salvador is stable and perhaps even improving or whether it is deteriorating, perhaps sharply. Almost all officials interviewed acknowledged that they did not know which side was winning.

There is also questioning among some officials about Administration policy. Military officers in particular are questioning whether the current approach can deal with a deteriorating situation. While not challenging Administration

goals directly, these officials ask if President Reagan and his advisers have asked themselves how far they are prepared to go and how far they might have to go to prevent a guerrilla victory.

Key officials in the State Department and the Pentagon say this kind of thinking is based on misplaced fears of "another Vietnam." President Reagan, they insisted, will never send United States troops to fight in El Salvador.

Even without American troops, they maintained, the situation will be manageable as long as aid is increased, the Salvadoran Government's program of liberalization continues and public opinion is not turned against the effort by what some officials called inaccurate and overblown news accounts of the war.

Yet a third train of thought, centered mainly among liberals and moderates in Congress, is that there should be negotiations between the rebels and the Duarte Government, apparently with a view to establishing a coalition government. This is also the starting point of the rebel position, and it has no support inside the Administration. To Administration officials, a coalition government would only fall into the hands of the guerrillas eventually.

All of these policy tangles lay just beneath the surface this week when President Reagan, as required by law, moved to free military aid to El Salvador by certifying that the Duarte Government was trying to end abuses of civil rights and making progress on political and economic changes.

This finding is expected to be challenged in Congressional hearings next week. Inside the Administration, according to many officials, no one objected to the certification. As one State Department official put it, "We don't disagree that Duarte is doing what the law asks; the disagreement is over how much difference his efforts have made in the war, and that, only time will tell."

The President's certification also came in the face of further troubles in El

Salvador. There were reports in The New York Times and The Washington Post this week of the massacre of hundreds of men, women and children, and Government troops apparently were responsible for the killing. One accounting said 733 died in the massacre last month; another said 926. Officials said they could not corroborate the accounts.

There was also the successful guerrilla attack on the Government's biggest air base, near San Salvador. The officials feared that this could have a dramatic effect on opinion in El Salvador and the United States.

Part of a Larger Package

Administration officials said the big increase in aid planned for El Salvador would be part of a larger military and economic aid package for Central America, and that this new package would be 50 to 60 percent larger than in this fiscal year.

This year, regional totals are about \$230 million in economic aid and \$105 million in military aid to El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala and Panama.

Increasing aid to foster political changes and economic stability now seems to be at the center of Administration policy toward the area, but for some time the policy was not clear at all.

Last February, Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. spoke as if Central America had become the new arena of East-West conflict. He maintained that the Administration would draw the line in El Salvador and that, if necessary, the United States would "go to the source" of aggression in the region, meaning to Cuba or even to the Soviet Union.

This was quickly followed by the publication of a White Paper that purported to prove that Salvadoran guerrillas were receiving substantial equipment and direction from Moscow and Cuba through the Sandinist-led Government of Nicaragua.

Tough Language Played Down

Subsequent admissions by the Administration cast serious doubt on whether the evidence in the paper was valid, but the Administration did not back away

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from its judgment about substantial Cuban involvement.

Shortly thereafter, White House officials let it be known to Congress and news organizations that they thought Mr. Haig had made too much of the matter.

White House officials wanted to play down the tough language. They did not want attention diverted from the priority effort to pass the President's economic program, and they thought Mr. Haig was scaring the public by making it look as if the President were contemplating direct American military action.

In the meantime, however, American military advisers were sent to El Salvador and aid was increased.

In mid-July, Thomas O. Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, gave what was then said to be the definitive Administration position. In a speech that even critics said did justice to the complexities of the situation, Mr. Enders committed the Reagan team to "a political solution," not a military one.

Haig Sees a 'Stalemate'

He said that the conflict was "Salvadoran in its origins, so its ultimate resolution must be Salvadoran." His prescription was for aid, political and economic changes and elections in which all parties could participate.

By late fall, the American military had come to the view that the situation in El Salvador was deteriorating, and Mr. Haig publicly used the word "stalemate."

He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for an analysis of various military moves that could be used in El Salvador and against Nicaragua and Cuba. The chiefs were highly skeptical about every alternative. Nonetheless, after an account of this was published, Mr. Haig acknowledged that he was looking for stronger action. The White House again disowned his remarks.

By December, however, Edwin Meese 3d, the White House counselor, was warning publicly that the President had not ruled out a blockade or other military action to halt the flow of arms to

Salvadoran guerrillas. Later, Mr. Reagan himself made similar statements. Administration officials interpreted them, however, as largely tough talk to make Cuba think twice about its aid.

All Administration officials interviewed said they believed that even without Cuban and Nicaraguan instigation there would be a serious civil conflict in El Salvador. And they all, regardless of their views on American policy, said Cuban arms were playing a significant role in the war and that Cuba had significant influence over the guerrillas. Above all, they all said that without Cuban aid, the containment of the guerrillas would be far easier.

Issue of Publication

Asked if they would publish their proof of Cuba's involvement with the rebels, they said probably not. The evidence comes from sensitive intelligence sources that would be jeopardized by publication, they said.

Asked if they thought publication of the evidence would be likely to convince skeptics that Cuba was helping the rebels, almost all said it would not. But all said the evidence was sufficient to convince every intelligence agency of the executive branch.

Nor is there any disagreement in the Administration that the economic situation in El Salvador is very bad and getting worse. Officials said the gross domestic product, exclusive of trade, had declined almost 25 percent in the last three years. They also agreed that it would take a long time and much outside financial support to turn this tide.

The differences of opinion among officials were almost entirely over the political and military situation. Key State Department officials below the Secretary and a few high civilian officials in the Pentagon were the only ones who said there was political or military stability or even signs of improvement. The Central Intelligence Agency and military officers were to varying degrees more pessimistic.

The doubters said they thought the situation was deteriorating and did not know what the Administration could do about it. Military action to halt supplies to the guerrillas, they pointed out, had

been judged by the Joint Chiefs to be either too risky or unworkable.

More aid, they contended, would not help much unless the Administration applied great pressure on the Duarte Government and the military for political and economic changes. But, in their view, the Administration had shown its unwillingness to use all the leverage it could.