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UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY
TO BALTIMORE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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I am delighted to be here this evening and to have the opportunity to speak to you.

Central America is closer to Baltimore than is California--in terms of geographic distance, that is. But the intellectual distance between here and Central America is enormous. Most of the American people are not well informed about Central America; many are misinformed; and some are outright disdainful about the cultural and social importance of this region.

You all have an obligation to remedy this situation, so that you and your representatives in Congress can engage in constructive support--or constructive criticism--of the Administration's policy.

To begin with, you should know that the President's policy for Central America has not yet been given a chance to work: the blocking votes in Congress have denied the President the means to succeed.

Indeed, members of Congress have involved themselves in the management of US policy for Central America more than for any other region of the world.

- While Congress has quickly and easily approved some four and a half billion dollars in Security Assistance for nations in the Mediterranean region, it slashed nearly in half the much smaller allocation for nations in the Caribbean region--so much closer to home.
- While Congress has been generally supportive of the deployment of some 1200 U.S. Marines to Lebanon, it fought fiercely to limit the number of US trainers in El Salvador to 55.

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- While Congress has not objected to large military exercises in the faraway Indian Ocean region, it many members have heavily criticized the recent military exercises in the nearby Caribbean region.
- While Congress has for a long time supported Radio Free Europe, the fine radio program that brings the truth to the people of Eastern Europe, members of Congress have delayed for two years President Reagan's request for Radio Marti, a new radio station that would bring the truth to the people in Cuba.

As we consult with members of Congress on these issues, we are often told that, you, their constituents, are pressing such positions on them. But as we review the public opinion polls, we discover an extraordinary lack of information. For example, in a recent New York Times/CBS poll, only 8 percent of the respondents knew, both for El Salvador and Nicaragua, whether the US was supporting the government or the insurgents.

You must help us overcome not only a lack of information, but also a great deal of misinformation. This misinformation is not accidental; it is the result of a well-organized and well orchestrated effort. A fabric of fiction has been tightly woven to conceal the essential facts. Let me review with you some of these fictions:

Fiction has it that US influence in Central and Latin America has prevented democratic development, that the spread of Leninist regimes is the tide of history, a natural process of social reform that we should not oppose. The fact is that the trend toward democratization has continued: among the 32 independent states of Latin America and the Caribbean, 17 are now democratic. Since 1978, five countries have made a peaceful transition from military regimes to elected democratic governments. It is the much criticized military regimes that are often transformed into a democracy; but there has never yet been a Marxist-Leninist regime that was succeeded by democracy.

Another bit of fiction: that the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua would have developed into a pluralistic democracy, had it not been for the US intervention. The fact is that the Sandinistas, only a few weeks after they came into power, reneged on their promise for early elections, began to attack the democratic trade unions, and invited Cuban military and security personnel in steadily growing numbers. Yet, during the first 18 months of the Sandinista regime, the United States provided more than \$120 million in direct aid and endorsed over \$220 million in Inter-American Development Bank aid -- more than the previous Somoza regime in Nicaragua had received from the United States in twenty years! Clearly, it was not US interference that drove the Sandinistas to link up with Fidel Castro -- unless economic aid

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is regarded as "interference."

Another piece of fiction is the charge that the Reagan Administration is "militarizing" the problems of Central America and is bringing the East-West conflict to the region. Well, the East is already here. The Soviets are giving ten times as much military assistance to Cuba and Nicaragua as we are providing to all of Latin America. And Soviet military advisors in Cuba and Nicaragua outnumber US military advisors in the Caribbean region twenty to one.

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Since Congress is so deeply involved in our day-to-day policy towards Central America, our key objectives need to be clear to the American people. Moreover, Congress must share with the Administration an understanding of our basic strategy.

On one thing we can all agree: We do not want the United States to fail. We must succeed.

But what is it we would like to see happen, and what do we want to prevent? We have wide agreement, I believe, that the United States favors a continuation and strengthening of the trend toward open, genuine democracy. And we favor social and economic betterment for the people in Central America, a region so close to us.

Equally important is what we want to prevent. We want to prevent the expansion of totalitarian regimes -- particularly Leninist ones, since they will import Stalinist police systems, bring in Soviet arms, and even invite Soviet military bases. There are two more reasons why Leninist regimes are particularly dangerous: once entrenched, they tend to become irreversible, and they usually seek to export their totalitarianism to other nations.

Given these objectives, what should be our strategy?

I.

First, we want to help build the road toward democracy and economic development. In the end, the people in each country will have to make their own choices. They can succeed only through their own dedicated effort. But we can help, through advice and influence, by facilitating trade, and by giving aid. The Caribbean Basin Initiative of the Reagan Administration (to which Congress has now agreed) is right on target. So are our efforts in El Salvador in behalf of elections and for improvements in the judicial system.

Also, we are using diplomacy to help the government of El Salvador win over those who are willing to abandon violence and compete in elections, provided they can be assured of safe and fair participation. But we must not underestimate our adversaries. The hard core among the insurgents will never settle for a fair democratic process. We can no more negotiate an acceptable political solution

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with these people then the social democrats in revolutionary Russia could have talked Lenin into giving up totalitarian Bolshevism.

II.

This leads us to the second requirement. As Secretary Shultz recently explained, the guerillas in El Salvador have used a "rule or ruin" strategy: they seek to destroy economic assets faster than our aid can restore them. You cannot have economic development in a nation, if guerilla forces keep blowing up bridges, power lines, school buldings, buses ... You have to defeat these "rule or ruin" forces militarily. This is the purpose for our military assistance.

Every so often the critics of the Administration proclaim -- with accusatory connotation -- that we seek a "military solution" in El Salvador. If a "military solution" means putting primary emphasis on military assistance and military means, then it is more factual to accuse the Reagan Administration of seeking an "economic solution," since three dollars out of four in the requested assistance programs are for economic aid.

What we seek to do is to open the doors to democracy and close the doors to violence. But we have to use military means against those who insist--till they have imposed their rule-- on using violence.

Let me make this clear to you:

- We do not seek a military defeat for our friends.
- We do not seek a military stalemate.
- We seek victory for the forces of democracy.

And that victory has two components:

One: Defeating militarily those organized forces of violence that refuse to accept the democratic will of the people.

Two: establishing an adequate internal system for justice and personal security.

At this point, let us recall our first agreed principle: We do not want the United States to fail. Hence, we must a group in allocate sufficient means so that we can succeed. As long as Congress keeps crippling the President's military assistance program, we will have a policy always shy of success. We will remain locked into a protracted failure.

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This the American people should not tolerate. If we are merely involved to fail, then we should not be involved at all.

The resources needed to succeed are small compared to our investment for security in other regions of the world. Once those in Congress who are now blocking adequate assistance give us the means to succeed, the capability and determination of the United States will become clear. This will make the Soviet Union more cautious, which in turn will help our success. On the other hand, if we signal that we are afraid of victory over the forces of violence, if we signal that we have opted for protracted failure, we will only encourage the Soviets to redouble their effort. We will be inviting ever-increasing difficulties.

III.

The third requirement of US strategy for Central America is least well understood. We should seek to prevent the partition of Central America, a division of this region into two spheres, one linked to the Soviet bloc and one linked to the United States. Such a partition would inexorably lead to a hostile confrontation of large military forces, a confrontation that could last for decades.

We can see how such a confrontation works, as we look at Cuba. During the 24 years of the Castro dictatorship, while the standard of living deteriorated and human rights were widely violated, Cuba built up a large military establishment. It has the second largest army in Latin America (second only to Brazil), it has some 200 MIG fighter aircraft, submarines, 6000 to 8000 Soviet advisors, and several Soviet intelligence installations. In addition, Castro has sent some 30 to 40 thousand troops abroad to provide the mercenary forces to protect the Soviet imperial outposts. As a result of the militarization of Cuba, our sealines to NATO are now seriously threatened.

The Sandinista regime in Nicaragua is determined to create a "second Cuba" in Central America. Ever since they seized power, the Sandinistas embarked on a major military buildup. Today, they have a much larger army than Somoza ever had, and they have expressed the intention to build the largest force in Central America. Nicaragua is building new military airfields, and is importing Soviet tanks, helicopters, armored vehicles, and other equipment.

This "second Cuba" in Nicaragua would be more dangerous than Castro's Cuba since it shares hard to defend borders with Honduras and Costa Rica. The Sandinistas have already started terrorist activities in both these countries. In addition, Nicaragua provides essential support for the insurgency in El Salvador.

Even after the insurgency in El Salvador has been brought under control, Nicaragua--if it continued on its present course--would be the bridgehead and arsenal for insurgency for Central America. And once the Sandinistas have acquired the military strength that they have long been planning for, they might well

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use that strength for direct attacks on their neighbors to help speed up the "revolution without frontiers" that they promised us.

At that time, the only way to help protect the democracies might be for the United States to place forward deployed forces in these countries, as in Korea or West Germany. Clearly, we must prevent such a partition of Central America.

In the Democrats' response to President Reagan's April 27 address on Central America to a Joint Session of Congress, Senator Dodd said: "We will oppose the establishment of Marxist states in Central America." Yet, a majority in the House of Representatives has done exactly the opposite. It voted to oppose US assistance to those who oppose the establishment of a Marxist state in Nicaragua. That is to say, a blocking majority in the House, in effect, voted to establish a sanctuary for the Sandinistas.

Congressional legislation to deny US support to the democratic resistance forces in Nicaragua would turn Nicaragua into a sanctuary from which the nations of Central America could be safely attacked, but in which US supported forces could not operate. This would enable the promoters of totalitarianism-- while being supplied and replenished by Cuba and the Soviet bloc--to attack neighboring countries indefinitely, and always with impunity. Hence, it would deprive the Marxist groups in El Salvador of any incentive to compromise. Indeed, if such legislation were passed, the Sandinistas and Cubans might well find it safe to increase their assistance to the insurgents in El Salvador and to step up the destabilization of Honduras and Costa Rica. This, after all, would be fully consistent with their presently declared objectives; and the guaranteed sanctuary would render such escalation almost risk-free.

The psychological impact from cutting off US assistance to the Nicaraguan resistance forces fighting for democracy in their native land would be severe. Such a cut off would signal throughout the region that the totalitarian Leninist forces represent the winning side. The democratic forces would have cause to despair. They would see that terrorist and insurgent attacks against them are being generously supported by Cuba and the Soviet bloc, and that these attacks could be conducted from safe havens that would be protected by the US Congress, in effect, from all counter-interference. Conversely, the totalitarian Leninist force would know that as soon as they seize control of a country, they will be secure: Cuba and the Soviet bloc will help them maintain an efficient police machinery to repress the people; and should any group arise to fight for freedom, the United States Congress would have denied it all support.

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Let me recapitulate.

Our basic objectives for Central America are clear: we want to strengthen democracy; we want to prevent in this hemisphere the expansion of totalitarian regimes, especially those linked to the Soviet Union.

To this end, we extend economic support and promote democratic development. But given forces of violence that will not accept the democratic will of the people, we also have to provide military assistance--enough to succeed. In addition, we must prevent consolidation of a Sandinista regime in Nicaragua that would become an arsenal for insurgency, a safe haven for the export of violence. If we cannot prevent that, we have to anticipate the partition of Central America. Such a development would then force us to man a new military front-line of the East-West conflict, right here on our continent.

To prevent such an outcome, the Administration and Congress must work together with a strategy that can succeed.

END