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SUBJECT Congressmen Solomon & Studds/Nicaragua

NEWSWOMAN: It's a story with all the classic trappings of CIA involvement; smuggled arms, well trained guerrillas, a left-leaning Central American country under attack, and a U.S. president denouncing the country as a hotbed of communism. A new Cuba involved in spreading arms and revolution throughout Latin America.

NEWSMAN: The country is Nicaragua, and the evidence is mounting every day that the CIA, with the support of Ronald Reagan, is backing a group of counter-revolutionaries fighting the Sandanista regime of the sparsely populated region of Northern Nicaragua.

[Sounds of bombs and gunshots.]

For a secret war, it has received an extraordinary glare of publicity. These pictures are of a training exercise, real bullets, in a counter-revolutionary camp in the Honduras countryside. Key American legislators believe these men are being trained with CIA money to overthrow the Sandanista regime in Managua, and the legislators want it stopped. Government officials have consistently refused to discuss covert activities, but there's been so much pressure on the Administration, Ronald Reagan was forced to hold a mini-news conference on Nicaragua. He denied the U.S. was trying to overthrow the government.

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN: Anything that we're doing in that area is simply trying to interdict the supply lines, which are supplying guerrillas in El Salvador.

NEWSMAN: Inside the training camp, one of the leaders of the Contras, as the insurgents are known, has a very different

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message. Edgar Chamorro is one of the leaders of the Nicaragua Democratic Front.

EDGAR CHAMORRO: We are fighting here, not to stop the flow of arms to El Salvador. We're not fighting here to just put little pressures so the Sandanista might calm down, they might calm down, they might slow down. We're fighting Sandanista because we are principle, we think this is a crusade.

NEWSMAN: Reporters who have traveled with the Contras and who have visited their training camp say that, for a guerrilla force they are remarkably well trained and armed. Most of the materiel comes from the United States, and although this man, who goes by the nom de guerre Commander Francis says, most arms are captured from the Sandanistas. He couldn't explain why they're still neatly in their original packing cases.

COMMANDER FRANCIS: We think that for guerrilla force we have just about all the weapons we need.

NEWSMAN: All along the mountainous terrain on the Honduras/Nicaragua border, there have been a series of clashes between Contras and the Sandinistas. There are charges that the United States has set up and manned a sophisticated listening system to pass on valuable intelligence to the counter revolutionaries. The Contras crossed by foot over the rugged terrain into Nicaragua. They use classic guerrilla techniques, hit and run attacks on small towns. Both sides are exaggerating the intensity of the fighting, but people are dying, and an economy pinched by a cut off of aid is further disrupted.

The Sandinistas charge that the Contras are ex-national guardsmen, followers of the deposed dictator Anastasio Somoza. Most of the rebel leadership did serve under Somoza, but the rank and file are also disillusioned Sandinistas and peasants hard hit by a destroyed economy. The government in Managua is using the two-fisted threat of the U.S. backed Somoza inspired counter revolution for all its worth, to rally its own people. In an interview with The Journal earlier this year, Foreign Minister Miguel Disquoto(?) denied American charges that Nicaragua's true aim is to export Cuban style revolution throughout Central America.

MIGUEL DISQUOTO: Before you know, in 1928, American invasion to Nicaragua was try to -- they tried to justify it on the basis that Nicaragua was on the verge of becoming a second Mexico. Now they say that we are going to become a second Cuba. We are becoming nothing but a first, truely and authentically democratic, independent sovereign Nicaragua.

NEWSWOMAN: The Reagan Administration makes no bones about its opposition to the Sandanista regime, but it is bound by law of Congress to refrain from acting to overthrow the govern-

ment of Nicaragua. That law is known as the Boland Amendment. The congressmen who sponsored it and other major congressional leaders charged that the Administration has clearly violated it. Opposition in Congress is so strong, President Reagan plans to go before a Joint Session of Congress next week, to defend his Central American policy.

Congressman Gerry Studds is one of the outspoken critics of the Reagan policy. Congressman Gerald Solomon says the President has not violated any laws.

Congressman Studds, is it the letter of the law or the spirit of the law that you think is being broken here?

CONGRESSMAN GERRY STUDDS: There's no question in my mind that the law is being broken in every respect, and when I say the law, I don't even necessarily mean the so-called Boland Amendment. One can argue and split hairs, as people have been doing for the past week or two over that.

I would have preferred a much more clearly written law, which is the Charter of the Organization of American States, which states that no nation has the right to intervene directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state. Under the Constitution of the United States, the treaties are made and ratified by the Senate, are the law of the land, the supreme law of the land according to the Constitution. That seems to me abundantly clearly, and it seems to me tragically sadly clear that we're violating that law.

NEWSWOMAN: Now, how do you take, then, the Administration's stand, its position, its argument, that it is not attempting to overthrow the government of Nicaragua or to interfere, but to put pressure on it in order to stop the arms flow from Nicaragua to El Salvador?

CONGRESSMAN STUDDS: Well, the Administration is attempting to make that argument with respect to the Boland Amendment. The Administration, for understandable reasons, does choose to discuss the OAS Charter, because it simply is unarguable.

We are interfering. The only question is, what the purpose of that interference is, and one can haggle forever whether the purpose is to overthrow the government or whether the purpose is to harass the government or to intimidate the government or annoy the government, but the fact of the matter is, apparently, that a good many thousands of people armed and trained and financed by the United States are inside the territory of Nicaragua. If that is not interference, the English language, which is already badly wounded in Washington, has departed the field altogether.

NEWSWOMAN: Mr. Solomon, do you feel that the United States Administration is on strong ground when it says that it is not trying to overthrow the government?

CONGRESSMAN GERALD SOLOMON: I don't think there's any question about it, and I can understand why Congressman Studds does not want to talk about the Boland Amendment because there's no question that the United States Government is not in violation of the Boland Amendment.

Further, I think it's an outrageous assumption to think that the Reagan Administration or President Reagan, who happens to be one of the most principled presidents that this country has ever had, would even support or condone any kind of action that would be in violation of either the Constitution or any law of the United States.

If there is any involvement whatsoever, it is the involvement of the United States to prevent weapons and arms from going into El Salvador. The same people that are bringing up the subject that we are in violation of the Boland Amendment and are aiding and abetting any kind of guerrilla activities in Nicaragua, are those same members of Congress who want us out of El Salvador.

There are just as many of us in Congress that don't want international communism to spread anywhere in the world, much less in Central America and on to the shores and adjacent to the United States of America. As a matter of fact, just in the last 48 hours four planes have been stopped in Brazil and detained there. They were supposed to be carrying medical supplies from Libya to Nicaragua. Those planes, according to Brazilian Government, were loaded with Russian and Soviet made arms going into Nicaragua, the same kind of arms that are being used in El Salvador against a duly elected democratic government in that country.

NEWSWOMAN: But the Nicaraguan government has more and more excuses to tell its people that it needs the arms because of United States interference. Doesn't it?

CONGRESSMAN SOLOMON: Well let me just say this, that the --I don't put any faith in anything that the Sandanistian government says. They haven't lived up to any of their promises during the revolution. And that's why many of the people that supported the revolution have subsequently left the Sandanistan support, and are no longer in support of that government. They haven't lived up to their agreement to be a non-allied country. They haven't lived up to their agreement for political pluralism in Nicaragua, preservation of private property, freedom of speech, press and religion. So, I put no faith in what the Nicaraguan government has to say.

NEWSWOMAN: Congressman Studds, if what you wanted to do

was to stop the flow of arms into El Salvador from Nicaragua, Cuba wherever, what would be the way to do it?

CONGRESSMAN STUDDS: Well, I think the best way to do it, first of all, would be to do it in a way that respected the law of the United States. We could make the evidence public, whatever it may be. We could take it to the Organization of American States and seek the kinds of regional sanctions that are available pursuant to both domestic and international law.

The question isn't whether one wishes or does not wish to stop the spread of international communism, these horrible bugaboos we keep hearing about in this hemisphere. There isn't a member of the United States Congress that wants to see communism spread to the -- throughout the hemisphere. I would trust that would go without saying, although one wonders, given the number of times that some of our colleagues feel like they have to say it.

The question is, how one can most effectively stop it. My contention is that those who argue that the United States must act like the Soviet Union in order to compete with the Soviet Union, do a fundamental disservice to what I like to think the United States stands for; which is to say something very different from what the Soviet Union stands for, which is to say, among other things, respect for the law.

It seems to me that if you argued that you have to fight fire with fire, which is essentially the argument of the Reagan Administration, that they're doing it so we have to do, that it's too darned bad that the world is as cold and ugly as it is, that if they're going to put arms in there, we have to put arms in there. That if you make that argument you don't have history or morality or law on your side. And in addition to being illegal and politically inept and unnecessary, it has -- and you think this -- if the other three disqualifications didn't mean anything to Reagan and his people, you think this might, it won't work.

NEWSWOMAN: Okay, let me put that to Congressman Solomon, because we hear that charge more and more often, Mr. Solomon, that the whole policy is counterproductive; that the United States supports the wrong people, loses the support of the populations in the area, and achieves the exact end that it wishes to avoid.

CONGRESSMAN SOLOMON: Let me specifically use as an example, El Salvador. Through American intervention and American encouragement, we now have a duly elected democratic government in El Salvador that has made tremendous strides.

NEWSWOMAN: You know that is debated all the time and disputed?

CONGRESSMAN SOLOMON: Well it can be disputed. I just got back from El Salvador and I saw firsthand where I spoke to the Cardinal in Central America, who says the same thing that I'm saying, that tremendous strides have been made and it's through our support and our encouragement that we now are going to have a truly elected government in El Salvador, and that's what American foreign policy seeks to achieve throughout the world.

NEWSWOMAN: Congressman Studds, let me ask you if you have any concern that in the general picture, in its fight against global communism, the United States is seen to be fighting with one arm tied behind its back; whether because it's such an open society, because covert actions are never really covert, because Congress wants to examine everything that happens and pass laws.

CONGRESSMAN STUDDS: No, I don't think, with perhaps some limited exceptions where there is a genuine assault on our own security in a direct way.

The covert activities of this nature are within the American character, within the character of the history and the people and the values of the United States. The Secretary of State says that we can't -- we won't tolerate talking to people who want to shoot their way into power in El Salvador. Well for heaven sakes, he's the same person who's arming the people who are shooting their way or attempting to shoot their way into power in Nicaragua.

Who are we to criticize with impact and meaning and with telling effect, around the world, the behavior of the Soviet Union and what they perceive to be their spirit influence. For example in Poland or Afghanistan, if in -- for our own part in what we perceive to be our spirit influence as a superpower, we allow ourselves to act in essentially the same way. After all, here you have two American congressmen essentially debating the internal affairs of what are supposed to be sovereign nations in this hemisphere. That ought to give you some idea of why the United States has difficulty down there.

CONGRESSMAN SOLOMON: Well again, let me, let me just quote the communist guerrilla, Sebastian Carpio(?) who said in August of 1980, he heads up the guerrilla movement in El Salvador; "The revolutionary process in Central America is a single process and sooner or later we will take over all of Central America." I think that's what the real argument's about and there are those of us in the Congress and President Reagan does not intend to see that happen.

NEWSWOMAN: Congressman Solomon and Studds, thank you both very much.

CONGRESSMAN SOLOMON: You're very welcome.

CONGRESSMAN STUDDS: Thank you.