

PAUL DUKE moderator with the following guests: David Rogers of The Wall Street Journal and Hedrick Smith of The New York Times.

DUKE: In the meantime, the Democrats have some squabbles of their own over foreign policy, David, and there seems to be a deepening split now within the Democratic Party over Central American policy. ROGERS: Well, Paul, there's, there were two issues up before the Senate this week, and it's a debate that ran since last week. One was the funding for Nicaragua, the 60, \$21 million for Nicaragua, the covert action there, the war that's going on there. And the second is the El Salvador money which was \$62 million. Now in the case of El Salvador, the split is most apparent, and it's been going on for some time, but in this debate it became more visible. It reflect Kenne..., Senator Kennedy from Massachusetts took the lead for the liberal opposition. And on, but he was undercut effectively in his own party by the loss of Southern conservatives, who as a region tend to be more sympathetic with aid to El Salvador. However, it's a much broader thing than that. I mean, the liberals lost traditional allies such as Senator Bill Ba... Bradley, from New Jersey, and they lost Senator John Glenn from Ohio, and various votes didn't... and they were really isolated effectively by three-to-one margins often in the votes.

SMITH: What about the House, David. I mean the House leadership is divided, too. You have Tip O'Neill coming from Massachusetts, Jim Wright coming from Texas, Wright closer to Central America, and so forth. How's it going to fare in the House? ROGERS: Well, the issue, Rick, is that they have to go to conference, and that is a particular procedure that the House-Senate conference said it will be a difficult one to sort out. The time is running against the administration in the sense that they both, they have to reach a conference report and bring it out next week before they go home for the spring recess. That will be difficult to do. Mr. O'Neill remains adamantly opposed, particularly to the aid to Nicaragua. And I think the focus really has to be divided between the El Salvador and the Nicaraguan questions. With the El Salvador elections, there is a kind of feeling to keep up some, some money for the El Salvador government until we know more about the elections. In the case of Nicaragua, that has caused increased concern, particularly because of the mining of the ports there. There's been reports that, I mean, sources have told me that the mining was, is being done through CIA operatives and that there's a, it is not the insurgents in Nicaragua who are handling it, but, in fact, it's self-contained units from outside of Nicaragua.

DUKE: If that's true, during the debate the president sent a letter up to the Senate leader, Howard Baker, in which he said the United States does not seek to destabilize or overthrow the government of Nicaragua. Now, if, if the CIA is involved in, in the mining of the harbors in Nicaragua, that would indicate there's a real question about what the president is telling Congress. ROGERS: Well, the issue, the whole justification for the Nicaragua operation is to interdict arms. The justification, then, for mining the ports is that you are then interrupting the flow of arms through those ports. It's the interdiction of arms from, from Nicaragua to El Salvador. The difficulty, of course, is that the mines don't know the difference between a ship that's carrying arms and a ship that's carrying wheat. And this is, this has definitely concerned members of Congress about the impact on economic targets. I think part of our larger

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discussion here, Congress is very good at expressing concern. Whether they're good at doing anything about it is unclear, and I think that there are people up there, for example, who vote three to one for El Salvador money who vote two to one for Nicaragua. And then when they're confronted with an amendment that says, 'But let's not give it to someone who's going to overthrow the government,' then it's a close vote. And it's sort of, they don't, they are willing to give the money to the president, but then they want to sort of set their conditions that sort of ease their own misgivings about the policy. They're good at that, but Senator Daniel Moynihan, Patrick Moynihan is the vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, and it's almost like one of the best kept secrets in Washington, is that he supports the covert aid. I mean, he's always expressing his concern. He was the, really, the impetus behind that letter.

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