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CONGRESS/
SALVADORAN AID

LEHRER: President Reagan said in a written statement today, his Central American aid package with a \$117 million in military aid to El Salvador is vitally urgent. He urged Congress to authorize it without further delay. But since Congress breaks for it's summer recess tomorrow that doesn't leave much time. And the division between the House and Senate on the El Salvador issue is a wide one. The House having passed a version with the special \$117 million out, last night the Senate passing one with it in. Judy Woodruff reports on the administration's efforts to win final passage and the debate about it. Judy.

WOODRUFF: Jim, a joint House-Senate conference committee is just now sitting down to work to resolve the issue. And in preparation for that the administration has pulled out all the stops to help make the case that El Salvador needs extra military aid. The U.S. Ambassador to Salvador, Thomas Pickering, and the top U.S. general in Central America, Paul Gorman, have both been up on Capitol Hill, trying to persuade legislators that the Salvadoran government is fighting rebels armed by Nicaragua. To back up those contentions, the State Department yesterday released, for the first time publicly, what it has been talking about for months privately. Intelligence films, taken at night, by planes using night-seeing photographic equipment. As one example, on the night of July 10, U.S. intelligence agents, flying in a AC-130 aircraft, photographed a large shrimp boat and two small boats 10 miles off the coast of El Salvador. The videotape and narration of that incident that we will show you now were prepared by the State Department. UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER: You are now observing the shrimper and the two boats on low-light television. The shrimper, which is 75 feet in length, has a smaller boat in tow. It has it's outriggers extended on both sides, as if to give the appearance of fishing. It is running with lights on, also to avoid suspicion. The two smaller boats, both 18 feet in length, have square-shaped sterns. It is likely that the shrimper had completed a transfer of material to the two 18 foot boats just prior to the arrival of the *'bill kirk.' When the shrimper realized that the *'bill kirk' aircraft was overhead, it began to move away from the smaller boats in a southwesterly direction, towards open seas. The shrimper quickly attained high speed, again, not indicative of normal shrimping procedure. For the time being, the two 18-foot boats remained in place. Upon the arrival of the *'bill kirk', the two boats pushed apart and began to move toward the Salvadoran coast. The boats quickly attained high speed, estimated at between 20 and 25 knots. On three occasions during the boat's movement toward shore one of the boats stopped, apparently to check

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if the *'bill kirk' aircraft was still overhead. During one such stop, shown here, a crew member of one boat apparently threw an object overboard. Aircraft crew members saw this activity through their night-vision goggles. When the boats landed on the beach, they were met by personnel noted on the screen as 'hot spots.' Of particular note, a crate was apparently off-loaded from one of the boats on to the shore. We have freeze-framed the imagery here to better outline the crate, which is just off the bow of the boat in the center of the screen. At this location along the southeastern coast of El Salvador, *'bill kirk' imaged what appeared to be the formation of a pack-animal train on the beach in the early morning hours of 11 July. After forming up, the personnel at the lead of the formation led the train inland. The larger 'hot spots' you see are probable pack animals, the smaller 'hot spots' are personnel. Notice also that the smaller 'hot spots' are leading the larger 'hot spots' as apparently a man would lead a pack animal. Notice also, the interval that is maintained by the 'hot spots' leaving the beach at the head of the column.

WOODRUFF: To assess the impact of these intelligence videotapes and to look at the overall aid prospects for Central America, we turn to the U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering and to a leading critic of administration policy in El Salvador, New York Democratic Congressman Stephen Solarz. First of all, Mr. Ambassador, I think to the

untrained eye a lot of that film looked like little white blobs and it was kind of hard to make out exactly what it was. Is this the best evidence that the administration has. THOMAS PICKERING: No, of course not. At the introduction to the briefing, we made it clear that no single piece of evidence presented in a 45-minute briefing, but the debriefing itself, putting together painstakingly collected bits of information from many sources, perhaps as many as 40 or 50 separate pieces of information, brought together a picture of four incidents of importance in establishing the fact that the smuggling of supplies was taking place into El Salvador. The other important thing to recognize, and it was made clear at the briefing, perhaps your correspondent missed that, was that these were pictures taken on a 900 plus line-scan television, compared with a 500-scan in which they were shown. Because of technical problems, people don't have that kind of definition. So the crew that identified these in the aircraft had approximately twice or perhaps even more, definition possibilities to understand what these things were. In addition, of course, it had long experience in looking at this kind of material and having it verified on the ground. So obviously, nothing relates solely to those fuzzy-defined (sic) videotapes.

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WOODRUFF: So how do you know that what you're saying, the State Department representative was saying these things were, were what they were. I mean, the crate, the people, and whatever the other... PICKERING: Because, as I made clear, we have pictures taken in the original mode, which is much clearer, because for technical reasons, the common television isn't able to reproduce it. Secondly, we've had long experience in checking against what's happening on the ground, what happens in the air. So we know what men look like from the air, we know what animals look like from the air.

WOODRUFF: All right. Then let me just ask you briefly, what does it all add up to? What does it prove?

PICKERING: Well, the total briefing, not just this videotape, which is only part of it, adds up to a great deal of evidence indicating that supplies move to the guerrillas over the beaches, perhaps over land corridors, I'm certainly convinced myself the land corridors are very important. And we've been able to establish that the Nicaraguans themselves have admitted participation in this activity. And we've established with this kind of material, throughout the whole briefing, that Nicaragua is a very important point for moving these kinds of arms and equipment to the rebels, the guerrillas in El Salvador.

WOODRUFF: Congressman Solarz, does this persuade you?

REP. \STEPHEN \SOLARZ (D-N.Y.): I don't think these pictures, Judy, in and of themselves, prove anything. To suggest, as you did, that all one can see are a lot of white blobs, is to imply that it has a degree of precision, which I think is actually lacking in the pictures that we just saw. Nevertheless, having said that, let me say that having looked into the evidence over the course of the last several years, I personally believe that the Nicaraguans are deeply involved in efforts to provide arms and other forms of material assistance to the rebels in El Salvador. In that sense, I don't think these pictures, even if they, in fact, demonstrate what the State Department claims they demonstrate or show, show us anything or tell us anything we didn't already know. The real issue is not whether the Nicaraguans are helping the rebels in Salvador but what we ought to be doing about it.

WOODRUFF: All right, so then let's move on to that. Ambassador Pickering, how do these, does this evidence, the pictures and the rest of it, add up to the case that you are trying to make to the Congress that all this extra money is necessary. PICKERING: Well, I'm delighted Steve agrees with the assessment. We have, I think, no differences on that score. I think the action on the Hill

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indicates that people are skeptical about the need for more assistance for El Salvador at the present time. The very important point is that you have a scene change in the government, a new president committed to all the things that we would like to see Salvador committed to doing and moving in the direction of making changes in El Salvador in the human rights area, in the area of better government, in the area of improving their economic conditions, and for these reasons, we believe he, as the new president, very much deserves our support. President Reagan has presented a two-year package and obviously debate now is how to get that two-year package through Steve and his colleagues.

WOODRUFF: All right. Mr. Solarz. SOLARZ: The point I would make, Judy, is that over the course of the last several years, we've already provided El Salvador with about \$325 million in military assistance. For this year alone we've given them \$126 million in military assistance, and at the beginning of the next fiscal year, which starts on Oct. 1, only several weeks from now, they're scheduled to receive an additional \$132 million.

WOODRUFF: But they're asking for \$117 million for the rest of this fiscal year. SOLARZ: On top of the \$126 million, they've already gotten and on top of the \$132 million they're scheduled to receive as of Oct. 1.

WOODRUFF: And you say they shouldn't get any of the \$117 is that it. SOLARZ: I think it would be premature to provide it at this time for two reasons. First of all, we've already given El Salvador over 10 times as much military assistance as the guerrillas have received from their outside supporters in Nicaragua, in Cuba and elsewhere.

WOODRUFF: All right, let's stop and ask Ambassador Pickering. PICKERING: Well, I don't know where Steve gets his math. Up until that 10-times figure, I tracked along with him. I don't think there's any way of establishing that. Everybody knows, of course, that a 10-to-1 force ratio, perhaps 10-to-1, is required to deal with guerrillas, whatever that may be. The math is not important. What we've had here, year after year, is the Congress dribbling out assistance, keeping Salvador on, in effect, starvation wages. The president has come in with a two-year program designed to improve the capacity of the Salvadoran military to deal with the security situation.

WOODRUFF: But how do you justify this four-fold increase? Last year the appropriation was \$81 million. PICKERING: Last year the president asked for \$130 million. This year we have finally succeeded with all the impetus of the national bipartisan commission report, to their

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dis-statement to the president that he urgently needed this money, he needed an increase, that we are somewhere below what he asked for last year and well, well, in my view what we got last year was barely enough to stay alive. SOLARZ: The figures that I cited, Judy, about the amount of support which has been received by the rebels in El Salvador come from our own intelligence agencies. It is indisputable that we have given far more military assistance to the government than the guerrillas have gotten from either Nicaragua or Cuba. Yet, in spite of that fact, the guerrillas are probably stronger today than they were a few years ago. The reason I think is,....

WOODRUFF: But that could be an argument for more aid, couldn't it? SOLARZ: No, but the main problem. I don't think so, because the main problem, which the Salvadoran military has, in my judgement, is not so much a function of an absence of arms or ammunition. It has to do with ineffective leadership, with inadequate motivation, with corruption and the like. And unless they can get their own act together, I think all of the military assistance in the world will do them relatively little good.

WOODRUFF: All right, quickly, Mr. Ambassador. PICKERING: Quickly on that, the Salvadoran military leadership went through an enormous organizational change in November of 1983. Since then, we have seen forces in the field much more often, fighting at night, as well as the daytime. In the period since the first of January right on through to now, they have dominated by maintaining the initiative, the battlefield. There is no question at all in my mind that more assistance is required. It's clearly demonstrated by all the facts and figures that we have presented. And now is not the time to undermine a democratic leader by cutting his assistance.

WOODRUFF: All right, two last quick questions. What do you think the prospects are, Mr. Congressman, in conference committee. How much do you think? You think they'll get something, right? The question is how much. SOLARZ: I doubt very much the administration will get all of the additional money it's requested because I think the House of Representatives, in particular, will want to know whether there's continued progress in eliminating the death squads and bringing the security forces under control.

WOODRUFF: All right, and Mr. Ambassador, what happens if you don't get everything you asked for, if you only get part of it? PICKERING: Well, if we don't get all of what we asked for, obviously the need will continue. That isn't going to go away because the Congress is not capable of facing up to the reality at this time.