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SUBJECT Interview with Senator Tom Harkin

DAVE HARTMAN: Congress votes next week on President Reagan's request for 14 million dollars in aid to the Nicaraguan rebels, the Contras they're called.

As the vote draws nearer, this debate is getting more and more intense. This morning, Senator Tom Harkin, who is a Democrat from Iowa, is releasing a report that accuses the Reagan Administration of lying to Congress about its Central American policies. Now this report, by the way, was prepared by the Institute for Policy Studies. It's a liberal research group down in Washington.

Senator Harkin is joining us now from Washington, and then we're going to talk with Ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick, our former Ambassador to the U.N., and, of course, she supports the Administration's policies.

Good morning, Senator.

SENATOR TOM HARKIN: Good morning, David.

HARTMAN: This report, I understand, deals with all of our policies toward Central America. Very specifically, outline for us, would you, the criticisms of our policy regarding Nicaragua.

SENATOR HARKIN: Basically, what we have put together here in this report is a compilation of a -- is a pattern extending over quite a few years of deceptions and distortions and duplicity by this Administration to mislead Congress as to

the true intent of the Administration's activities against Nicaragua.

Each instance taken by itself may not be significant, but when you add them all together we have about 77 instances where we can point that the Administration has deliberately misled Congress as to their true intentions, or we have about 15 other instances where the Administration has violated the law in their activities in Nicaragua, and what this really adds up to is the same kind of pattern that we saw develop as a prelude to the Vietnam war.

HARTMAN: The report, however, does not deal with the Sandinista government -- what? Actions over the last several years. They made commitments, promises to both the OAS and to members of our Congress to have completely open and free elections, to have freedom of religion, to have freedom of press. Why have you not included all of this information as well in this report?

SENATOR HARKIN: What we're concerned with is we're concerned with whether or not Congress is getting the facts from the Administration as to what their activities are against the government of Nicaragua.

Now it is true that the government of Nicaragua has not fulfilled all of the promises of the revolution. However, I would point out, David, that it was only a year-and-a-half after the revolution, after the country lay completely devastated because of Somoza and what he'd done to their country -- it was only a year-and-a-half after that this Administration came in and began tightening the screws down in Nicaragua. We literally did not give them a chance to get back on their feet, and ever since January of 1981 this Administration's policy towards Nicaragua has been solely to overthrow that government in Nicaragua.

As a result, they've funded the Contras who have engaged in -- in assassinations and terrorism and killing women and children, and as a result the Nicaraguans have had to defend themselves. I think the best course for democracy in Nicaragua is to end the support for the terrorists and the murderers who are going into Nicaragua now and to give the Nicaraguans some breathing room so that they can develop a democratic form of government.

HARTMAN: Senator Harkin, thank you very much.