

JAMES D. THEBERGE

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April 15, 1981

The Honorable Edwin Meese III
Counsellor to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Meese:

I wish to express my deep concern over the growing campaign in this country to erode public and Congressional support for the Reagan Administration's policy towards El Salvador. Having served as American Ambassador to Nicaragua in the mid-1970's I am well aware of what is at stake.

You may remember that I served on Governor Reagan's Foreign Policy Advisory Council and campaigned actively for the Reagan-Bush ticket last Fall. I am in complete agreement with our policy of providing both military and economic assistance to the present Government of El Salvador.

Our policy is widely perceived at home and abroad as a test case of the Administration's ability to halt the violent expansion of Soviet-Cuban supported communism in Central America, and by implication around the world. It is of the utmost importance to our national security that our policy succeed and that a communist takeover is prevented in El Salvador.

The initial momentum achieved by the Administration in late January and February--with the State Department's issuance of the White Paper demonstrating communist support for the Salvadoran insurgency and the dispatch of official envoys to inform our friends in Western Europe and Latin America--is now in danger of being lost. The initiative appears to be passing to the opponents of our policy. Various domestic Church and other lobbying groups, liberal Congressmen, and human rights groups have launched a campaign (which will include demonstrations in Washington this Spring) designed to influence public opinion and pressure Congress to halt military aid to El Salvador.

We must regain the initiative and ensure that public opinion and the Congress support the Administration's policy towards El Salvador (and our foreign policy more generally) over the next several months as the new foreign assistance legislation is prepared for voting upon this summer.

- 2 -

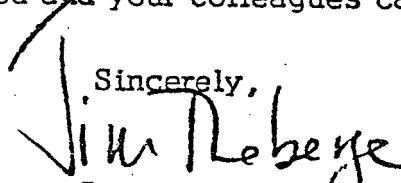
Only the President and the White House can provide the leadership required to regain lost momentum, reverse the declining public support for Administration policy towards El Salvador, and secure Congressional support for the policy--which are necessary conditions for the success of our Salvadoran policy. That is why I have taken the liberty of writing to you about this grave matter.

What must be done? I believe the first step must be to establish a special task force in the White House to mobilize public and Congressional support for the President's policy. It could be given such tasks as:

- guiding an intensified Congressional lobbying effort by the Administration.
- mobilizing friendly organizations and groups to lobby the Congress and take the Administration's message to the media and public fora.
- releasing a White Paper on the various factions that make up the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary left in El Salvador, their self-proclaimed political goals, and their links to the international terrorist network.
- inviting three of the five pro-government Bishops in El Salvador to visit the United States to meet with the Congress, the media and supportive Church groups.
- establishing a terrorist watch to collect and release to the public information about the Salvadoran terrorist linkages, and the states training and financing terrorists like Cuba and Libya.
- releasing a White Paper on Cuban involvement in Latin American and worldwide terrorism.
- mobilizing our Latin American and Western European allies behind our policy.
- inviting groups of editors to the White House for special briefings.

Having engaged American prestige and credibility in El Salvador--correctly so, in my opinion--we must now be successful. The revolutionary left in El Salvador and their allies in the United States see the chances for a military success weakening as we provide political-military support to the Government. The battle is shifting, as it always does in such cases, to Washington and the Congress. I trust that you and your colleagues can and will do something about this.

Sincerely,


James D. Theberge