

Gentlemen:

You have a fateful decision to make. I appreciate this chance to tell you why I and, indeed, the Executive Branch, can in no way acquiesce in, and why you should not make, a decision to deny support to resistance forces in Nicaragua.

It would be cataclysmic in its impact on the reputation and the credibility of our country as well as its long term geopolitical and national security position. It would send a signal to Latin America and around the world that would take a generation to live down.

President Reagan, in addressing the nation a week ago, spelled out the details of the Soviet-Cuban threat in our back yard. I will not repeat that. He laid out the critical moral issue in these words:

"If the Communists can start war against the people of El Salvador, then El Salvador and its friends are surely justified in defending themselves by blocking the flow of arms. If the Soviet Union can aid and abet subversion in our hemisphere, then the United States has a legal right and a moral duty to help resist it. This is not only in our strategic interest; it is morally right. It would be profoundly immoral to let peace-loving friends depending on our help be overwhelmed by brute force if we have any capacity to prevent it."

Let me address the decision you face in the specific terms of the responsibility you are in this room to discharge. How can you appropriate \$300 million for defense and withhold one ten-thousandth of that amount to continue support you've authorized for people who have put their lives on the

line, relying on your support, to resist aggression and oppression sponsored by the Soviet Union and their proxies in our own back yard?

How will the world react to such a decision? We've heard from President Suazo of Honduras. He believes that failure to provide additional funding could risk "losing everything" in Central America. Cutting off anti-Sandinistas now would convey impression of USG weakness and lack of concern for friends in the wake of Lebanon setback. The Communists are seeking to drive home harder than ever the message that the USG is an unreliable partner. Cutting off anti-Sandinistas would play right into their hands. That's Honduras speaking. In Costa Rica, President Monge stated that continued pressure on Sandinistas by the resistance is essential not only to any hope of successful negotiations in Contadora, but also to political stability in Costa Rica.

What are we risking in Central America? With the heavier Soviet supply and the intensified Cuban support we expect and are beginning to see, there is a good chance that within a year, perhaps earlier, the national security and geopolitical position of the United States will have been permanently worsened. This would represent an historic failure. The record would show that while the Soviet Union was committing over \$4 billion a year in military and economic assistance to and through Cuba and positioning some 6,000 Soviet troops and advisors in Cuba, with some 3,500 Cuban military advisors and 100 Soviet military advisors in Nicaragua, the United States tried to counter this with less than half a billion in economic and military assistance and a handful of military advisors for El Salvador and Honduras.