

NEWSWEEK  
2 April 1984

FOREIGN POLICY

# Congress Talks Back

**'Pure and Simple':** The administration's handling of the Salvadoran aid request was similarly graceless. The White House began the week with rhetorical broadsides in support of the \$93 million measure. "I believe it is being either naive or down-right phony to express concern for human rights while pursuing policies that lead to the overthrow of less-than-perfect democracies by Marxist dictatorships, which systematically crush all human rights," Reagan

himself told an audience of Cuban-Americans. Although many people think the trouble in Central America has been caused, at least in part, by widespread injustice, Reagan blamed it all on "a power play by Cuba and the Soviet Union, pure and simple."

**Retraction:** Opponents of the administration said it was trying to push the aid package through Congress in a hurry, for fear that Roberto D'Aubuisson, the alleged godfather of the right-wing death squads, might win the presidency in El Salvador, making further U.S. aid unlikely. But some of the critics came a cropper. Robert White, the former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador who has conducted a passionate crusade against Reagan's policy, was tripped up when he appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In February, White named six Salvadoran émigrés in Miami who, he said, were helping to organize and finance the death squads. When White arrived at last week's hearing, one of the men on his list, Arturo Muysshondt, 35, popped up alongside him. Muysshondt denied that he had any connection with the death squads, and his lawyer said White was being sued for \$10 million. The former ambassador conceded: "It appears my source may have been in error" about Muysshondt.

In another embarrassment for Reagan's foes, it was revealed that a former Salvadoran officer had been promised \$50,000 for information connecting D'Aubuisson to the death squads. The informant, whose identity was an ill-kept secret, told his story to members of Congress, to The New York Times and to CBS News. Two weeks

ago, NEWSWEEK identified him as retired Col. Roberto Eulalio Santivañez, once D'Aubuisson's boss in the security apparatus. Although people who knew him described Santivañez as an unsavory character, parts of his story rang true. But it did not help his credibility when the Times disclosed that Santivañez had been offered a financial "safety net" by a group of liberals, including White and Massachusetts businessman Philippe Villers.

Another of the tales told by Santivañez came out in time to embarrass the administration on the eve of the Salvadoran election. The informer claimed that Col. Nicolás Carranza, head of El Salvador's Treasury Police, one of the more notorious security services, was on the payroll of the Central Intelligence Agency. Previously, Santivañez had linked Carranza to the death squads. The CIA declined to comment, but the Times said other U.S. officials had confirmed that Carranza "received more than \$90,000 a year from the CIA as an informant for the last five or six years." Carranza insisted: "I don't know anyone in the CIA, nor have I ever accepted money from the U.S." He also said he was not involved with the death squads.

The propaganda blasts from both sides did not seem to change many minds in Congress. Eventually, Shultz and Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker worked out a compromise with the Democrats. The aid for El Salvador was cut back to \$61.7 million, still a political plus for the administration. Then, to the dismay of the Republican negotiators, the White House repudiated



Anne Nelson

Carranza: Death-squad chief, CIA agent—or neither?



Harry Mattison—Gamma-Liaison

White: 'In error'