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Critics of Reagan's Salvador Policy Find

Credibility Attacked

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Critics of the Reagan administration's policy in El Salvador have suffered attacks on their credibility in the last two days, just as the Senate has begun moving toward a vote on the controversial question of increased military aid to that country.

Robert White, former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador and now a leader of those who say the administration is shoring up a repressive regime there, has admitted that he wrongly named a Salvadoran living in this country as one of six who had organized and financed death-squad activity in El Salvador. White leveled the charge in congressional testimony last month in which he also accused the Reagan administration of a cover-up in El Salvador.

It was also disclosed yesterday that a former Salvadoran military officer who provided The New York Times and CBS News with detailed descriptions of the history and structure of the death squads has been given money by critics of administration policy.

Among other things, this former official is said to have charged that there are links between the CIA and the chief of El Salvador's feared Treasury police, Nicolas Carranza.

The Salvadoran debate has reached an urgent pitch in recent days, and the two new disclosures are part of a high-stakes information-disinformation game in which each side has attacked the other's image of human rights and political

dangers in that country. Administration critics hinted yesterday that pro-administration groups had helped in the staging of the two new developments.

White told a congressional subcommittee Feb. 2 that the Reagan administration has known for three years and has covered up certain knowledge that former major Roberto D'Aubuisson, a leading candidate for president of El Salvador, is "a terrorist, a murderer and a leader of death squads." White made public the contents of a Jan. 7, 1981, cable to Washington from the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador that named six Salvadorans living in Miami as the source of money, organization and planning for death-squad murders and threats.

"In a very real sense, the Reagan administration created Roberto D'Aubuisson the political leader," White charged.

Late Tuesday, as White was repeating this testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, chaired by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), an administration defender, one of the six Salvadorans appeared in the hearing room with his attorney and boxes of documents.

The attorney, Jerris Leonard, told the hearing that White had slandered the Salvadoran, Arturo Muyschondt, 35, of San Salvador. He said White should be stripped of the lifelong title of ambassador and announced that he had filed a \$10 million lawsuit against White.

White admitted that "the report I quoted may have named Arturo Muyschondt erroneously." He said he had learned of Muyschondt's suit three weeks ago and rechecked his information, and that the first name may have been reported incorrectly.

Helms, a vocal backer of admin-

istration efforts in Central America, pounced on White, asking if he were prepared to withdraw his other charges. White said no, that he had accurately reported the contents of the cable.

"You can certainly say that was a setup," White said yesterday. "Helms brought that guy in to say I said things I never said."

White was also involved, less directly, in the episode about the military officer. The New York Times reported yesterday that the officer had been promised \$50,000 by some administration critics, including White, "if he would speak out" to the public and Congress.

According to several administration critics in Congress who had rejoiced at the official's initial revelations March 3, yesterday's report in effect damaged The Times' source and further involved White in what seemed to be "a pretty sleazy operation," as one Senate aide put it.

But White and those who put the military officer in touch with the news media insisted that no deception was attempted. Leonel Gomez, formerly the No. 2 man in El Salvador's land-reform program and now a political refugee here, said in an interview that the officer had told White, three congressional aides and Gomez details of his story before the subject of money was raised.

"It was I that insisted we should come up with a safety net to provide for this man and get his family out of El Salvador," Gomez said. Funding was confirmed Feb. 11 from a Massachusetts businessman and from other individuals and foundations, he said, two days after the officer talked with Rep. James M. Shannon (D-Mass.) and Sen. Paul E. Tsongas (D-Mass.).

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