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## U.S. Aid to Nicaraguan Rebels— Lawmakers Speak Out

The Reagan administration's actions in Central America are engulfed in controversy on Capitol Hill—so much so that the President planned to make a televised speech to a joint session of Congress on April 27 to defend his policies.

One key issue: Should the U.S. be following its present course of giving aid to the rebels who are trying to overthrow Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista regime? The magazine asked key lawmakers that question. Excerpts from their replies—

### Representative Henry Hyde (R-Ill.):

Insofar as the Sandinistas are providing weapons, training and support to the Communist guerrillas in El Salvador, they must understand there's a price to be paid for that. I don't know that the administration is funding anti-Sandinista groups, but I hope it is.

Attempts by Congress to cut off funding will hamstring efforts to aid the democratically elected El Salvador government in resisting Communist guerrillas and at the same time will immunize the Sandinista government from freedom fighters attempting to regain their country from Communism.

We don't seem to know our friends from our adversaries in Central America.

### Representative Jim Leach (R-Iowa):

The administration is now saying it's not our program to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, although it may be the goal of the particular groups we are assisting. To accept that sophistry is to accept the notion of a tooth fairy.

One of the lessons of the post-World War II period is that great-power interventionism is an idea whose time has passed.

We cannot look at Nicaragua in a vacuum. Ironically, in El Salvador, we object to forces supported from abroad who are seeking to shoot their way into power. In Nicaragua, we are supporting forces that are attempting to shoot their way into power. We are the financiers of anarchy.

### Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.),

chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee: I think everything the President has done has been within his legal and constitutional rights. Everything the Central Intelligence Agency and other parts of the intelligence family have done has been within the law.

In my opinion, the Boland amendment [prohibiting the U.S. from using govern-



ment of Nicaragua] is unconstitutional. It's another example of Congress trying to take away the constitutional power of the President to be Commander in Chief and to formulate foreign policy. The role of Congress is to advise and consent. But Congress has gone way too far in telling the President how to run foreign policy.

### Representative Berkley Bedell (D-Iowa):

I came back from my recent trip to Nicaragua with three strong beliefs. First, what we are doing is morally wrong. These counterrevolutionaries are led by the security guards of former dictator Somoza. They were guilty of atrocities during the Somoza regime. Now they are sweeping through the countryside kidnapping and murdering innocent civilians. I met a grandmother whose grandson had been killed by the counterrevolutionaries that we are financing. She said to me: "I cannot understand why President Reagan wants to see our women and children killed when we have not meant to do anything to him." It's pretty hard to answer that question as an American.

Secondly, what we're doing is pragmatically wrong. We're giving the government of Nicaragua an excuse for some of its economic difficulties. We're pushing them more toward the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc.

Finally, I think it is legally wrong. The President is violating the law of the land and is not abiding by the treaties to which the U.S. is a party.

### Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.):

It is a legitimate point of our foreign policy to discourage arms shipments by foreign powers into El Salvador when those shipments are clearly designed to disrupt a democratically elected government.

We are not attempting to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. It is the unelected, undemocratic government of Nicaragua that is trying to upset the democratically elected regime in El Salvador.

The Nicaraguan armed forces are now a juggernaut of tens of thousands of persons, more substantial than any other military force ever assembled in Central America. To talk seriously about overthrow when all these persons are still in place is to talk nonsense.

### Senator Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.):

The administration claims it is not desirous of overthrowing the Sandinista government. Yet, we've admitted in effect that we're providing assistance to the *contras* fighting the Sandinistas. That is confusing enough here at home and it is certainly confusing to Central America.

What's more, it legitimizes, in the eyes of many, Nicaragua's buildup in arms. It could provide them with justification for inviting Cuban troops in or inviting the Soviets to place missiles in the country. What will we do then? Are we going to rely upon the Costa Ricans and the Hondurans to fight the Cubans?

The administration has not thought out clearly where

