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## White House Says U.S. Financed Some Salvador Groups in Politics

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WASHINGTON, May 10 — The White House said today that the United States had not taken sides in the election in El Salvador, but did provide help to labor unions, business groups and other organizations that endorsed or worked for candidates.

Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman, said the assistance was part of a policy to foster "democratic institutions" in friendly countries.

Meanwhile, Congressional sources said the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence was informed last year that the Central Intelligence Agency had provided aid to groups to help prepare for the Salvadoran election. Last week, the sources said, committee members were briefed on the aid and on the C.I.A.'s role in helping to insure an orderly election.

The two leading candidates have claimed victory. United States officials say José Napoleón Duarte, a moderate Christian Democrat, is correct in saying he won.

Officials have said a victory by Mr. Duarte over Robert d'Aubuisson, a rightist, would help win support in Congress for aid to El Salvador.

The White House's comments today followed accusations by Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, that the Central Intelligence Agency had meddled in the election by supporting Mr. Duarte.

Mr. Speakes, in reiterating that the United States had not taken sides, said:

"It has been the policy of this and previous Administrations to provide assistance to democratic institutions, such as trade unions and private sector organizations. These groups are free to endorse and work on behalf of political candidates, and they frequently do. But we do not play a role in what their decision-making is."

When asked whether C.I.A. money might have found its way into the Duarte campaign, Mr. Speakes said he could only stand by his statement.

"I cannot go beyond that, and I am not discussing covert money," he said.

Mr. Helms said last week that Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering had favored Mr. Duarte. The Senator called for Mr. Pickering's recall, but President Reagan refused. Mr. Speakes said then that Mr. Reagan had "full confidence" in the envoy.

After Mr. Helms's accusations, according to Congressional sources, the Senate Intelligence Committee was told that the C.I.A. had been financing groups involved in the effort to support Mr. Duarte and other moderate political parties and individuals.

The sources said an aide to a Senator on the Intelligence Committee had briefed Mr. Helms, who then spoke on the Senate floor to follow up his earlier criticism by saying that the C.I.A. had meddled in the election.

The Congressional sources said members of the Intelligence Committee had not been surprised by the information about assistance to groups in El Salvador, nor were they opposed to it. The rendering of such aid to friendly organizations is known to have been a C.I.A. practice since at least the 1950's.