

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 4-24

WASHINGTON POST  
11 May 1984

# CIA Channeled \$2 Million Into Salvador Voting

By Joanne Omang  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The House and Senate Intelligence committees yesterday received what one member of Congress called "sobering" reports from the CIA indicating that the agency channeled an estimated \$2 million into elections in El Salvador over the past two years.

Sources familiar with the briefings stressed that the CIA had portrayed its participation as a non-partisan effort to help streamline election logistics, provide media advice and technical assistance and to ease the financial burden on interest groups such as trade unions and peasant cooperatives.

However, they acknowledged that the chief beneficiary of the aid was Christian Democratic Party candidate Jose Napoleon Duarte, who is narrowly leading rightist Roberto D'Aubuisson in the presidential runoff race in unofficial returns.

Although the Reagan administration was formally neutral in the election, many of its members privately regarded a Duarte victory as crucial to winning congressional support for aiding the government of El Salvador in its war against leftist guerrillas. D'Aubuisson has been linked to death squad activity and key Democrats swore to block all aid if he becomes president.

The sources said CIA officials, in maintaining that their aid was nonpartisan, said D'Aubuisson's Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) party received no direct aid because it was considered well-funded by wealthy Salvadorans in the United States and elsewhere. The agency noted that ARENA benefited indirectly from CIA help in computerizing voter lists and advising the elections council, the sources said.

D'Aubuisson has said that if 80,000 to 100,000 allegedly fraudulent ballots are discounted he will be victorious.

The CIA also said it had helped two other conservative parties, the National Conciliation Party and Democratic Action, by funding advertising and media assistants for them. The Conciliation Party candidate, Jose Guerrero, had been widely expected to ally his party with D'Aubuisson, but surprised observers and dealt D'Aubuisson a blow with an April 16 announcement that he would remain neutral.

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) charged Tuesday that CIA funding "bought the election" for Duarte. An aide to Helms said yesterday that the accusation "did the White House a favor" by coming long enough in advance of President Reagan's televised speech Wednesday night on Central America to allow effusive praise for Duarte to be deleted.

The speech contained only one brief reference noting that El Salvador had held two successful elections and did not mention Duarte by name.

White House spokesman Larry Speakes yesterday confirmed that the United States had sent funds "to assist democratic institutions, including trade unions, private sector organizations and so forth" in El Salvador, but he did not say which agency had sent the money and maintained that its effect had been neutral.

"These groups are free to endorse and work on behalf of political candidates. They frequently do, but we don't play a role in telling them what to do," Speakes said. Another high-level administration official briefing reporters Wednesday added "political parties" to the list of recipients.

The House Intelligence Committee asked for "a complete rundown of what the CIA was doing" in the El Salvador elections and received it yesterday, committee member Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) said. While refusing to disclose the contents of the report, he said that "to the extent that [Sen. Jesse] Helms is right, I disapprove of the United States involving itself in a major financial way to affect the outcome of an election in any country, El Salvador or any other." Hamilton is expected to become chairman of the Intelligence Committee in the next congressional session.

The Senate Intelligence Committee also received a briefing from a CIA official, who provided a point-by-point denial of a Christian Science Monitor report that the agency had funded a military unit engaged in torture, the sources said.

They added that while the senators appeared satisfied with the account of CIA involvement in the elections, they still plan to set new rules for the general reporting relationship between the CIA and Congress.