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## Hill Panel Says Helms' Charges Are 'Overstated'

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Members of the Senate Intelligence Committee said yesterday that claims by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) of CIA involvement in the recent presidential election in El Salvador have been "overstated," but added that they will seek further information from the CIA on the degree of that involvement.

Helms charged Tuesday that covert CIA action "bought the election" for former Salvadoran president Jose Napoleon Duarte, who is the apparent victor by a narrow margin in unofficial returns. Helms said the CIA has helped Duarte for the past two years.

"Jesse overstated anything I heard" during a briefing on the election from CIA officials last week, one senator said.

Another senator who is a frequent critic of the Reagan administration said Helms' charges "were more detailed" than the briefing the committee received, "but if he's trying to make the point that the United States was involved in controlling the way the election came out, that's absolutely so."

This senator, noting reports last week in *The Washington Post* of U.S. aid to Duarte, said Helms' remarks bordered on calling on the Salvadorans to repudiate the election results.

"There's a lot of regrouping going on at the White House" because of Helms' remarks, the senator said. He noted that President Reagan's televised speech last night included only a brief reference to the Salvadoran election, which Reagan previously hailed as an inspiring example of democracy in action.

"That indicates they felt they got hit hard by Helms and he's damaged them down there," the senator said.

A third senator said there were discussions among committee members yesterday about the source of the details in Helms' charges, and added that the CIA had been requested to brief the committee on the subject again today. The CIA already had scheduled a briefing for the senators to deny charges in a recent *Christian Science Monitor* article that the agency has been supporting military units involved in torture.

At a news conference in El Salvador yesterday, Duarte's rightist opponent, former major Roberto D'Aubuisson, cited Helms' remarks but added that there was no "tangible" proof of the claim.

Helms described D'Aubuisson as a man "who openly espoused the principles of the Republican Party in the United States." He called Duarte "a socialist."