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Helms says CIA rigged election in El Salvador

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Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., has charged that the CIA "bought the election" of El Salvador's apparent president-elect, Napoleon Duarte, and the Salvadoran people should "take whatever steps they deem necessary in light of the facts."

El Salvador has had several military coups in its history and Mr. Helms added to the speculation that another could occur, saying, "In assuming power through a rigged election, Mr. Duarte runs the real risk of touching off another conflagration in a war-torn land."

Mr. Helms said Mr. Duarte, who is the apparent winner of Sunday's runoff election for president, is a "socialist" who is "without a mandate to rule or the arguments to produce national unity."

In the same statement released last night by his office, Mr. Helms said the right-wing candidate, Roberto D'Aubuisson, has been unjustly accused of links to death squads and that he actually "espoused the principles of the Republican Party in the U.S."

Mr. Helms charged yesterday that the CIA and State Department for two years have funneled funds and other assistance directly into Mr. Duarte's campaign without Mr. Reagan's approval.

No response was immediately available from the White House or State Department to the senator's charges.

Last week, Mr. Helms asked President Reagan to remove the U.S. ambassador in El Salvador, Thomas Pickering, because he allegedly aided Mr. Duarte's candidacy, but yesterday Mr. Helms said the ambassador was but one player in a larger drama.

Mr. Helms said that the funding decision was made by the Interagency Group on Central America that coordinates policy in the executive branch.

Mr. Helms said that the U.S. efforts to control the election outcome undermine, "The whole purpose of our policy in El Salvador ... to build democracy ..."

Mr. Helms said that the support reportedly given to Mr. Duarte included funds for 400 precinct organizers, a model press operation, technical advice and funds for the "computer voter registration system that disenfranchised 20 percent of the voters the first time around."

The United States aided in the voter registration procedures, which were opposed by Mr. D'Aubuisson's party.