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# Congress hit over Central America views

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A senior Pentagon official yesterday charged that a well-organized, orchestrated effort exists to keep the essential facts about Central America from the American people.

In one of the hardest-hitting speeches by an administration official, Fred C. Ikle, undersecretary of defense for policy, also charged that Congress is denying President Reagan the military aid money needed to succeed in Central America.

The Pentagon's number three official said members of Congress tell the administration that their constituents are pressing such positions on them. But Ikle told the Baltimore Council of Foreign Affairs, a private group, that polls show only a small percentage of Americans know which side the United States supports in El Salvador and Honduras.

"You must help us overcome not only a lack of information, but also a great deal of misinformation. This misinformation is not accidental; it is the result of a well-organized and well-orchestrated effort to conceal the essential facts," Ikle said in his prepared address in Baltimore last night.

Misinformation being spread includes the "fictions" that the United States has prevented the development of democracies in Central America and is "militarizing" the problems of the region.

The official noted that the Soviets are giving ten times as much military assistance to Cuba and Nicaragua as the United States is providing all of Latin America.

He said that as a result of the Soviet domination of Cuba, including Russian military installations there, U.S. sea lanes to Europe are seriously threatened.

Allowing the Marxist Sandinista regime to continue in power indefinitely would create a "second Cuba" that would be more dangerous than Castro's Cuba since it shares borders with Honduras and Costa Rica.

Even after the insurgency in El Salvador has been brought under control, Ikle said that Nicaragua, if it continues on its present course, "would be the bridgehead and arsenal for insurgency for Central America."

Proposed congressional legislation to deny U.S. covert aid to anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua "would turn Nicaragua into a sanctuary from which the nations of Central America could be safely attacked, but in which U.S.-supported forces could not operate," Ikle said.

Ikle said that U.S. strategy is to prevent both a Communist victory in Central America and the partition of the region into two spheres of influence — one linked to the Soviets and the other to the United States.

He said the guerrillas in El Salvador have used a "rule or ruin" strategy, seeking to destroy bridges, school buildings, etc. faster than U.S. aid can restore them.

"You have to defeat these 'rule or ruin' forces militarily. This is the purpose for our military assistance," the undersecretary said.

But, he added, "as long as Congress keeps crippling the president's military assistance program, we will have a

policy always shy of success. We will remain locked into a protracted failure."

A congressional cut off of U.S. covert aid to the anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua would have a severe "psychological impact," signaling that the Communist forces represent the winning side, Ikle said.