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**Letter: On Foreign Aid****Securing Democracy in Central America**

To the Editor:

Your Dec. 16 editorial, "The Wrong Beat for American Cops," failed to note the Senate Foreign Relations Committee action on the Administration's request for counterterrorism police training in Central America. The committee-passed bill is now the issue before Congress. The editorial was essentially about a moot proposal.

On Dec. 5, the committee voted 15-1 to authorize \$22 million for police training in El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala. No funds were provided for Panama.

The committee bill provides no funds for military training. It places a number of restrictions on the use of funds for police training: it prohibits C.I.A. participation, allows no more than 10 percent of the equipment provided to be of a lethal nature, and requires the General Accounting Office to make three quarterly reports on human rights in the area. The Admin-

istration supports these changes.

The committee did not reach this decision easily. All of us are painfully aware of past abuses. But the conditions have changed substantially. We now observe in El Salvador and Guatemala, for example, democratically elected presidents who once were the targets of police abuses. They may now wish our assistance in reforming police practices.

This bill received a great deal of bipartisan support. Senator Christopher Dodd argued that providing the money was a risk, but concluded that if there is to be reform in Central America "it is essential that the security forces be part of it."

The establishment of democratic governments throughout Latin America is one of the most important new foreign policy developments facing the United States. These countries confront enormous economic prob-

lems and face the continuing threats of terrorism. It is in our interest to help them address these problems.

The committee's action is not "a dubious idea derived from a flawed premise," as you claimed (without mentioning the action that your news pages had reported 11 days before). It is a constructive and careful effort to use American aid to help democracy and human rights by meeting the very real threat of terrorism in Latin America.

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Washington, Dec. 18, 1985

*The writer is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.*

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