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# Topic A

## The Right Strategy on Nicaragua

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### Support the 'Democratic Center'

The United States has a historical debt to the Nicaraguan people. We backed a corrupt and oppressive dictatorship for 40 years because that seemed the path of least resistance. Now, for some, the path of least resistance is to allow the Sandinistas to consolidate an equally, if not more, corrupt and oppressive dictatorship that is a threat to its neighbors and, with Soviet backing, a long-range threat to our own security.

The great mistake of the Sandinistas was to assume that they themselves made the revolution by military means rather than the Nicaraguan people by their political uprising against Somoza. The only hope for Nicaraguans is a process of national reconciliation as requested by the Contadora group. A policy that seeks to overthrow the Sandinistas will only ensure further bloodshed and civil war.

Many have feared that the Reagan administration policy is set on a course that will end in a U.S. invasion, with all its dire consequences. Not long ago the same fears were raised with respect to El Salvador. They have been proven unjustified. Wrong also were those who argued that the United States could not break with the extreme right and defend human rights when faced with a Marxist revolutionary threat. Democrats and Republicans working together in Congress helped shape a bipartisan consensus that put the United States on the side of democracy and helped weaken both extremes, setting El Salvador on the road to a political settlement.

As a member of the House intelligence committee, I have followed events in Nicaragua closely and worked with colleagues in both parties to steer our policy there onto a responsible, sustainable course. Now we have introduced bipartisan legislation which will be voted on in the House this week. Our amendment prescribes the same goal for

U.S. policy in Nicaragua as we seek in El Salvador—negotiations, national reconciliation and democracy:

**Cease-fire and negotiations.** It reiterates that U.S. foreign policy in Nicaragua is not a military overthrow of the government, but a cease-fire and negotiations among the parties to the conflict, mediated by the Nicaraguan conference of bishops, that will permit genuine democracy and self-determination for the Nicaraguan people.

**Suspension of maneuvers and economic boycott.** The president is urged to suspend military maneuvers and lift the trade embargo, if the Nicaraguan government agrees to a cease-fire, a dialogue with the democratic resistance and to suspend the state of emergency.

**Resumption of bilateral negotiations.** Our bill calls on the president to resume bilateral negotiations with the Nicaraguan government to encourage a church-mediated dialogue and a Contadora agreement.

**Support for Contadora.** It provides \$2 million to assist the Contadora nations in implementing the Contadora Document of Objectives, including costs of peacekeeping, verification and monitoring systems.

**Humanitarian aid.** Our bill provides \$27 million in strictly defined humanitarian assistance to the democratic resistance in three installments through March 31, 1986. Humanitarian assistance is defined in the bill as "food, clothing, medicine and other humanitarian assistance." It specifically prohibits "vehicles, weapons, weapons systems, ammunition or other equipment or materials which can be used to inflict serious bodily harm or death."

**Prohibition on CIA.** Humanitarian assistance may be directed to the democratic resistance through a government agency of the president's designation, but specifically not through the CIA or Department of Defense.

**Human rights.** The president is required to submit to the House and Senate Intelligence committees a report on "alleged human rights violations by the Nicaraguan democratic resistance and the government of Nicaragua," including a statement of who was responsible.

Our legislation continues the Boland amendment restrictions on military and paramilitary activity, with one exception: it permits our government to "exchange information" with the democratic resistance for the purposes outlined by the legislation. And should negotiations fail—or not take place—our bill permits the president to submit a new request to Congress, to be handled under expedited procedures, for additional aid to the resistance forces.

Our proposal puts the United States on the side of a negotiated settlement and democracy, and against abuses of human rights by the Sandinistas and the armed resistance. It calls on the president to pursue every possible diplomatic and economic initiative to support the chance for negotiations among the Nicaraguans and the efforts of the Contadora Group. It also provides real incentives—both carrots and sticks—to lead the government of Nicaragua to the negotiating table.

What our proposal refuses to do—and what the United States should not do—is abandon the brave men and women of the democratic center in Nicaragua—the trade unionists, church people, businessmen and women, campesinos and ordinary citizens who are struggling, both from within and from exile, for the freedoms for which they waged a valiant revolution in 1979.

*The writer, a Democratic representative from Oklahoma, is a member of the Armed Services Committee and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.*