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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 27, 1986

Dear Sam:

Thank you for your letter this morning regarding our need to move in a bipartisan manner on forging a policy which will lead to a democratic outcome in Nicaragua. I fully agree with your objective of ensuring that everything we do diplomatically, politically, economically, and, especially, with our aid should contribute to the goal of a truly democratic solution.

Your observations, regarding the Nicaraguan opposition and its need to broaden its appeal to the Nicaraguan people, are entirely accurate. I agree that we need to do more to ensure that the Nicaraguan democratic resistance is, indeed, a representative movement, responsive to civilian leadership which is, in turn, committed to the ideals of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and a better life for the Nicaraguan people.

It is because I believe so deeply in a truly democratic outcome in Nicaragua that I have endorsed a number of proposals made by thoughtful members of Congress, regional leaders, and the leadership of the Nicaraguan opposition itself, which are designed to further that end. The legislation that we have discussed with the Senate leadership and, which I find acceptable, reflects this advice and includes the following provisions intended to give effect to the objectives identified in your letter:

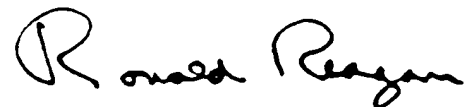
"The President shall use the authority provided by this Joint Resolution to... encourage the Nicaraguan democratic resistance to take additional steps, strengthen its unity, pursue a defined and coordinated program for representative democracy in Nicaragua, and otherwise increase its appeal to the Nicaraguan people."

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Please be assured that I will implement this mandate from the Congress in a manner which gives primacy to civilian leadership and democratic development within the Nicaraguan opposition. To do so, we will work with the leadership of the Nicaraguan opposition to establish a council which, like our own National Security Council, ensures that military activities are conducted under the guidance of responsible civilian leaders. It is our intention that this body will be responsible for ensuring that U.S. assistance is fairly and properly administered. I have also endorsed language in the legislation which provides not less than \$3 million for "strengthening programs and activities of the Nicaraguan democratic resistance for the observance and advancement of human rights." Training and democratic principles will be an important part of our program. Finally, I am committed to ensuring that no aid be provided to those groups that retain in their ranks individuals who engage in human rights violations, drug smuggling, or misuse of resistance funds.

I believe that these commitments are responsive to your concerns and those of other members of Congress who are as dedicated as you and I to a sustainable bipartisan and truly democratic solution to the turmoil in Central America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ronald Reagan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "Ronald Reagan".

The Honorable Sam Nunn
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 26, 1986

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

Last year when Senator Lugar and I, and a number of our colleagues, sponsored an amendment which provided humanitarian assistance for the democratic resistance in Nicaragua, we sought to develop a consensus behind a sustainable policy that would promote the growth of democracy in Nicaragua and support negotiations. One of the central purposes of our amendment was to foster the growth of democracy and respect for human rights within the democratic resistance.

I agree with your view that the establishment of a consolidated, Marxist-Leninist regime in Nicaragua, allied with the Soviet Union and Cuba, represents a potential threat to the security of the United States. The Sandinistas have steadily tightened their grip on the people of Nicaragua. They have violated the human rights, and denied fundamental freedoms, of the Nicaraguan people. Moreover, the evidence is incontrovertible that the Sandinistas have continued to support guerilla movements and terrorism outside Nicaragua and that the Soviet and Cuban presence and influence has grown.

Although some progress has been made in forming a democratic political leadership for the contras, the American people and the Congress are reluctant to support the contras because they are not convinced that they are truly a democratic movement. The Congress, and I believe the American people, are prepared to support an authentic broad-based democratic resistance movement fighting for freedom and human rights in Nicaragua.

Our policy must indicate clearly not only what the United States opposes - a Marxist-Leninist repressive regime in Nicaragua - but also what we support, democracy and human rights. As we learned in El Salvador, the most effective force to prevent a communist success is a strong, principled, democratic movement which represents the real aspirations of the people. Similarly, in the Philippines we recently saw the enormous force generated when people want democracy and believe that there are leaders with integrity and courage who support democratic goals.

Unless the contra movement is perceived in the United States and Central America as an effort to bring democracy to Nicaragua, it is unlikely that American aid can be sustained or that the contras will attract the kind of political support required to bring about changes in Nicaragua.

Unfortunately, the contras have yet to become this force. Their political program and goals remain unclear. The various forces opposing the Sandinistas are divided. The power within the FDN, the largest contra force, still does not appear to be under civilian control. Although the United Nicaraguan Opposition has recently formed a Human Rights Commission, the contras' record and commitment on human rights remains unacceptable.

In El Salvador, we have used our military and economic aid effectively with bipartisan support, to strengthen democratic forces committed to human rights. We should follow a similar course in providing military assistance to the democratic resistance in Nicaragua.

I agree with the recent suggestion of Senators Cohen, Kassebaum and Rudman that the contras must agree to broaden their base, eliminate human rights abuses, and develop and pursue a program for achieving democracy in Nicaragua. I suggest a number of measures to insure that U.S. aid is designed to bring about these goals which are essential for success.

First, all aid should be given only to civilian political leaders that are genuinely democratic, respect human rights and have not or are not engaged in criminal activity, such as drug trafficking. No aid should go to the military leaders except through civilian leadership committed to these goals and principles.

Second, the civilian political leadership of the opposition movements must form a genuine democratic movement. The United States must insist that they work together and that they broaden their base so as not to exclude Nicaraguans who are committed to democratic principles. This does not mean that they must all adhere to a common political approach, but only that they embrace democratic principles.

Third, vigorous action must be taken to enforce respect for human rights including investigation and prosecution of individuals within the resistance responsible for human rights abuses.

Fourth, all intelligence and other non-materiel assistance and cooperation should also be funneled through, or at least controlled by, the democratic civilian political leadership.

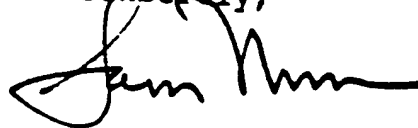
Fifth, strict accounting measures must be adopted to insure that all aid is being properly administered and accounted for.

Sixth, humanitarian aid should include basic education for the democratic resistance fighters and their families. We should, for example, teach reading, writing, health care, and other basic courses in agricultural and vocational skills which will foster political and economic growth.

It is my firm belief that these assurances would go a long way toward satisfying doubts that linger in the minds of the Congress and the American people as to whether the contras truly represent a democratic force worthy of our support. I hope you will be able to provide me with these assurances.

Mr. President, I have one final but important point. The foreign policy of the United States toward Nicaragua cannot succeed if the only way it can be sustained is by repeated, razor-thin votes of the Congress. We need to develop a bipartisan, sustainable policy toward Nicaragua that enjoys the long-term support of the Congress, the American people and of the governments and the people of Central and South America. I applaud the efforts of Senator Sasser, Senator Byrd, Senator Lugar and Senator Dole in seeking to develop such a policy. I hope you will support them in that effort and join in developing such a policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Nunn", with a stylized, cursive flourish extending to the right.

Sam Nunn