

Excerpts From President Reagan's Speech on His Proposals for El Salvador

WASHINGTON, March 10 — Following are excerpts from a speech by President Reagan to the National Association of Manufacturers today, the text of which was made available by the White House:

Central America is too close and the strategic stakes are too high for us to ignore the danger of governments setting power there with ideological and military ties to the Soviet Union.

As I speak to you today, its countries are in the midst of the gravest crisis in their history. Accumulated grievances and social and economic change are challenging traditional ways. New leaders with new aspirations have emerged who want a new and better deal for their peoples. That is good.

The problem is that an aggressive minority has thrown in its lot with the Communists, looking to the Soviets and their Cuban henchmen to help them pursue political change through violence. Nicaragua has become their base. These extremists make no secret of their goal. They preach the doctrine of a "revolution without frontiers." Their first target is El Salvador.

Why is El Salvador important? Well, to begin with, there is the sheer human tragedy. Thousands of people have already died, and unless the conflict is ended democratically, millions more could be affected throughout the hemisphere. The people of El Salvador have proved they want democracy. But if guerrilla violence succeeds, they won't get it. El Salvador will join Cuba and Nicaragua in spreading fresh violence to Guatemala, Honduras, even Costa Rica. The killing will increase, and the threat to Panama, the canal and ultimately Mexico. In the process, vast numbers of men, women and children will lose their homes, their countries and their lives.

I know a good many people wonder why we should care about a small Communist government come into power. One columnist argued last week that we shouldn't care because their products are not that vital to our economy. That's like the argument of another so-called expert that we shouldn't worry about Castro's control over the island of Grenada — their only important product is nutmeg.

Nutmeg Not the Issue

People who make these arguments haven't taken a good look at what has lately or followed the extraordinary buildup of Soviet and Cuban military power in the region or read the Soviet's discussions about why the region is important to them and how they intend to use it.

It is not nutmeg that is at stake in the Caribbean and Central America. It is the United States national security.

Soviet military theorists want to destroy our capacity to resupply Western Europe in case of an emergency. They want to tie down our forces on our own southern border and so limit our capacity to act in more distant places, such as Europe, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the Sea of Japan.

For the past three years, under two Presidents, the United States has been engaged in an effort to stop the advance of Communism in Central America by doing what we do best — by supporting democracy. For three years our goal has been to support fundamental change in the region — to replace poverty with development, and dictatorship with democracy.

These objectives are not easy to attain, but we are on the right track. Costa Rica continues to set a democratic example, even in the midst of economic crisis and Nicaraguan intimidation. Honduras has gone from military rule to a freely elected civilian Government. Despite incredible obstacles, the democratic center is holding in El Salvador, implementing land reform and working to replace the politics of death with the life of democracy.

The Choice of Central Americans

So the good news is that our new policies have begun to work. Democracy, with free elections, free labor unions, freedom of religion and respect for the integrity of the individual, is the clear choice of the overwhelming majority of Central Americans. In fact, except for Cuba and its followers, no government and no significant sector of the public anywhere in this hemisphere wants to see the guerrillas seize power in El Salvador.

The bad news is that the struggle for democracy is still far from over. Despite their success in largely eliminating guerrilla political influence in populated areas and despite some improvements in military armaments and mobility, El Salvador's people remain under strong pressure from armed guerrillas controlled by extremists with Cuban-Soviet support.

The military capability of these guerrillas — and I would like to stress military capability, for these are not peasant irregulars but trained military forces — has kept political and economic progress from being turned into the peace the Salvadoran people so obviously want. Part of the problem is internal to El Salvador. But an important part is external: the availability of training, tactical guidance and military supplies coming into El Salvador from Marxist Nicaragua.

Now all this is happening in El Salvador just as a constitution is being written, as open presidential elections are being prepared and as a Peace Commission named last week has begun to work on amnesty and national reconciliation to bring all social and political groups into the democratic process. It is the guerrilla militants who have so far refused to use democratic means, have ignored the voice of the people of El Salvador and have resorted to terror, sabotage and bullets instead of the ballot box.

During the past week, we have discussed all of these issues and more with leaders and members of the Congress. Their views have helped shape our own thinking, and I believe we have developed a common course to follow. Here are some of the questions raised most often.

First: How bad is the military situation? It is not good. Soldiers have proved that when they are well trained, led and supplied, they can protect the people from guerrilla attacks. But so far U.S. trainers have been able to train only one soldier in 10. There is a shortage of experienced officers; supplies are scarce. The guerrillas have taken advantage of these shortcomings. For the moment, at least, they have taken the tactical initiative just when the sharply limited funding Congress has so far approved is running out.

No U.S. Combat Troops

A second vital question is: Are we going to send American soldiers into combat? The answer is a flat no. A third question: Are we going to Americanize the war with a lot of U.S. combat advisers? Again the answer is no. Only Salvadorans can fight this war, just as only Salvadorans can decide El Salvador's future. What we can do is help to give them the skills and confidence to take the job for themselves. In military terms, most are mostly men training. Without playing a combat role themselves and without effective training, Salvadoran units into combat. American specialists can help the Salvadoran Army improve. There are many needs for more training, we have scrupulously kept our training activities well below our self-imposed moral and political guidelines of trainers. We are currently reviewing what we can do to provide the most effective training possible. I think the best way is to provide training outside of El Salvador, in the U.S. or elsewhere, but that costs a lot more. So will also be asking for an additional \$30 million for regional security assistance.

Question four: Are we seeking a political or a military solution? Despite all I and others have said, some people still seem to think that our concern for security assistance means that all we care about is a military solution. That is nonsense. Bullets are no answer to economic injustice, social tensions or political disagreements. Democracy is.

Issue of Negotiations

This reality leads directly to a fifth question: Why not stop the killing and start talking? Why not negotiate? Well, negotiations are already a key part of our policy. We support negotiations among all the nations of the region to strengthen democracy, to halt subversion, to stop the flow of arms, to respect borders and to remove all foreign military advisers — the Soviets, Cubans, East Germans, P.L.O., etc. — from the area.

A regional peace initiative is now emerging. We have been in close touch with its sponsors and wish it well. And we support negotiations within nations, aimed at expanding participation in democratic institutions — at getting all parties to participate in free, nonviolent elections. What we oppose are negotiations that would be used as a cynical device for dividing up power behind the people's back. We cannot support negotiations which, instead of expanding democracy, try to destroy it — negotiations which would distribute power among armed groups without the consent of the people of El Salvador. The thousands upon thousands of Salvadorans who risked their lives to vote last year should not have their ballots thrown into the trash heap this year by letting a tiny minority on the fringe of a wide and diverse political spectrum shoot its way into power. No, the only legitimate road to power, the only road we can support, is through the voting booth, so that the people can choose for themselves, as His Holiness the Pope said Sunday, "far from terror and in a climate of democratic civility." This is fundamental and it is a moral as well as a practical belief that all free people of the Americas share.

What Comes Next
Having consulted with the Congress, let me tell you where we are now and what we will be doing in the days ahead. We will be submitting a comprehensive, integrated economic and military assistance plan for Central America.

First, we will bridge the existing gap in military assistance. Our projections of the amount of military assistance needed for El Salvador have remained relatively stable over the past two years. However, the Continuing Resolution, budget procedure in the Congress last December led to a level of U.S. security assistance for El Salvador in 1983 below what we had requested, below that provided in 1982, and below that requested for 1984. I am proposing that \$60 million of the monies already appropriated for our worldwide military assistance programs be immediately reallocated to El Salvador. Further, to build the level of discipline that we must have, I can take and hold the initiative while respecting the rights of its people, I

Iraqi Navy Contends It Sank 6 Iranian Ships in Persian Gulf

NICOSIA, Cyprus, March 10 (AP) — The Iraqi Navy sank six Iranian ships today as they were entering an inlet on the northern tip of the Persian Gulf, the Iraq News Agency said. There was no immediate comment from Iran on the claim, and no independent confirmation was possible. Western reporters generally are barred from the Iran-Iraq battlefield. The press agency said the six sunken vessels were a convoy sailing north toward the port of Bandar Khomeini. It said fires and thick smoke were seen around the vessels before they were sunk, while the attacking Iraqi navy units returned safely to their bases. The attack in the gulf waters was the third reported by Iraq this month.



The New York Times/Teresa Zabala
President Reagan addressing the National Association of Manufacturers yesterday.

will be amending my supplemental, currently before the Congress, to reallocate \$30 million to El Salvador.

Focus on Training

These funds will be sought without increasing the overall amount of the supplemental we have already presented to Congress. And, as I have said, the focus of this assistance will remain the same: To train Salvadorans so that they can defend themselves. Because El Salvador's security problems are not unique in the region, I will also be asking for an additional \$30 million for regional security assistance. These funds will be used to help neighboring states to maintain their national security and to be subject to full Congressional review.

Secondly, we will work hard to support reform, human rights and democracy in El Salvador. Last Thursday, the Salvadoran Government extended the land reform program, which has already distributed 20 percent of all the arable land in the country and transformed more than 63,000 farm workers into farm owners. What they ask is our continued economic support while the reform is completed. We will provide it. Without support, we expect that the steady progress toward more equitable distribution of wealth and power in El Salvador will continue.

Working for Human Rights

Third, we will, I repeat, continue to work for human rights. Progress in this area has been slow, sometimes disappointing. But human rights means working at problems, not walking away from them. To make more progress, we must continue our support, advice and help to El Salvador's people and democratic leaders. Lawbreakers must be brought to justice and the rule of law must supplant injustice in setting disputes. The key to ending violations of human rights is to build a stable, working democracy. Democracies are accountable to their citizens. And when abuses occur in a democracy, they cannot be covered up. With our support, we expect the Government of El Salvador to be able to move ahead in prosecuting the accused and in building a criminal justice system applicable to all and ultimately accountable to the elected representatives of the people.

Fourth, the El Salvador Government proposes to solve its problems the only way they can be solved fairly — by having the people decide. President Magaña has just announced nationwide elections this year, calling on all to participate — adversaries as well as friends. To help political activists compete in the elections, he has appointed a Peace Commission, including a Roman Catholic Bishop and two independents. And he has called on the Organization of American States and the international community to help. We were proud to participate, along with representatives of other democratic nations, as observers in last March's Constituent Assembly elections. We would be equally pleased to contribute again in any international effort, perhaps in conjunction with the O.A.S., to help the Government insure the broadest possible participation in the upcoming elections — with guarantees that all, including critics and adversaries, can be protected as they participate.

Plan for Economic Aid

Finally, we must continue to help the people of El Salvador and the rest of Central America and the Caribbean make economic progress. More than three-quarters of our assistance to this region has been economic. Because of the importance of economic development to the region, I will ask the Congress for \$65 million in new monies and the reprogramming of \$103 million from already appropriated worldwide funds for a total of \$168 million in increased economic assistance for Central America. And to make sure that this assistance is as productive as possible, I will continue to work with the Congress for the urgent enactment of the long-term opportunities for trade and free initiative. In El Salvador and in the rest of Central America, there are today thousands of small businessmen, farmers and workers who have kept up their productivity as well as their spirits in the face of personal

danger, guerrilla sabotage and adverse economic conditions. With them stand countless national and local officials, military and civic leaders and priests who have refused to give up on democracy. Their struggle for a better future deserves our help. We should be proud to offer it, for, in the last analysis, they are fighting for us, too.

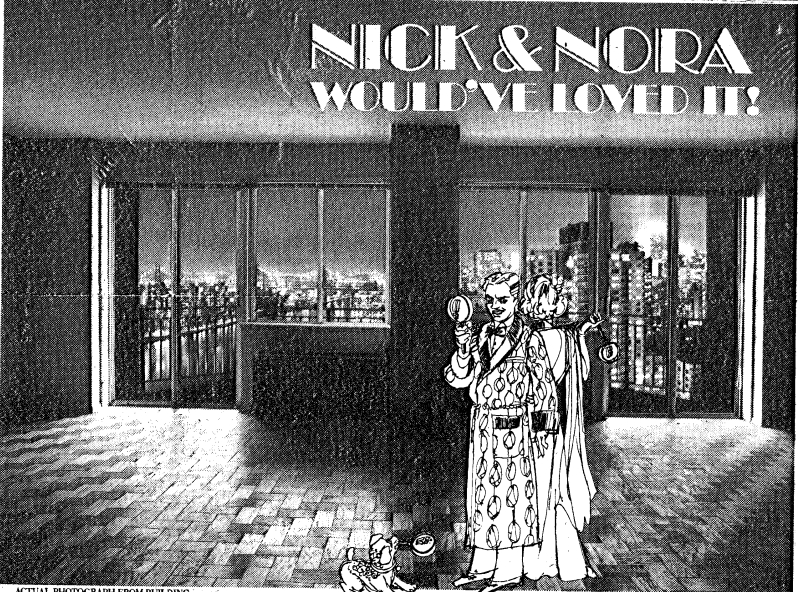
Need for Strong Neighbors

By acting responsibly and avoiding illusory shortcuts, we can be both loyal to our friends and true to our peaceful, democratic principles. A nation's character is measured by the relations it has with its neighbors. We need strong and stable neighbors with whom we can cooperate. And we will not let them down.

We would in truth be opening a two-way street. We have never fully realized the great potential of this Western Hemisphere. Oh, yes, I know we have talked in the past of plans involving our neighbors to the south, but it was our plan which we would impose on them — the cold colossus of the north.

On my trip to Central and South America, I asked for their ideas. I pointed out that we had a common heritage. We had all come as pioneers to these two great continents. We worshipped the same God and we had lived at peace with each other long before most people in other parts of the world. There are more than 600 million of us calling ourselves Americans — North, Central and South. We have not really begun to tap the vast resources of these continents.

Without sacrificing our sovereignties, our own culture or national pride, we could as neighbors make this Western Hemisphere — our hemisphere — a force for good such as the old world has never seen. But it starts with that word neighbor.



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