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U.S. Latin policy hit by report

WASHINGTON [AP]—A group of prominent U.S. and Latin American citizens said Wednesday that a flawed Reagan administration policy in Central America risks prolonged bloodshed in El Salvador and new turmoil in Nicaragua.

It denounced past "overt and covert U.S. intervention" in Latin America and said "sharp external confrontation with revolutionary regimes" is more likely to breed revolutionary sentiment than to quell it.

"The United States could do much to foster a climate of security in the region by making unequivocally clear its commitment to respect national sovereignty," the group said in a study known as the Inter-American Dialogue report.

It also urged "a many-sided dialogue" to peacefully end disputes among all the governments of Central America and their opposition movements. It should include talks among the U.S., Cuba and the Soviet Union, the study said.

"Continued fighting in El Salvador, continuing counterrevolutionary activities in Nicaragua, escalating violence in Guatemala—all are likely to feed each other and even raise the spectre of wider regional conflict," it said. "We believe, therefore, that negotiations should be tried."

IT RECOMMENDED that the U.S. and the Soviet Union extend the understanding that ended the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

At that time, the Soviet Union agreed to remove offensive weapons from Cuba and pledged not to reintroduce them; the U.S. pledged to end threats to invade and efforts to subvert the Cuban government.

In extending that "basic principle," the study said, the Soviet Union and Cuba could pledge not to deploy strategic or conventional combat forces or facilities in any part of the Caribbean and Central America, and the U.S. and the Soviets could undertake not to intervene in the internal affairs of nations in the region.

Issued after a six-month study, the report was prepared under the joint direction of Sol Linowitz, former U.S. representative to the Organization of American States, and Galo Plaza, former president of Ecuador.

Participants included former political leaders as well as business leaders, academics and clerics from the region. The U.S. members included former Secretary of State Edmund Muskie and former Secretary of Defense Elliott Richardson.

THE REPORT SAID 100,000 people have been killed in fighting in Central America in the last five years, and a million people have been displaced.

On El Salvador, the panel said, "The likeliest result of present trends in El Salvador will simply be to prolong the bloodshed without respite."

The group said it was under "no illusions" that the struggle could be resolved through elections in which the insurgents fail to participate, and that military solutions are unlikely to succeed either.

There is mounting evidence that the Reagan administration has embarked on a covert campaign to destabilize the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua, including arming and financing antigovernment guerrillas. The administration has refused to confirm or deny the reports.

The report said poverty, repression and other domestic ills, rather than outside intervention, are behind most of the insurgencies and other security problems in the Americas, including El Salvador.

It said revolutionary movements now seeking power in the region should have little desire to convert their countries to Cuban or Soviet outposts "if they feel secure from subversion or harassment."