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Stockwell: Reagan Administration Leading U.S. to War in Nicaragua

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Led by the war-inclined ideology of President Reagan, the U.S. government is actively working to destabilize countries such as Nicaragua and is bringing the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust, former CIA official John Stockwell told a capacity crowd at Campbell Hall.

But he doesn't want anyone to take his word on it.

"Everything I'm sharing with you tonight is in the public record ... I urge you not to take my word for anything. I'm going to stand here and tell you and give you examples of how our leaders lie. Obviously I could be lying, but the way you can figure it out for yourselves is to educate yourself.

"If you don't fill your mind eagerly with the truth, dig it out from the records, go and see for yourself, then your mind remains blank and your adrenaline pumps and you can be mobilized and excited to do things that are not in your interest to do," Stockwell cautioned the almost entirely student audience Tuesday night.

The ex-CIA officer listed books throughout his two-and-a-half-hour talk and said he provided the Student Lobby with lists of 80 publications he recommends.

Stockwell — who left the CIA after serving as an officer for 13 years during the Vietnam War and then as task force director in Angola — has since spoken publicly on the covert actions of the agency worldwide. His book, *In Search of Enemies*, addresses the same issue.

The CIA currently operates 50 covert actions, destabilizing one-third of all nations, he said. The most famous of these today is Nicaragua, which the Reagan administration is using "for a very special purpose," he added.

According to Stockwell, the U.S. gave life to the *contras*, the counterrevolutionary force warring with the Sandinista government, and financially backs them in order to undermine the economic and social foundations of Nicaragua. "We created this force," he said. "(We gave them) training, leadership, direction as we've sent them in to destabilize Nicaragua."

"They (the U.S. government) pick a government they don't like, they target them, they send the CIA in with its resources and activists, hiring people, hiring agents to tear apart the social and economic fabric of the country as a technique for putting pressure on the government," Stockwell said.

He argued that the CIA is "hoping that they can make the government come to the United States' terms or that the government will collapse all together and they can engineer a coup d'etat."

Stockwell said the *contras* systematically assassinate their opposition and that various witnesses for peace have documented over 13,000 deaths that have occurred in this manner.

"They use terror, this is a technique

they're using to traumatize a society so that it can't function."

"The *contras* are the people President Reagan calls 'freedom fighters.' He says they are the moral equivalent of our founding fathers — and the whole world gasps at this confession of his family traditions."

According to Stockwell, "It is the game plan of the Reagan administration to have a war in Nicaragua," and the groundwork for that action has been laid since 1981. The U.S. has attempted to discredit the Sandinistas by claiming their elections were undemocratic, and that they smuggle arms into El Salvador and drugs out of Honduras, he said.

"We (the U.S.) claim that the Sandinistas are responsible for terrorism anywhere in the world. The 'country club of terrorism' we call it.

"We blame the Sandinistas for the misery that exists in Nicaragua today, and there is misery, because the world's richest nation (the U.S.) has set out to create conditions of misery and obviously we're bound to have some effect. The misery is not the fault of the Sandinistas. It is the result of our destabilization program," he said. "And despite that ... all observers are saying the people are still hanging together with the Sandinistas."

Americans, he said, are given a picture of the Sandinistas as "heartless communists" who Reagan says are a "two-days drive from Texas." He added that the easiest way to incite a populace is through the "politics of paranoia," used by the current administration, that appeal to emotions of machismo and fear.

Stockwell believes that the public is purposefully incited to be manipulated into war. "When you get people worked up to hate, they'll let you spend huge amounts on the buildup of arms."

"This planet is terminally ill. And it's not a long-term disease; we're talking about the nuclear arms race," he said. "And there is probably not anyone in this room that is likely to die of an old age."

Stockwell outlined the social climate that points toward signs of war. He spoke of aggression-themed cartoons viewed by two-year-olds, movies in the *Rambo* vein, armed services ads with the slogan "be all that you can be," revisionism of history books on the Vietnam War and the rewriting of certain U.S. legal codes. Circumstances that are "conditioning us to the necessity and rightness of violence," he said.

The U.S. has participated in 15 wars an average of 10 years apart and in each instance, specific incidents have drawn the country into those actions, he said. "And now you and I can sit and watch what kind of triggers they're trying to use on us in the orchestration of the Central American war."

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"President Reagan sees himself playing the role of the greatest leader of all time leading us into Armageddon," he said, adding that Reagan has the power to achieve this end.

"We cannot take care of the poor, we cannot take care of the old, but we can spend millions, hundreds of millions, to destabilize Nicaragua," Stockwell said. The U.S. has the capacity to destroy the world 100 times over, he said, yet it finances more nuclear weapons.

The public, however, wants peace and 75 percent are against a war in Nicaragua, he said. "President Eisenhower said 'the people of the world genuinely want peace. Someday the leadership of the world are going to have to give in and give it to them.'"

Stockwell explained that to achieve this, "we have to join hands with the countries that have the bomb and others that are trying to get it and give our leaders no choice; they have to find some other way to do business than to motivate us through hate and paranoia and anger and killing, or we'll find other leaders."

Individuals must educate themselves and take action, whether it be in the form of letter-writing, reading, traveling or physical demonstrating, he said. "You can't wait until you graduate or next summer for the simple reason that there may not be a world here when you graduate or next summer."