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15 April 1983

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Response to HPSCI Questions on Nicaraguan Military Strength

1. The intelligence community estimates the Nicaraguan armed forces now have over 25,000 men on active duty plus at least 50,000 more in organized reserve and militia units.

2. The Army's weapons inventory includes about 45 Soviet T-55 tanks, 12 BM-21 multiple rocket launchers, and about 30 Soviet 122 mm and 152 mm artillery pieces.

3. The Air Force is being increasingly equipped with Soviet Bloc aircraft to replace older Western models. Within the last year, the Sandinistas have received two AN-26 transports and four MI-8 helicopters. The MI-8s reportedly are the armed version, equipped with rockets and machineguns. They also have received three Soviet MI-2 helicopters from Libya.

4. Recent reports indicate the Libyans are in the process of delivering three more MI-2s, five Czech L-39 jet trainers, and other military hardware. The L-39s would be useful in a counterinsurgency role, and will supplement the two old US T-33 jet trainers which the Sandinistas have used to bomb and strafe the insurgents. Furthermore, reliable sources indicate the Nicaraguans already have MIG-21 aircraft in Cuba, but delivery has been postponed because of US warnings.

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Following is a transcript of President Reagan's statement yesterday in Washington on the confirmation of Kenneth L. Adelman as head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, followed by an exchange with reporters, as recorded by The New York Times:

OPENING STATEMENT

I am deeply gratified by the United States Senate's confirmation today of Ambassador Kenneth Adelman to be director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. It's my earnest hope that this positive step will mark the beginning of a new bipartisan consensus on the vital issue of nuclear arms reduction. I'm convinced that Kenneth Adelman will prove that the confidence which the Senate has expressed in him today is well-founded. Under his leadership we can look forward to a reinvigorated Arms Control and Disarmament Agency that will make an important contribution to our arms reduction efforts.

As we seek equitable and verifiable agreements with the Soviet Union to reduce the arsenals and the risks of war, we will need the advice and support of the Congress. I'm confident that with full consultation with Congress and the development of our arms reduction initiatives, the United States can continue to be a force for genuine peace and progress in the world. And if we're met with reciprocal seriousness of purpose from the Soviet Union, 1983 can be a year of historic importance in securing a more solid and stable peace through arms reductions. Helen?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Insurgents in Nicaragua

Q. Mr. President, are we directly or indirectly supplying, arming or training any insurgents — Nicaraguan insurgents? And if so, why?

A. We are complying with the law — the Boland Amendment, which is the law — we're complying with that fully.

Arms or Supplies

Q. Does that mean we are not arming or supplying any of the dissidents along the border — the Honduran border?

A. I am not going to get into — I could not and would not possibly talk about such things. But may I point out that this whole controversy over Nicaragua is ignoring some realities — that the Nicaraguan Government is a revolutionary Government that took power by force, but with the promise of democratic elections, none of which have taken place, and all of this was under the previous Administration.

The previous Administration, however, did recognize this Government of Nicaragua, sought to help it with considerable financial aid and withdrew that aid long before we were here when it became apparent that the Government had become completely Marxist, had turned away and thrown out some of the democratic groups that had supported them and fought with them in the revolution to bring democracy to Nicaragua, and were then no longer a part of the Government. But also the cutoff of funds was because the Nicaraguan Government had pledged to the United States that it would not attempt to overthrow any other governments in Central America, particularly El Salvador, by helping the insurgents there — the guerrillas — and they violated that promise. And they are still violating it.

And anything that we are doing in that area is simply trying to interdict the supply lines, which are supplying the guerrillas in El Salvador. But the picture today is that Nicaragua, with its protests that somehow someone is trying to overthrow them — it, as a revolutionary Government, is trying to overthrow the Government of a neighboring country, El Salvador, which was a duly-elected Government, and which is going to hold another election before this year is out.

Boland Statement

Q. But Mr. President, what is the American public to think if Congressman Boland, who as you know is chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, says there's very strong evidence that we are violating the law? How do we clear this with the American people? Don't they have a reason, if a Congressman is saying that we're violating the law...

A. Well, maybe some of you people misled him.

Access to Intelligence

gence information, to Administration briefings and...

A. Yes, and of — I think Secretary Shultz and Security Adviser Judge Clark have both been talking to him, and you have seen the statement by Barry Goldwater of the Intelligence Committee that is absolutely positive that there is no violation of the law whatsoever. I think that when they pay a little more attention to this they're going to find out we're not violating the law.

Let me do what I promised the other day and start with some of the people in the back of the room here.

A Perspective

Q. Mr. President, are you willing to say flatly that the United States is not engaging in any activities that a reasonable person could assume would be

for the purpose of overthrowing the Nicaraguan Government?

A. We are not doing anything to try and overthrow the Nicaraguan Government. As a matter of fact, let's put that in perspective for a moment.

Nicaragua today has created the biggest military force in all of Central America and large parts of South America — an army of some 25,000 backed by a militia of 50,000 armed with Soviet weapons that consist of heavy-duty tanks, an air force, helicopter gunships, fighter planes, bombers and so forth, heavy artillery and a few thousand Moskito Indians and guerrillas. I don't think it's reasonable to assume that that kind of a force couldn't nurse any ambitions that they can overthrow that Government with that great military force. And I think that people should understand some of these things and ask themselves what is the need for them having the biggest army in all of the region.

We are cooperating with the other Central American countries in the region to try and bring democracy and peace to Central America.

Soviet Aircraft

Q. Mr. President, this morning your Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Mr. Enders, told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that there was a possibility Cuba or the Soviet Union may introduce high-performance aircraft or even Cuban troops into Nicaragua. Do you have any information about any impending possibility of this, and if so, what would be the American response to that move?

A. Well, no, I think I'm not going to answer a hypothetical question with a hypothetical answer. And I only know that that possibility does exist because the Soviet Union, by way of Cuba, has been engaged already —

Remarks to News Reporters

may I remind you that the inauguration of the revolutionary government, when it took over — Castro was present and a representative of the Soviet Union and both of them openly hailed Nicaragua as the first Communist country on the mainland of the Western Hemisphere.

No Justification in Wishes

Q. Mr. President, considering what you've just said about Nicaragua and your past statements about how it is a staging area there — doesn't the United States want that Government replaced? And is there anything that you feel that we should be doing within the law to have that Government in Nicaragua replaced with a democratic one?

A. We, of course, as I said — anything that we are doing is aimed at interdicting these supply lines and stopping this effort to overthrow the El Salvador Government. But what I might personally wish, or what our Government might wish, still would not justify us violating the law of the land.

Q. You're not doing anything to overthrow the Government there?

A. No, because that would be violating the law.

Jobs in Pittsburgh

Q. Mr. President, you were successful in your efforts to get a job for Ron Bricker, the bold young man from Pittsburgh who gave you his résumé — I understand a lot of other unemployed steel workers are now flooding the White House with requests for help. Are you planning to help get jobs for these other people, too?

A. I haven't seen any of those

accosted me and handed me his résumé and asked me would I show it to anyone if I had the opportunity — that he was seeking work. And I said, yes, I would. I did. He's got a job. Now I didn't expect that all of the unemployed were suddenly going to ask me to be the employment agency, individually, for them — I think that would be impossible.

But at any time that I can be in any way of help in lining someone up with an employer who's looking for an employee, of course I'd do it, because I think it's a problem on all our minds, and I think — this digresses from your question — but I think we ought to recognize that throughout this country, radio and TV stations that have held job-a-thons have been successful in getting thousands of people put back to work. There are local groups and committees, including, right there in Pittsburgh, that are doing the same thing in an effort to help stimulate and move faster, and they have to do it on the basis of individuals, and we, of course, in our own legislation with the so-called jobs bill, are doing our part here at the government level. But the main way they're going to go back to work is going to be with the recovery of the economy. Now, Bill? I just recognized Bill.

Legislative Restrictions

Q. Thank you so much. Let me ask you this, sir — do the War Powers Act and the Boland Amendment unduly restrict your authority as the Chief Executive and would you like to see something done about it?

A. Helen, I should have listened to you. I think any legislation which restricts the relation or is — confines itself to the relationship of a single

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