

UNCLASSIFIED The Director of Central Intelligence

NOVEMBER 1985

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EYES ONLY

20 March 1985

Central American

The Honorable Donald L. Regan  
Chief of Staff and Assistant  
to the President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500

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Dear Don,

The effort to explain the security and credibility stakes in Central America is already very late. A white paper cleared well over a month ago is still somewhere in the bureaucracy. Supporters on the hill are clamoring for guidance. As far as I know, none of the material that was to be available in February has been seen.

There is worry that a budget fight may require deferring the contra vote. It's pretty bad if this government can't handle more than one legislative battle at a time.

The battle for contra funding is viewed in Central and Latin America as a litmus test of US resolve and long-term intentions in Central America. We have informed our Central American allies in definitive terms that we will be seeking Congressional approval for renewed aid immediately following the MX missile vote. Any delay in this endeavor, for whatever reasons, will be interpreted by all observers, friendly and unfriendly, as a weakening of US resolve.

[REDACTED] which resulted in the 2 March signing of the San Jose declaration which unified key armed and unarmed opposition leaders in Nicaragua around a common set of principles and objectives. This declaration has been widely acclaimed by all observers as a positive development. It has led to key regional leaders, Presidents Barletta of Panama, Lusinchi of Venezuela, and Betancur of Colombia meeting for the first time with Nicaraguan opposition groups which include leaders of the armed opposition. [REDACTED] has placed the Nicaraguans on the defensive and has given momentum to the opposition.

The forthright stand taken by President Reagan in his public declarations of support for renewed aid has steeled the resolve of our regional allies and of the Nicaraguan opposition both armed and unarmed. As a result of President Reagan's clear support and the momentum accruing to them from the 2 March declaration, opposition leaders are demonstrating confidence and unity that we have not previously seen. Even more important, regional allies are demonstrating signs of a willingness to support our policies. Conversely, the Sandinistas are demonstrating an atypical hesitancy and a lack of sure-footedness.

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By: R. Regan, National Security Council

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 We have closely monitored these Sandinista preparations but are precluded from providing any warning, advice or assistance to the FDN. This is an unsatisfactory situation, which can only be changed by modification of existing legislation. It is our assessment that without renewed aid, advice and guidance, the Sandinista effort to destroy the effectiveness of the armed opposition will be successful, probably within a twelve-month period. Of equal importance, it is our assessment that without renewed funding the unity and effectiveness of the unarmed opposition will quickly disintegrate.

Against this background, it is crucial that we move quickly and strongly for renewed funding for the armed opposition. Not to do so will:

-- result in failure to capitalize on our momentum of the moment and yield the initiative once again to the Sandinistas;

-- seriously undermine our credibility with our regional partners and call into question explicit messages passed to them by senior administration officials;

-- have a highly negative, perhaps even devastating, impact on the morale and effectiveness of the opposition both armed and unarmed, internal and external;

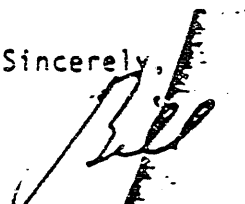
-- hand the Sandinistas and their Soviet/Cuban backers an unearned victory;

-- finally, have a negative impact internationally as delay will be interpreted as an indicator that the US is once again abandoning its allies in a moment of crisis.

I am told that private organizations have made major commitments and set up their program to inform the public of what's at stake on a schedule geared to a tentative government schedule which is some weeks behind on its implementation.

God save America!

Sincerely,

  
William J. Casey

cc: The Honorable Patrick J. Buchanan  
Assistant to the President  
for Communications

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QUOTATIONS ABOUT NICARAGUA

"It's up to all of us, the Administration, you as citizens, and your representatives in the Congress. The people of Central America can succeed if we provide the assistance I have proposed. We Americans should be proud of what we are trying to do in Central America, and proud of what, together with our friends, we can do in Central America -- to support democracy, human rights, and economic growth, while preserving peace so close to home. Let us show the world what we want to hostile, Communist colonies here in the Americas: South, Central, or North."

President Reagan, May 9, 1984

"It is not popular support that sustains the insurgents. . . . this insurgency depends for its life blood -- arms, ammunition, financing, logistics and command-and-control facilities -- upon outside assistance from Nicaragua and Cuba. . . . It has provided -- by land, sea and air -- the great bulk of military equipment and support received by the insurgents."

On El Salvador  
U.S. Congress, House Permanent  
Select Committee on Intelligence  
(96th Congress, 1st Session, 1983)

"Nicaragua and El Salvador will soon fall to guerrilla forces" and their governments will "take their place in the trash heap of history."

Fidel Castro, May 1979, before  
Sandinistas took control of Nicaragua

"Today in Nicaragua there is terror where there was once bright hope."

Eden Pastora

"Armed subversion has but one launching pad: Nicaragua. While Nicaragua draws the attention of the world by saying that for two years they have been on the verge of being invaded, they have not ceased for one instant to invade our country."

Salvadoran President Alvaro Magana,  
December 22, 1983

"Nothing is more humanitarian than preventing the Marxist-Leninist juggernaut from imposing its bloody, ruthless" control over Central America.

"Every bit of moral fiber in my being tells me it is wrong, wrong, wrong" to deny the aid.

Senator John P. East (R), June 25, 1984

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"We have to recognize that the Cubans are the fulcrum of the revolution in Latin America."

Joaquin Villalobos, Top Leader of Salvadoran Guerrillas, 1980

The Marshal [Soviet Army Chief of General Staff Marshal Nikolai V. Ogarkov] said that over two decades ago, there was only Cuba in Latin America; today there are Nicaragua, Grenada, and a serious battle is going on in El Salvador."

From memorandum of conversation between Marshal Ogarkov and Grenadian Army Chief of Staff Einstein Louison on March 10, 1983

It is necessary to "stop [Fidel] Castro's influence militarily, otherwise there will be no place left in the Americas to send our humanitarian efforts."

Dr. Othneil J. Seiden, Medical Volunteer in Honduras and Nicaragua

"Internal democracy solves all the other problems. If there isn't any, Nicaragua's threat to its Central American neighbors will not abate."

Senior U.S. Official in Managua

"The easy parts are over. Things now will take a lot more time, and time is what we don't have much of."

Virgilio Godoy, leader of the opposition Liberal Independent Party (formerly a cabinet member of the Sandinistan government)

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