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NEW YORK TIMES

13 March 1982

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†BC-DEMS(COX)
†Democrats Assail Reagan Intelligence Policies
†By Andrew J. Glass
†c. 1982 Cox News Service

WASHINGTON - A frustrated group of key Democrats on Capitol Hill contend they have been told little or nothing about what President Reagan intends to do in Latin America.

Their complaints focus on what they see as a dearth of intelligence data being supplied to the legislators as well as a lack of candid briefings on the administration's policies in this critical region.

Their growing restiveness, which came to light in a series of interviews last week, appears to threaten any semblance of a coordinated bipartisan approach toward mounting problems in El Salvador and elsewhere in the Caribbean basin.

"There have been no briefings about Latin America," Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., said. "What we have heard has been cursory and bland."

Hart, a member of the Senate Armed Services and a potential Democratic presidential candidate in 1984, said, "A kind of attitudinal distain for Congress exists in this administration. At bottom, they regard all people in Congress as irrelevant buffoons."

Hart's views, if not his sharp rhetoric, were echoed by another Senate Democrat, Joseph Biden of Delaware. Speaking here to the government affairs committee of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, a group of leading news executives, Biden reportedly castigated Reagan's advisers for failing to share any hard data on the increasingly volatile situation in Latin America with the Senate Intelligence Committee, on which Biden serves.

Biden suggested that the administration could end up paying a high price for its lack of candor. His remarks were confirmed by his press secretary, Peter Smith.

One focal point for the Democratic unease is a resolution introduced last month by Sen. Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, a member of the intelligence panel, calling for the United States to encourage unconditional negotiations for a cease-fire in El Salvador. That approach is strongly opposed by Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr., who contends that Cuba and Nicaragua are trying to foment an anti-American Marxist upheaval in the Caribbean basin.

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