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"DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY IN THE CARIBBEAN BASIN"
STATEMENT BY
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FOR
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
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SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
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This hearing, Mr. Chairman, comes at a moment when it is vital to clarify and affirm what the United States should seek to achieve in Central America as a whole, and in El Salvador in particular. Perhaps then we should start from fundamentals.

1.

We believe that a responsible American policy must have two pillars:

- Defense of our national security interests;
- Support for freedom and (where necessary) social reform, allied to economic development.

There can be no mistaking that our national security interests are being challenged.

- Cuba is systematically expanding its capacity to project military power beyond its own shores. The arrival this year of a second squadron of MiG-23/Floggers and the 63,000 tons of war supplies imported from the Soviet Union last year come on top of what was already by several times the largest air, land and sea inventory of the region.
- Nicaragua is being exploited as a base for the export of subversion and armed intervention throughout Central America. Inside Nicaragua, Soviet, East European, and 1800-2000 Cuban military advisors are building Central America's largest military establishment with Soviet arms; outside Nicaragua, the clandestine infiltration of arms and munitions into El Salvador is again approaching the high levels recorded just before last year's "final offensive."

State Dept. review completed

- The decisive battle for Central America is underway in El Salvador. If, after Nicaragua, El Salvador is captured by a violent minority, who in Central America would not live in fear? How long would it be before major strategic U.S. interests - the canal, sea lanes, oil supplies -- were at risk?

For most of its life as a nation, our country has faced no threat from its neighbors. But, unless we act decisively now, the future could well bring more Cubas: totalitarian regimes so linked to the Soviet Union that they become factors in the military balance, and so incompetent economically that their citizens' only hope becomes that of one day migrating to the United States.

This brings me to the second pillar of our policy. The sharing of political power through democratic institutions and the overcoming of violence and poverty are not only fundamental for us -- they are also fundamental for our neighbors.

- An acute economic crisis has engulfed the entire Caribbean Basin. As the world economy slid into recession, these small and vulnerable economies felt the shock hard. Democracy is hard to achieve or maintain in times of bitter economic hardship, particularly if great inequalities in social and economic opportunity persist.
- Lawlessness from the violent right frequently compounds the problems created by insurgent violence and external intervention. The fragility of institutions under political and economic stress can create chain reactions of disorder and abuse that feed dictatorship.
- Faith in representative democracy and government institutions will erode if these trends continue. Yet in societies as deeply divided as those in Central America only pluralistic institutions can enable people to live with each other without violence.

Rather than sacrifice either our interests or our values -- either support for democracy or security -- we must find a way to assert both. So that we can check the communist drive for power, yet help the region develop in a humane and democratic way, using the state of danger to help the people of Central America realize their political and social aspirations.

It is in this spirit that the Administration understands the conditions on aid to El Salvador contained in the Foreign Assistance Act. Yes, there is a challenge to our national security, so military and economic assistance are required. But yes, we must also use our assistance to help El Salvador control violence, make land reform work, develop a democratic process, bring murderers to justice. I do not mean to say that we would have expressed the objectives precisely as they are expressed in the legislation, but our goals are the same.

The certification the President has just made shows that there has indeed been substantial progress towards each of the desired goals laid out in law.

- Thanks to efforts by the military command, the levels of violence against non-combatants have fallen; all sides agree that the trend is downward;
- For all the inherent administrative and political difficulties, land reform -- the most comprehensive program of land reform ever attempted in Latin America -- is moving ahead;
- Despite violence and the absence of deep-rooted democratic traditions, the electoral process is gathering momentum. Eight parties have entered the campaign that officially opened last Thursday. Important elements of the Salvadoran society, including the Church and peasant organizations have come out strongly in support of elections. But the guerrillas have refused to test out their strength at the ballot box.
- The Salvadoran government has made major progress in its investigation of the murder of the four American church women. We expect indictments based on a strong case very shortly, maybe as early as this week.

This is clearly not enough. More is needed, especially on the problem of violence. But a lot has been achieved in the midst of an externally-supported insurgency in a deeply divided country.

Some few would argue that El Salvador is not reforming itself fast enough and we should cut off aid. But that would defeat the goals both the Congress and the Administration are pursuing. All hope of achieving functioning democracy in El Salvador would vanish. The Soviets and Cubans would have a new opening to expand their power on the American mainland. And it would be hard to argue that Nicaraguanizing El Salvador would be an effective way to promote human rights.

But there is another basis for action. Two years ago, a new Salvadoran government committed itself to political reform -- free elections -- and land reform. The United States supported it then. It supports it now.

With our help

- The government of El Salvador is working towards democracy and the scheduled elections; the violent FDR/FMLN opposition is trying to sabotage the election process.
- The government of El Salvador is pursuing economic development and reform; the violent FDR/FMLN opposition is waging economic warfare.
- The government of El Salvador has made measurable progress in controlling violence; the violent FDR/FMLN opposition boasts of having inflicted 2000 casualties in the last seven months of 1981.

2.

Mr. Chairman, sometimes Americans underestimate the power of democracy in this area. That is a mistake.

The Caribbean Basin has far more democratic than repressive states. The resilience of more than a century of democracy has enabled Costa Rica to hold up magnificently under the pressures of a brutal economic crisis. Honduras -- where Chairman Helms and I have just been to attend the inauguration of a new and democratically elected President -- shows that if given a chance people are eager to see their leaders elected democratically.

The democracies of the area are beginning to realize that they will remain democracies only if they stand together. Within Honduras the Cubans are trying to unify the left and start another insurgency, while across the border Nicaragua is building up the biggest and best equipped army in Central American history. To Nicaragua's south, Costa Ricans are watching the Sandinistas organize military operations in Costa Rica's own rich and largely undefended Guanacaste province and wondering what will happen when more Soviet-built tanks and perhaps MiG's appear next door. In El Salvador, insurgents are escalating their violence and terror, doing everything to prevent the elections from being held -- including threats of death to candidates and voters.

In response to this situation, Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador formed -- on January 19 -- the Central American Democratic Community, to defend their values and seek the support of other democratic states.

On January 27, on the occasion of Honduran President Suazo's inauguration, three democracies -- Venezuela, Colombia, the United States -- responded. The six will meet regularly

- to help carry through the democratic transformation in El Salvador and protect free institutions elsewhere;
- to overcome the region-wide economic crisis fueled by the recession in the world economy and by terrorism;
- to attempt to head off the arms race Nicaragua seems determined to impose on its neighbors;
- to be ready to use the resources of the Inter-American system to defend against armed aggression.

These steps are part of a collective approach to the area's problems, an approach proposed by Secretary Haig at the OAS meeting in St. Lucia last December and evident in the OAS General Assembly's endorsement of elections in El Salvador by a 22-3 vote. The democracies are banding together to defend their values and their security in a time of rising danger.

3.

For the dangers are rising fast.

We have tried to communicate with Cuba, to convince Castro of the dangers of confrontation. But the Cubans are accelerating their acquisition of intimidating armaments; they are aggressively pushing their policy of organizing and supporting violent insurgencies throughout Central America.

We have tried to communicate with the Nicaraguans, to offer a way out of confrontation if they would restrain their military build-up and cease their support of insurgency in El Salvador. But the Nicaraguan response has been to move toward greater internal repression -- for their large Miskito Indian minority, for the remaining free radio stations and press, for the church, for democratic leaders and businessmen -- and to accelerate their build up of heavy arms, and to bring in more Cuban and Soviet advisors, while exporting more arms to rebels in neighboring countries.

In El Salvador the insurgents talk peace but throw bombs. The attack last week against Ilopango Airport, continued attacks on the economic infrastructure, stepped up arms flow, all indicate intensified military action aimed at disrupting the electoral process.

The Caribbean Basin is right on our borders. We cannot, even if we wanted to, turn our back on it. The administration, the Congress, the American people are all confronted with the problems of the area. Together we must find a solution.

What the administration suggests -- to gain the initiative, and make sure the area's besieged and aspiring democracies survive -- is to:

- Support the fledgling Central American Democratic Community in its efforts to protect democracy and promote the common welfare, defense and development. We must act both individually and through the Inter-American system.
- Provide increased military assistance to El Salvador and Honduras, the two most threatened states.

We expect in the immediate future to use emergency authority to draw on DOD stocks for approximately \$55 million to replace lost aircraft, and to assure that the Government of El Salvador has the means to defend against the attacks on its economy and to protect the electoral process.

- Provide emergency financial assistance to a number of states in the Basin suffering from economic catastrophe. The Administration will shortly forward its proposal to the Congress;
- Strengthen -- along with our partners in the Nassau group, Venezuela, Mexico and Canada -- international cooperation to help the Caribbean Basin as a whole achieve long-term prosperity; the Administration will shortly send specific proposals in trade and investment to the Congress.

And as we move forward on these items, we must redouble our efforts in El Salvador to help bring the violence under control and push forward with land reform. Simultaneously we must help all countries of the area to choose legitimate governments through elections. Americans will not permit Central America's future to be decided in Moscow or Havana. Neither will they support solutions that are inherently undemocratic or unjust.