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SUBJECT General Singlaub's Role in Aiding Nicaraguan Contras

MIKE WALLACE: Tonight the story of a retired two-star Army general the Reagan Administration relied on to run a way the Congress had forbidden them to wage. During the 15 months that the Congress refused to give President Reagan the \$100 million he asked for to aid Nicaragua's Contra rebels, retired General John Singlaub defied the will of Congress by taking over for the CIA as virtual director of that war.

The White House, which is now about to get their \$100 million from the Congress, will not comment on what Singlaub did to keep the President's Contra war alive. But when we caught up with the General last summer, we found a proud warrior eager to defend everything he's done. And we found him in a most unlikely place.

This is not the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, not some halftime ceremony in Mid-America. It's a giant rally in Taiwan of the World Anti-Communist League, W.A.C.L., or WACL, as it's sometimes called. And this is General Singlaub, until last month WACL's chairman, here to spread his gospel of anti-communism.

GENERAL JOHN SINGLAUB: And let us take heart that the freedom fighters in Nicaragua...

WALLACE: There is something strange about a retired U.S. Army general calling on anti-communists in the Far East to join in a military campaign in Central America and throughout the world to, as he put it, role back the Soviet empire. And there's the temptation to dismiss it as some kind of exotic nonsense, until you recognize the role that Singlaub has played these last two years in keeping Ronald Regan's Contra war alive.

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Let me put a thesis to you, General Singlaub. Private citizen Jack Singlaub has become Ronald Reagan's secret weapon to sidestep a Congress that will not permit him to act in the arenas where he believes that our security interests are at stake. True?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: True.

WALLACE: You're sidestepping the Congress. You're, in effect, almost subverting the will of the Congress up to now.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Well, that's true. But foreign policy, by our Constitution, is to be made by the President, not by the Congress.

SENATOR JOHN KERRY: The minimum that Jack Singlaub has been doing is, as an American citizen, personally been encouraging and assisting the waging of a war against a people with whom we are at peace.

WALLACE: He acknowledges that.

SENATOR KERRY: That's in violation of the law.

WALLACE: As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator John Kerry is investigating Singlaub's Contra activities.

SENATOR KERRY: That's in violation of the Neutrality Act. That is precisely what we are not supposed to do. And it is not enough to say that, somehow, these are freedom fighters, and therefore it's permissible in the tradition of Lafayette.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: I keep going back to the fact that if George Washington had not had help from outside of the government, private citizens in France and Holland and Spain, we would not be a free country today.

WALLACE: But who is this would-be Lafayette?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Beautiful, isn't it [Taiwan ceremony]?

WALLACE: It's hard to explain the role that private citizen John Singlaub has been able to play in Ronald Reagan's Washington until you consider the kind of missions he performed for the U.S. Government over three decades, and the friends he made along the way.

World War II. As a 23-year-old paratrooper, Jack Singlaub signed on with the OSS and was dropped behind enemy lines to help organize the French Underground. The man who sent

him on his mission against the Nazis was an OSS officer named William Casey.

What does your old case officer, Bill Casey, who now runs the CIA, what does he say about what you're doing?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Well, he has indicated approval and he has been encouraging. He introduces me to the people that need to have the detailed information. So he's been cooperative and sees me when I come into town on short notice.

WALLACE: Singlaub's anti-communism was forged in the immediate years after World War II when, as a CIA officer stationed in China in 1949, he witnessed the world's most populous country fall to Chinese Communist forces.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: It was a very depressing thing to see all of China fall, when most of us felt that it was not necessary.

WALLACE: The following year, 1950, when the Communist Army of North Korea invaded the South, the 29-year-old Major Singlaub was once again detailed to the CIA, this time to direct operations behind enemy lines.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: During that time there were many very young case officers who now hold top positions in CIA or in the Department of Defense.

WALLACE: For example, Singlaub's immediate superior, Richard Stilwell, would become Ronald Reagan's Deputy Undersecretary of Defense.

A young case officer, Nestor Sanchez, who worked under Singlaub would emerge as the Pentagon's Deputy Secretary in charge of Latin America, a job he still holds.

And in Vietnam, where Singlaub was put in charge of special operations, his colleague running missions into Laos was John Vessey, whom President Reagan would later appoint Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Well, I don't want to say that my friends are providing influence. But I do have friends at the top levels of the CIA, top levels of State, the National Security Council, and the Department of Defense.

WALLACE: And you talk to them all the time?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: I talk to them, yes.

WALLACE: For three decades the U.S. Government chose

Jack Singlaub for one sensitive mission after another. His record was remarkable: wounded in two wars, fought in three, decorated 33 times. And yet he was virtually unknown to the American people until 1979, when as Chief of Staff of U.S. Forces in South Korea he publicly challenged President Jimmy Carter's decision to cut U.S. troop strength there in half. The General told a reporter that any major reduction would have encouraged an attack by the North Koreans.

And so you went back home to Washington. And Secretary of Defense Harold Brown had some advice for you, didn't he?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Well, unfortunately, he suggested that if I were to tell the President that I had been misquoted by the reporter, that things would go easier for me when I got to the White House.

WALLACE: And?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: That just made me mad. I had to tell the Secretary he obviously didn't understand that I was very accurately quoted, and I believed what I said, or I would not have said it.

WALLACE: Harold Brown denies urging Singlaub to say he had been misquoted. Whatever the case, Singlaub emerged from his confrontation with Jimmy Carter a hero to conservatives like Senator Jesse Helms.

SENATOR JESSE HELMS: The conservatives recognize Jack Singlaub as a man who will lay his own career on the line, which he did, to stand up for freedom in the world and for the best interests of America.

WALLACE: The drastic troop cut was never made. But Singlaub's career in the Army was over. And he all but disappeared from sight until 1984, when Dr. Koo Cheng Kang (?), the 86-year-old founder of the World Anti-Communist League, invited him to become WACL's director.

It was to mobilize worldwide support against communism that two of Singlaub's allies, the governments of Taiwan and South Korea, created WACL in 1954. But in recent years WACL has acquired a reputation for promoting death squads in Latin America and harboring sinister extremists.

Prior to your taking over WACL, WACL was -- I won't call it a hotbed, but it...

GENERAL SINGLAUB: It surely had some in it. That is absolutely right.

WALLACE: It harbored Nazis, anti-Semites, fascists, and killers.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: I think that that's correct. I don't think the numbers were significant, except that there were some, small numbers. But that was enough to contaminate the whole barrel.

WALLACE: Singlaub claims to have purged WACL's ranks and to have transformed the organization into an action arm to provide guns and money to anti-communist guerrillas around the world. A strategy the White House later adopted, which is now commonly referred to as the Reagan Doctrine.

WACL, according to Singlaub, has been giving aid; to the rebels in Afghanistan. In Africa, he says, WACL is supporting UNITA's guerrilla army in Angola, RENAMO in Mozambique, and an emerging rebellion in Ethiopia. In Southeast Asia, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

But the focus of his efforts these last two years has been on aiding the Contras, at a time when it was illegal for any U.S. official even to advise those Nicaraguan rebels.

By what right, if you will, does Jack Singlaub presume to make himself an arm of American foreign policy?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Well, there's no restriction, there's no law that says that an American citizen can't support a cause that he believes in. And I have been doing this very carefully to make sure that I don't violate any law.

WALLACE: Yeah, but you said that you will do some things that the CIA will not do because it's prohibited from doing it. You say that you will go around the Congress.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Well, that's right. That's what we have done in the case of Nicaragua. We gave them food, medicines, clothing to keep them going. And outside the country, we organized an effort to raise money to buy arms for them.

SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY: If he said that, I give him credit for his candor, but I don't give him much credit for any sense of constitutional checks and balances.

WALLACE: Democratic pat Leahy is Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

SENATOR LEAHY: There should not be private citizens, perhaps with a wink and a shrug from the White House, doing their own foreign policy. That inevitably, inevitably leads to all kinds of problems for this country.

WALLACE: Senator Leahy was surprised by Singlaub's admissions. But what's been most distinctive about the General's Contra crusade is how open he has always been about what he's doing.

Here at this freedom fighter convention which he hosted in Dallas a year ago, everyone, it seemed, was talking provocatively about bypassing the Congress and keeping the Contra war alive. Ellen Garwood, for example, had just donated \$67,000 to purchase a medical helicopter for the cause.

Aren't you, aren't you, Mrs. Garwood, skirting the will of the United States Congress in, for instance, giving them the money to purchase that chopper?

ELLEN GARWOOD: What a funny thing to say. Don't you know that the President asked us to give private aid, humanitarian aid?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: The first letter is addressed, "Dear General Singlaub. Our combined efforts are moving the tide of history toward world freedom. I send you all who help in your crusade for liberty my best wishes. God bless you.

"Sincerely, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States."

[Cheers]

MRS. GARWOOD: Remember, Churchill himself stood out about the danger of Naziism. And look, when it came to the nitty-gritty and they needed him, they called him in. And they're going to calla us in when it comes to the nitty-gritty. Well, I hope before.

WALLACE: And you...

MRS. GARWOOD: General Singlaub.

WALLACE: Last summer, while the fate of U.S. aid to the Contras was being bitterly debated in the Congress, we traveled with General Singlaub back to his old command in the Korean demilitarized zone.

MAN: Three cheers for [unintelligible]

GENERAL SINGLAUB: You know the ropes. That's great.

WALLACE: No one from the Administration, not William Casey at the CIA nor anyone at the White House, was willing to discuss General Singlaub's activities with us. In all of our

talks, General Singlaub insisted that he is no longer involved in any official capacity with the U.S. military or the CIA. But he repeatedly told us that he considers his intervention in Nicaragua to be a mission on behalf of the President.

Okay. How did you go about taking over the Contra account from Bill Casey and the CIA?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Well, it was just relatively simple. It was first to determine what the need are, and then to mobilize the conservative organizations and give them different tasks of what we wanted them to do.

WALLACE: But still, the White House had to know what you were doing.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Right.

WALLACE: The CIA had to know what you were doing.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: That's right.

WALLACE: The Pentagon had to know.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Well, I made a point of getting word to the White House and to the Agency. They saw what we were doing. And from time to time, I would get a: "Good job, Jack. Appreciate what you're doing."

WALLACE: From?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: From Mr. Casey and from people in the White House.

SENATOR KERRY: He is in pursuit of a policy which this Administration wants to see effected. And by virtue of that, there's been a reluctance in many quarters for people to hold him accountable to the law, and to hold a lot of people accountable to the law in this situation.

WALLACE: And the Administration would say to you today, Senator, "Look, they've just given us the hundred million. I'm glad that we had Jack Singlaub helping us in that interim period."

SENATOR KERRY: That's probably what they would say. But the American people are owed a much better explanation for how we got to where we are today and why it is that our institutions have been subverted in that process.

WALLACE: And laws been broken, you believe.

SENATOR KERRY: I am convinced.

WALLACE: All right. Now the Contras are going to get the money they need for a while, let us say. You're going to turn the account now back to the CIA? Is that it?

GENERAL SINGLAUB: The physical assets that I have purchased with private funding I would turn, hopefully, over to the CIA. I would like to sell it back to them so that I can take that money and shift it to one or more of the other resistance movements that we are supporting.

WALLACE: What you're saying is, "Mr. President, mission accomplished, as far as this Contra business is concerned. Now give me the money to open a new front for you."

GENERAL SINGLAUB: I would like that. Yes.