

OCA 88-0884
17 March 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing for Members of Congress in the Hearing Room of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Nicaragua

1. On 17 March 1988 a closed "Top Secret" level briefing, on the subject of fighting between the Sandinistas and the Resistance on the Honduran/Nicaraguan border and the President's decision to send 3,100 troops to Honduras for a training exercise was provided to any interested Member of the House. The briefing was held in 226 Rayburn, a relatively large room, and the Capitol Police did control access to the room during the briefing. I would estimate that as many as 200 House Members attended, as did most of the Members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Representative Dante Fascell (D., FL) chaired this meeting and did his best to control a somewhat chaotic session, assisted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee staff. It was impossible to identify exactly who was there, but identities were checked and the press was evicted from the room before the briefing began.

2. The main briefer was Mike Armacost, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, assisted by Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Marty Roeber was the briefer for CIA; the undersigned also attended.

3. The briefing lasted for about an hour and a half, punctuated by a brief recess so the Members could go to vote. Marty was called on to do much of the actual briefing and did his usual first rate job. He was again low key, factual and clear in his presentation, and in answering the questions as well, some which were good, some which were clearly partisan. Armacost was treated generally with respect, but certain Members were a bit hostile toward Abrams. There is little point in reviewing what was said because of the many press conferences that were held after the briefing, including one I got caught in while escorting Abrams over to the House Intelligence Committee. Much of what was discussed is already on the news as I write this anyway, at least the major points, so I will not go into details in this MFR.

[Redacted Signature]

Deputy Director, House Affairs
Office of Congressional Affairs

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