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DOC NO	Doc Type	Document Description	No of Pages	Doc Date	Restrictions
1	FORM	REQUEST FOR APPOINTMENTS	1	1/9/1984	B6
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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Release at 3:00 p.m. EST
Wednesday, January 11, 1984

BACKGROUND BRIEFING
BY
A COMMISSION OFFICIAL
ON THE COMMISSION ON CENTRAL AMERICA REPORT

January 10, 1984

Room 208
The Old Executive Office Building

2:39 P.M. EST

MS. SMALL: I want to welcome you. I think we have most everyone here now. We'll get started, and mention a couple of the ground rules again which we talked about before. This is a background briefing. This is embargoed until the conclusion of tomorrow's major briefing. Tomorrow's briefing is at 12:30 p.m. so let's say until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

Also, as you can see, we're making a transcript. It will be available at the end of the day. I don't know exactly. There's a lot going on today. I would say at least about 6:00 p.m. perhaps. We will try. At least 6:00 p.m. It might be a little bit later but we'll stay here until we get it out and you can check with my office to be sure. It will be put with -- one transcript with each of your names on it in Room 45 for close of business today.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: All of you, as I see, have copies of this report. I would just like to make two or three brief comments.

One is, inevitably, when a report like this gets out in bits and pieces at various stages of drafting, some of it from staff drafts, it is very difficult to create a coherent impression of either what went on or what the report is intending to do. I must say, to me, the significant thing about the report, apart from its substance, is that -- I read some of these gory stories of disagreements in the Commission and heroic, titanic struggles that were going on between various members, victors and losers. And I'm sure all of this went on in the Social Security Commission, but it did not happen to go on in this Commission.

What I think is important is that twelve individuals of vastly different points of view, vastly different background, working together for four months, came up with a consensus report on the major issues. There are some dissents -- essentially, two points that you can assess for yourselves, but in view of dealing mostly -- dealing with the Contras and one, the dissent of whether to send -- favor more export promotion for Central America. And there's a clarification added to the conditionality clause by three members, one of whom is I, about how that conditionality clause ought to be interpreted.

But on the analysis of the problem, on the recommendations, there was a consensus. And that, whatever one may think, if one agrees, as I certainly do, that it is important to restore a sense of bipartisanship to American foreign policy, that I consider a hopeful phenomenon.

Secondly, as to the substance of the report. You will be asking me questions, but let me make a general comment. The fundamental argument of this report is that we're dealing with an area fairly close to us geographically that has a long history in which there are many causes of discontent and many indigenous reasons for upheaval. But what makes -- what gives the current crisis on the security side its international character is that it has become part of a significant degree of outside intervention.

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In dealing with these problems, it would be the conviction of our Commission that one has to deal with two issues simultaneously; that one can't separate them. One is, to remove -- to the extent possible -- the causes that produce the turmoil, and those are importantly indigenous. We can't do that by dealing with it on an ad hoc basis, by fixing specific symptoms. But rather, we need some positive notion of what it is we are trying to accomplish in Central America, and that, in turn, has to be embedded into a Western hemisphere policy.

Talking about Central America, we are dealing with a region of a population of 23 million. It is a manageable problem in terms of the resources involved. What we are recommending is something slightly more than doubling the economic assistance we are giving. And we have put it into a framework in which -- there is some coherence. We've recommended an organization in which it can be carried out on an integrated basis.

Secondly, no amount of economic and social aid is going to do us any good unless the security problem can be dealt with. And the security problem can be dealt with in only two ways which are probably closely related. One is, to deprive the insurgents of hopes of victory; and secondly, to give them a possibility of negotiation if the first objective can be achieved.

On those issues there is consensus on the Commission. And we feel, as we said in the Report, that one can make an argument for doing nothing. And one can make an argument for doing enough. But, one cannot make an argument for doing too little, and doing just enough to deal with these problems on an individual ad hoc basis.

It is my conviction, and I think, the conviction of all of my colleagues, that we hope very much that this will be dealt with on a bipartisan basis; and that it will give us an opportunity to look at the problems of Central America as a whole rather than dealing with it country-by-country. And that is the contribution we tried to make.

Obviously, the implementation is up to the administration and to the Congress. The Commission, as such, will go out of business. And once we have turned over the report, and done the required amount of briefing about the report, the responsibility will obviously be that of the administration and the Congress, hopefully working together.

Now, let me answer your questions. Jack?

Q You and Mr. Walsh, Mr. Brady, and Mr. Silber all filed supplementary statements dwelling upon the conditionality clause. Do we understand that that means that assistance is to be conditioned through legislation on terminating death squads, progress toward democracy, and establishment of the rule of law? And if so, who is to judge when and how those conditions have been met?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: First of all, let me make clear what the -- what that -- this statement is not a dissent from the conditionality clause, it is a clarification of the conditionality clause. It is the way we would recommend to both the Congress and the Executive Branch to interpret the conditionality clause, and to me -- and I think to my two colleagues signing this -- it seems slightly absurd, in the name of human rights, to destroy the structure in

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El Salvador in order to bring into power people whose record on human rights is more deplorable than anything that exists, and who have never shown any indication of making progress toward any of the objectives that we have described in the conditionality clause.

Now we have deliberately not stated how this conditionality clause is to be -- is to operate -- except that it should be in trying -- legislation. And it would seem to me that it could -- that there should be some discussion -- between the Executive Branch and the Congress as to a workable system that is compatible with everybody's objectives. But we have not specifically stated how that is to be worked out.

Q Are you saying that you are not unalterably against some sort of certification process, if it is --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No. I have signed this report. And I support this report with only the clarification that I have added as to how that clause is to be interpreted.

Q Yes, but -- your clarification is being widely interpreted subject to your own interpretation today --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I interpret that --

Q -- as meaning you're against certification as it existed?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: My clarification means that the -- that there should be some system of reporting which I hope the Executive Branch and the Congress will carry out in such a manner that we keep in mind that, while promotion of human rights is a very important American objective, preventing the victory of the Marxist-Leninists in Salvador is a precondition for this objective to be realized. And I do not believe that those two objectives need to be in conflict. There's a wide area in which, with cooperation between the Congress and the Executive, and with an Executive that is determined to make progress on human rights, we can have a major influence in El Salvador without -- without overthrowing the existing structure in the name of certifica -- we haven't used the word "certification" as you may have noticed.

Q How -- how implicated do you think the authorities in El Salvador are in right-wing terrorism? How important is that in the security equation -- that is, how much does that contribute to the undermining of the government? And how does the United States get right-wing terrorism to stop?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: As you might have noticed, we indicated in the introduction to the security report, that there are two kinds of struggles going on: the struggle of the democratic center against extremes on both the left and the right, and then the struggle in which the center and the right are in uneasy alliance against the Marxist-Leninists who are trying to destroy them both.

Now, we were meeting for only four months, so we have not had a chance to go into the details of every issue that was before us, and its sociology. It seems to me, there are many aspects to the death squads -- aspects of how guerrilla wars are fought in that area, aspects of personal revenge, aspects of trying to prevent the land reform from working -- so there are many aspects to it.

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It seems to me, however, that -- and not just to me, but to my colleagues on the Commission -- that the government of El Salvador must be able to find a way of winning this conflict without recourse to such methods. And that we must bring the maximum influence to bear on their government to put an end to this. And that there will be no excuse if an end is not brought to it in a measurable time, as long as we keep in mind that it is a chaotic situation and cannot happen from one day to the next -- but it must happen in a measurable, and in a short, time. On that there was no disagreement.

Q But will we inevitably lose this, if the right-wing terrorism -- the human rights violations -- don't stop?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Will we lose the struggle if the right-wing terrorism doesn't stop? We will certainly lose domestic support in the United States if the right-wing terrorism doesn't stop, and we will lose the possibility of a democratic center and therefore, in the long-run, perhaps the possibility of getting popular support.

Q If that's the case, though -- just one last thing -- if that's the case, don't we have to have a policy that, in no uncertain terms, tells the Salvadoran establishment that it must stop. I mean -- is it enough to operate by persuasion and -- and without --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I think it is always -- one can always make a caricature of a problem by citing the alternatives in the most absolute terms -- either you

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wreck everything that exists, are prepared to wreck everything that exists or you can get an end to the death squads.

I think we can get an end to the death squads within the clarification that I have put forward. And how to do this and the methods to do this, abstract persuasion by itself, the eloquence of any one emissary alone will not do it. It will require a certain amount of pressure to bring it about. And I think they also have to know that we are determined to assist them in the guerrilla war and that we do not make an exact equivalence between what we are supporting and the guerrillas.

Q If I understand you correctly, to follow up, you are saying in your clarification that you are absolutely opposed to cutting off military assistance, no matter what, if it would lead to Marxist-Leninist victory.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, you know, "no matter what" goes very far; but I would think it is inherently illogical in the name of human rights to bring into power people who have never demonstrated the slightest concern for human rights and who have never permitted their governments to change from their totalitarian way in any country in which they were in office. So, in that sense, yes. But "no matter what" means that we have absolutely no influence over a government to which we give a large amount of aid.

After all, the intensity with which we support aid requests before the Congress, the scale of the aid requests, I mean, there are innumerable ways that we have. And, moreover, it is my impression -- it was our impression when we were there -- that there are many people in Salvador on the government side that would like -- that share our feelings. So it is not a question that nothing happens or everything happens.

Q I can understand your saying that -- as you do here -- that you would rather have U.S., American vital security interests protected than the human rights thing enforced vigorously --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, you know, when you put it that way you are already sort of loading it that, you know -- Yes, but fundamentally I'm saying it makes no sense, in the name of human rights, to bring Marxist-Leninists into office.

Q When you say -- I think -- aren't you saying to the death squads that "you people who have killed 30,000 of your own citizens, bad as you are, you are preferable to Marxist-Leninists"?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I'm saying, "I am confident that we can take care of the death squads without going to the other extreme."

Q So, hypothetically, you could see a statute that would require the administration to certify progress in the human rights area for assistance over and above a -- perhaps, a base level. Is that what you're --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I could -- You know, now, I'm going beyond what the Commission said. I certainly, as an individual, could imagine -- I could imagine a statute to that effect very easily.

Q You've made a big jump in logic I would like you to explain for us. When you say that this would just wipe away the existing structure, why do you think a requirement for certification would, as you seem to suggest, automatically destroy what's there and --

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COMMISSION OFFICIAL: But I'm not saying that. I have signed a report supporting the conditionality clause. I am saying it should be interpreted in a manner that, while it brings considerable pressure on the government to change, stops short of overthrowing the existing structure. I'm not --

Q Give us a model then.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I'm not saying the certification procedure -- we have not, incidentally, used the word "certification" -- that the recording procedure would automatically overthrow the government. I'm not saying that at all.

Q Give us a model then. What do you suggest? You've described --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I am suggesting that we make clear our concern as to human rights objectives and our unalterable opposition to the death squads. I have signed a report in which we say that this can be enshrined -- that this could be enshrined in legislation requiring periodic reports on the subject and, obviously, that the amount and kind of aid is affected by this.

The only point I'm saying that I want to make clear and on which -- I don't know what -- I didn't try to get a majority of the Commission, I didn't try to take a vote on that proposition for a variety of reasons. In interpreting this, I would like the administration and the Congress to keep in mind the limits beyond which it should not be pushed, but also to keep in mind the limits to which it should be pushed.

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But let's keep in mind, they're talking about one clause in a 140-page report. The fact that it has, unfortunately, led to a lot of discussion should not detract from the fact that we are -- that we tried to write a report about many aspects of Central America, not just about that one clause.

Q Why did you feel that you had to write the clarification unless you feared that the --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I do fear it.

Q -- that the consensus, or at least that the wording of the report might be interpreted by Congress as a green light to have tight strings and perhaps a cutoff on aid if certain human rights criteria were not met?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, I simply wanted to make clear that this was not how I would interpret it. I have no particular reason to suppose that they will do it or that they won't do it. If they won't do it -- if there's no danger that the Congress will do this, then my clarification is unnecessary. If there is a danger, then my clarification is relevant.

Did you discuss this clarification note with the President or anybody in the administration?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Absolutely not. I had no discussion with the President or anybody close to the President or anybody in the administration about my position. And as you heard yesterday, I do not think that the clause, which I, after all, signed, was greeted with total approval in this building.

Q Since your purpose, as you say, was to get a bipartisan consensus and since, very clearly from the nature of just these questions on key issues, do you think you've succeeded?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Yes.

Q It doesn't sound like you have on the issue of human rights.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Yes, I think we have succeeded on the issue of human rights. The only -- we have succeeded among the twelve people of our commission who represent a rather wide-spread of -- of opinion.

You can, of course, focus this whole discussion on the human rights issue, which is not the major theme of this report. The major theme of this report is to analyze the conditions in Central America, the conditions that produce the current turmoil, the outside support that gives it its international character, and the necessity for the United States to take a long-range, coherent view of dealing with both the conditions that produce the upheaval and with the security problem.

The human rights conditionality with respect to military aid to Salvador is one particular aspect of this report. It is not the central theme of this report, although it is the central theme of much reporting.

Q You described the military situation in El Salvador as a stalemate and I wonder if -- what -- how you evaluate the will of the leadership in El Salvador and, especially, the military leadership to prevail. Do they have the morale to do what they have to do?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: What we said in this report is we do not guarantee success if the program that we have outlined here is carried out. But without such a program we think there cannot be any success.

In any -- all of these guerrilla wars have similar -- many of them have similar characteristics. There's a systematic attempt to de-legitimize the government on the part of the force

that's hostile to it. There's a systematic weakening of the governmental structure which isn't all that strong to begin with or there wouldn't have been a guerrilla war.

We have elections at the end of March. We have -- hopefully, a democratic government will emerge out of this. And we shouldn't delude ourselves. If a non-democratic government emerges out of this, there's a new set of problems. A new set of problems will arise.

I think there is a chance that the situation in Central America can be first stabilized, and then given a positive direction. But I'm not saying that this is assured. We were asked to address what the United States should do. We were not asked to make an intelligence assessment as to probability.

Q Do you think that the --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: The administration has no choice

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except to try to do what is right.

Q Do you think that the death squad problem would vanish or be severely reduced if the guerrilla movement itself were stopped? In other words, do you think it's tied into the fact that there is guerrilla movement and that it's --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I am not an expert on Central America. I want to begin with this. I am told by people who served as ambassadors in Central America that there was no death squad problem before 1979. On the other hand, I do not think we can wait with solving the death squad problem until the guerrilla war is over. I think the death squad problem has to be dealt with in a short period of time, and I do not believe the guerrilla problem can be solved in an equally short period of time. But certainly there is an interconnection between the death squads and the degree of insecurity that exists in the society, but I think that it is also true that some death squad activity has nothing to do with the guerrilla war.

Q I only have one more question here. Do the majority of the Commission members believe that Central America can remain non-communist so long as the Sandinistas are in power? In other words, are the Sandinistas --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: What page are you talking about?

Q Are the Sandinistas the key to the non-communism in Central America?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: What page are you talking about?

Q Page? I'm not -- I am just asking a question. I'm just wondering whether that's the --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I could say -- because you said majority, I think it is the consensus of the Commission that a Nicaragua that continues to receive its present scale of outside military support, that receives -- that has over 10,000 Cubans and hundreds of East European and other intelligence experts in that country will become a growing and in time intolerable weight on all of its neighbors. And if there was any consensus among the countries that we visited, including democratic Costa Rica, it was on that proposition. And this is why we feel that the same principles we are demanding or recommending for the other countries of Central America are only appropriate for Nicaragua; namely, that it live up to what it promised the OAS in 1979.

And I would like to point out that this is also what the Contadora countries are asking Nicaragua.

Q Can I follow up on that? Your seven point program for these comprehensive regional settlements calls for a prohibition on all foreign forces, bases and advisors and so on. What assurance, if any, do you have that Nicaragua or the Sandinista government would go along with that?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I have none.

Q Do you have hope? You have no assurance. Do you have hope?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: At one point in recent months after the invasion of Grenada, or the event in Grenada, whatever the term of art is --

Q Rescue, rescue mission.

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COMMISSION OFFICIAL: -- the Sandinistas hinted that this is something that they might consider. But I would not pay too much attention to it at this point.

All we can do as a commission -- we cannot conduct a negotiation. We cannot say what the reaction of the United States should be to the ebb and flow of various proposals and counter-proposals that are made. What we can do is to state what we think objectively the terms, the conditions are under which security can be achieved in Central America. If we can reduce military forces in Central America to traditional Central American levels, if we can remove foreign military advisors and bases, if Nicaragua becomes another, a normal state in the region, and if there is advance towards pluralism in all of the states, then we believe there are objective conditions for security.

Now our President might well decide that he will compromise one or the other of those conditions in the process of negotiations. He will then run an increased risk, but he has to balance this against the risk of not coming to an agreement and the consequences of that. That is not for a commission -- a commission cannot, offering a program, also offer various alternative positions because they will then become the starting point for --

Q When you did your research on this, did you come to the conclusion that if all foreign forces literally were removed, all the Cubans from Nicaragua, and the Americans from Salvador, the indigenous insurgents in Salvador could be defeated today? And if some miracle occurred and all of the forces were withdrawn --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: First of all, all the Americans in Salvador, there are not that many Americans that would fall under this category in Salvador. The more

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serious problem would occur in Honduras as far as military forces are concerned. We only have 55 military advisers --

Q Well there are -- there are perhaps a few others, and other things -- but that wouldn't -- in other words -- military aid would cease also, wouldn't it?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No.

Q -- I mean, if the Nicaraguans were cut off from military, outside military aid, wouldn't the Salvadoran?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No, the proposition is that there would be agreed levels of outside military support. And that, of course, would have to be negotiated.

Our belief is not that insurgents be totally defeated in Salvador -- that's a big order. But insurgents reduced to normal -- what to the sort of proportions that have occurred previously in Central America as an indigenous problem, without part of an international intelligence and military apparatus. That, I think, can be achieved.

Q We were told that one reason you met last week with the President to -- giving him an early briefing on the contents of the report -- was so that he could take into account some of its fiscal components in preparing his budget. Have you any reason to believe that he's inclined to accept some of these on the fiscal side?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I don't know. It is -- you're quite correct -- I met with him in order to give him our preliminary -- our conclusions as they then stood, and I knew they weren't going to change, as to the budgetary implications. I must say, I met with a group of Senators this morning. They were of the view that this program ought to be presented as an omnibus program. That it should not be presented as being added to the -- to individual appropriations bills where it might fit. And that the Congress should be asked to commit itself to an overall approach.

Q Multi-year?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: That certainly would be put to them in our briefing. Now, these were all Republican Senators this morning -- it was not our choice --

Q Can you clarify your aid figure?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: In a second. -- and, I must say -- not speaking for the Commission because we did not discuss it -- I think that that is a good idea, and I think that it is important that a coherent vision of what it is we want in Central America be put -- so that people can take a look at it?

Can I clarify the aid figure?

Q On page 53, you talk about -- of the \$24 billion that will be required in five years, \$12 billion --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No. The \$24 billion -- that are required by 1990 --

Q All right -- six years --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: In six years.

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Q -- \$12 billion from the United States, and then you say, "We now propose an economic assistance over five year -- beginning in 1985, totally \$8 billion."

What's the discrepancy -- there seems to be a discrepancy between \$12 and \$8 billion.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: With one we're talking about fiscal years, and the other we're talking about calendar years.

Q It's very confusing --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: It is a little confusing, but one figure applies to calendar years -- and the other applies to --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: -- is by fiscal years.

Q Do you think you can achieve the larger goal of the Commission which is a cohesive bipartisan foreign policy toward Central America if the administration picks and chooses among your recommendations?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: If the administration what?

Q Picks and chooses among your recommendations. Or, do you see it as sort of a Scowcroft Commission Report -- where they should accept it all?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: We make a lot of recommendations in the economic, social and human development field -- and I cannot say that the administration needs to accept every last technical proposal that we make here. But, I would think that it is important from the view of the Commission, that the administration agrees with the general philosophy of the approach and to the orders of magnitude that we are describing. And I would not believe that it's possible -- consistent with what we're doing -- for the administration to pick, say, only the security analysis and not the analysis of what kind of a Central America we should strive for over a a period of five years.

Q That would then include the conditionality clause?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: If the administration can come to an understanding with the Congress on an alternative method of conditionality -- after all, the administration is, itself, committed to conditionality as it has proved by the mission of Vice President Bush to Salvador.

So here we are talking about a method by which conditionality is carried out. If the administration can come to an alternative agreement with the Congress on how to operate conditionality, I would certainly see no reason

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why the members of the Commission would oppose it.

But the basic philosophy that we have to start for progress towards democratic freedoms while we are fighting the Marxist-Leninist guerrillas has to be embodied in an American program for the area.

Q Can I just get clarification. Which is the better figure to use?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Aid.

Q Aid over five years?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Aid. Aid over five years.

Q You're not talking about an extra \$4 billion in assessments?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Frankly, I don't quite --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: In the report in an appendix is an analysis of the financial.

Q You speak in -- I forget the exact terms, but strategic disaster, in effect, if Central America is not addressed immediately. Could you give us some ideas of the contours of that disaster, what it would mean to the U.S. and the world?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I think strategic disaster is used -- is not used -- if it is not addressed immediately, I think strategic disaster is applied to the circumstance of the whole area becoming Marxist-Leninist.

I know that it's fashionable to make fun of so-called domino theories. It is also true that they happened, if not in the immediate area, then on a global basis. It is hard for me to imagine, and I think that is true of our colleagues, that if Salvador were to become Marxist-Leninist, that we would not have greatly stepped up guerrilla activity in Guatemala and a near disastrous situation in Honduras.

We were told repeatedly in Costa Rica by the leaders of that country which, as you know, is a democratic country, that even in present circumstances, in Nicaragua armed to the present extent, with its present intelligence capacities, would, over a period of time, present an intolerable situation for Costa Rica. And here, we're not talking about an oligarchic government, but it's also democratic, freely elected.

And the impact on Panama, again, judging by these statements of all of the leaders that we talked to, would be equally serious.

Now, I don't want to go on projecting impacts on Venezuela, Columbia, and Mexico, which I think most of you are in a position to do for yourselves. But this is, in our view -- will be the consequence.

Again, I want to repeat, we are not saying this is a purely military problem. We are saying that it has to be dealt with as a coherent problem.

Q If I can follow up for a moment. How is it possible that a country like the United States allowed its peripheries to -- the countries where these signals were coming for the last twenty years to get to this poisonous situation? Should you make some recommendations about building things into our diplomacy?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, I think it is unfortunately true that our governmental process is more geared towards dealing

with the immediate crisis than with the long-range crisis. Certainly, I was in a position of responsibility during those twenty years and I cannot recall, although probably some smart person is going to find that I'm not telling the truth right now, but I do not recall anyone ever submitting a memorandum saying, "Look at the situation in Central America. It's getting out of control and you'd better start thinking about it before ten years later, you may have to have a bipartisan commission on Central America."

The general attitude of government is, "If it isn't broken, don't fix it." So they wait until it's broken. And that's true of every administration and -- how to build into our -- when you're Secretary of State, what awaits you when you come into the office is a file selected by your staff of incoming cables that require immediate attention. And there's nothing in the system that naturally leads our top officials in any administration towards long-range problems. That is a great problem and I have often thought that -- I think a reorganization of the Department I know best, the State Department would -- you see, unless you have somebody who's entitled to raise the issue and unless some time is freed on a calendar, it doesn't

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occur because there are always immediate problems that you have to deal with. That's a very fair point.

Q I would gather from the final point on page 9 of the summary and the second point on page 10 that the Commission supports continued U.S. support of the Contras in Nicaragua.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well --

Q And that it -- the United States recommends direct U.S. military action against any Soviet attempt to establish a military base in that country?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: To take your second question first, we have -- I interpret the Commission Report to indicate that we should oppose, by all means necessary, the establishment of a Soviet military base in Nicaragua and, indeed, to oppose the spread of any Soviet military influence in the Caribbean and Central America beyond what now exists in Cuba, which does not mean that we like what exists in Cuba.

With respect to the first question, we did not deal with the Contra issue systematically, partly because that would have gotten us into issues of classification and partly because the government, due to the nature of its -- the covertness of the operation has never formally admitted a U.S. role; so we thought it was inappropriate for us to -- indeed, embarrassing to raise this as a governmental problem.

But what we did do, and I think, except for two people that filed a dissent, 10 of the 12 members believed that whatever the varying views were about the wisdom of establishing the Contras to begin with and whatever the views were about large-scale covert operations to begin with, that now the Contras were essential as -- in the present, as an -- were an essential aspect of the negotiating process and should not be abandoned except as part of a settlement in which, according to our proposals, they could then participate in the political process of Nicaragua, just as we are prepared to permit the insurgents in Salvador to participate in the political process of Salvador.

Q May I ask, in this connection, the Commission objects -- disapproves of containment --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No.

Q -- as a long-term policy --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Yes. The Commission does not oppose containment as a long-term -- It says it cannot work.

Q But it cannot work. And you -- the majority supports the -- pressure, such as the Contras. But it's a little unclear to me, how the Commission expects to -- that the Nicaraguan Sandinistas will yield. What form of pressure beyond the -- What are you calling for? Military pressure? Economic pressure? It isn't clear. Or how you expect to get the Nicaraguans to comply?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: We have indicated the Contadora process, we have indicated that there are economic pressures that have not yet been used. We did not make a catalog -- We did not write a tactical game plan for the administration of what pressures it could use and what combinations of incentives and penalties

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could be assembled. I would like to point out to this group that we have made one contribution to report writing, for which I hope some of you will give us credit, we dropped both the phase "carrot and stick" and also the phase "hearts and minds." (Laughter.) And I hope somebody will give us credit for making that contribution to --

Q Do you think this report could be interpreted as an endorsement of a particular candidate in the coming election in El Salvador?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Oh, look, I don't know how this report is interpreted; but I think I am not giving away any secret if I tell you that it was the unanimous conviction of the Commission that a victory of Duarte would be compatible with the objectives of the process towards democratization. But, obviously, our assignment was not to endorse any particular candidate. But it would be wrong to leave any doubt on that subject. That --

Q -- the converse also the conclusion, that the victory of his opponent would be detrimental to the objectives of this report?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: You're speaking now about the private views of the members of the Commission, which I am interpreting for you and it may be that I will be shot down by some of my colleagues.

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But, I think it would be the view, privately expressed around the table, that a victory of his opponent would be detrimental to the process. But I repeat: This is not in the report. It's not appropriate for us to make this as a formal recommendation. But that is my sense of what people were saying around the table.

Q You've offered a program which, you say, does not guarantee success. But -- what if it doesn't? Would you use all means -- U.S. forces -- all means possible to prevent a takeover in El Salvador? Is that required in our national interest -- if it comes to that?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: There is only so much that a Commission can do. And that is a question that the President will then have to answer in the fullness of time.

I, myself, am not in favor -- as an individual -- of the use of American forces in Salvador. It would get us again into the same sort of guerrilla situation where the enemy can regulate the level of casualties. But, I think, there was a significant percentage of the group -- maybe all of them -- who were convinced that a defeat in El Salvador brings a war measurably nearer.

Whether there, or somewhere else, or somewhere along the line -- or as the sequence of events develop -- this was a conclusion to which, I think, many members of the Commission came.

Q A personal question -- do you expect to take on any other assignments from the President?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No. I absolutely do not expect to take on any other assignments. When this report is -- I will do the briefing that is necessary to explain this report, which was the assignment that the administration gave me -- I will testify before two Committees. When this report is translated into an administrative program, it will be the administration that will have to defend its programs. Of course, I don't exclude doing an occasional testimony, but -- this concludes my connection with the government, and it concludes, also, my relationship to the Central American problem except that, of course, I want us to succeed. I would like this -- I believe that the only hope we have is in a coherent program of this kind.

I feel very strongly that we cannot afford another debacle. I feel very strongly that we cannot afford another bitter division. And I feel that the fact that twelve of us could get together and come out with such a wide consensus is a hopeful thing for America. And that we should, therefore, try to build on that. And I can say that, because I will bear no responsibility in its execution.

I'm going back to private life.

Q Since this issue is likely to play a part in the campaign -- despite the bipartisan nature of the report -- do you expect to be a Reagan campaign adviser in '84 as you were in 1980?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I wasn't a -- you mean --

Q You were on the plane, I mean.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: In 1980, candidate Reagan asked my views on foreign policy. He never asked my views on the campaign.

Q Well, but you are a foreign policy adviser to candidate Reagan -- and --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, but now he is President Reagan and I don't believe --

Q Well, he will also be candidate Reagan for a period of some months --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, but if he needs a foreign policy adviser on the plane, he's in deep trouble, I mean -- (laughter) -- he has a Secretary of State, he has a Secretary of Defense, he has the whole machinery of government. (Laughter.)

So, I think that issue is certainly not going to arise.

Q We will not see you in public life again?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I'm not --

Q We're not going to have -- to kick around anymore?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I'm not saying that -- I certainly have no aspirations.

Q Is there any need -- in one manner or another -- to "go to the source" in this connection? Is there anything either diplomatically or militarily that we should be doing vis-a-vis Cuba, or diplomatically with the Soviet Union to solve these problems.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, we have stated in this report that we don't really see how we can negotiate on this problem with the Soviet Union without getting into a spheres-of-influence kind of discussion -- which would be very difficult to conduct or to sustain politically.

We did not address the issue of negotiations with Cuba which has a long, and complicated, background -- but which, at some point in this process, could certainly occur.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

3:32 P.M. EST

DRAFT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Release at 3:00 p.m. EST
Wednesday, January 11, 1984

BACKGROUND BRIEFING
BY
A COMMISSION OFFICIAL
ON THE COMMISSION ON CENTRAL AMERICA REPORT

January 10, 1984

Room 208
The Old Executive Office Building

2:39 P.M. EST

MS. SMALL: I want to welcome you. I think we have most everyone here now. We'll get started, and mention a couple of the ground rules again which we talked about before. This is a background briefing. This is embargoed until the conclusion of tomorrow's major briefing. Tomorrow's briefing is at 12:30 p.m. so let's say until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

Also, as you can see, we're making a transcript. It will be available at the end of the day. I don't know exactly. There's a lot going on today. I would say at least about 6:00 p.m. perhaps. We will try. At least 6:00 p.m. It might be a little bit later but we'll stay here until we get it out and you can check with my office to be sure. It will be put with -- one transcript with each of your names on it in Room 45 for close of business today.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: All of you, as I see, have copies of this report. I would just like to make two or three brief comments.

One is, inevitably, when a report like this gets out in bits and pieces at various stages of drafting, some of it from staff drafts, it is very difficult to create a coherent impression of either what went on or what the report is intending to do. I must say, to me, the significant thing about the report, apart from its substance, is that -- I read some of these gory stories of disagreements in the Commission and heroic, titanic struggles that were going on between various members, victors and losers. And I'm sure all of this went on in the Social Security Commission, but it did not happen to go on in this Commission.

What I think is important is that twelve individuals of vastly different points of view, vastly different background, working together for four months, came up with a consensus report on the major issues. There are some dissents -- essentially, two points that you can assess for yourselves, but in view of dealing mostly -- dealing with the Contras and one, the dissent of whether to send -- favor more export promotion for Central America. And there's a clarification added to the conditionality clause by three members, one of whom is I, about how that conditionality clause ought to be interpreted.

But on the analysis of the problem, on the recommendations, there was a consensus. And that, whatever one may think, if one agrees, as I certainly do, that it is important to restore a sense of bipartisanship to American foreign policy, that I consider a hopeful phenomenon.

Secondly, as to the substance of the report. You will be asking me questions, but let me make a general comment. The fundamental argument of this report is that we're dealing with an area fairly close to us geographically that has a long history in which there are many causes of discontent and many indigenous reasons for upheaval. But what makes -- what gives the current crisis on the security side its international character is that it has become part of a significant degree of outside intervention.

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In dealing with these problems, it would be the conviction of our Commission that one has to deal with two issues simultaneously; that one can't separate them. One is, to remove -- to the extent possible -- the causes that produce the turmoil, and those are importantly indigenous. We can't do that by dealing with it on an ad hoc basis, by fixing specific symptoms. But rather, we need some positive notion of what it is we are trying to accomplish in Central America, and that, in turn, has to be embedded into a Western hemisphere policy.

Talking about Central America, we are dealing with a region of a population of 23 million. It is a manageable problem in terms of the resources involved. What we are recommending is something slightly more than doubling the economic assistance we are giving. And we have put it into a framework in which -- there is some coherence. We've recommended an organization in which it can be carried out on an integrated basis.

Secondly, no amount of economic and social aid is going to do us any good unless the security problem can be dealt with. And the security problem can be dealt with in only two ways which are probably closely related. One is, to deprive the insurgents of hopes of victory; and secondly, to give them a possibility of negotiation if the first objective can be achieved.

On those issues there is consensus on the Commission. And we feel, as we said in the Report, that one can make an argument for doing nothing. And one can make an argument for doing enough. But, one cannot make an argument for doing too little, and doing just enough to deal with these problems on an individual ad hoc basis.

It is my conviction, and I think, the conviction of all of my colleagues, that we hope very much that this will be dealt with on a bipartisan basis; and that it will give us an opportunity to look at the problems of Central America as a whole rather than dealing with it country-by-country. And that is the contribution we tried to make.

Obviously, the implementation is up to the administration and to the Congress. The Commission, as such, will go out of business. And once we have turned over the report, and done the required amount of briefing about the report, the responsibility will obviously be that of the administration and the Congress, hopefully working together.

Now, let me answer your questions. Jack?

Q You and Mr. Walsh, Mr. Brady, and Mr. Silber all filed supplementary statements dwelling upon the conditionality clause. Do we understand that that means that assistance is to be conditioned through legislation on terminating death squads, progress toward democracy, and establishment of the rule of law? And if so, who is to judge when and how those conditions have been met?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: First of all, let me make clear what the -- what that -- this statement is not a dissent from the conditionality clause, it is a clarification of the conditionality clause. It is the way we would recommend to both the Congress and the Executive Branch to interpret the conditionality clause, and to me -- and I think to my two colleagues signing this -- it seems slightly absurd, in the name of human rights, to destroy the structure in

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El Salvador in order to bring into power people whose record on human rights is more deplorable than anything that exists, and who have never shown any indication of making progress toward any of the objectives that we have described in the conditionality clause.

Now we have deliberately not stated how this conditionality clause is to be -- is to operate -- except that it should be in trying -- legislation. And it would seem to me that it could -- that there should be some discussion -- between the Executive Branch and the Congress as to a workable system that is compatible with everybody's objectives. But we have not specifically stated how that is to be worked out.

Q Are you saying that you are not unalterably against some sort of certification process, if it is --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No. I have signed this report. And I support this report with only the clarification that I have added as to how that clause is to be interpreted.

Q Yes, but -- your clarification is being widely interpreted subject to your own interpretation today --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I interpret that --

Q -- as meaning you're against certification as it existed?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: My clarification means that the -- that there should be some system of reporting which I hope the Executive Branch and the Congress will carry out in such a manner that we keep in mind that, while promotion of human rights is a very important American objective, preventing the victory of the Marxist-Leninists in Salvador is a precondition for this objective to be realized. And I do not believe that those two objectives need to be in conflict. There's a wide area in which, with cooperation between the Congress and the Executive, and with an Executive that is determined to make progress on human rights, we can have a major influence in El Salvador without -- without overthrowing the existing structure in the name of certifica -- we haven't used the word "certification" as you may have noticed.

Q How -- how implicated do you think the authorities in El Salvador are in right-wing terrorism? How important is that in the security equation -- that is, how much does that contribute to the undermining of the government? And how does the United States get right-wing terrorism to stop?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: As you might have noticed, we indicated in the introduction to the security report, that there are two kinds of struggles going on: the struggle of the democratic center against extremes on both the left and the right, and then the struggle in which the center and the right are in uneasy alliance against the Marxist-Leninists who are trying to destroy them both.

Now, we were meeting for only four months, so we have not had a chance to go into the details of every issue that was before us, and its sociology. It seems to me, there are many aspects to the death squads -- aspects of how guerrilla wars are fought in that area, aspects of personal revenge, aspects of trying to prevent the land reform from working -- so there are many aspects to it.

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It seems to me, however, that -- and not just to me, but to my colleagues on the Commission -- that the government of El Salvador must be able to find a way of winning this conflict without recourse to such methods. And that we must bring the maximum influence to bear on their government to put and end to this. And that there will be no excuse if an end is not brought to it in a measurable time, as long as we keep in mind that it is a chaotic situation and cannot happen from one day to the next -- but it must happen in a measurable, and in a short, time. On that there was no disagreement.

Q But will we inevitably lose this, if the right-wing terrorism -- the human rights violations -- don't stop?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Will we lose the struggle if the right-wing terrorism doesn't stop? We will certainly lose domestic support in the United States if the right-wing terrorism doesn't stop, and we will lose the possibility of a democratic center and therefore, in the long-run, perhaps the possibility of getting popular support.

Q If that's the case, though -- just one last thing -- if that's the case, don't we have to have a policy that, in no uncertain terms, tells the Salvadoran establishment that it must stop. I mean -- is it enough to operate by persuasion and -- and without --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I think it is always -- one can always make a caricature of a problem by citing the alternatives in the most absolute terms -- either you

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wreck everything that exists, are prepared to wreck everything that exists or you can get an end to the death squads.

I think we can get an end to the death squads within the clarification that I have put forward. And how to do this and the methods to do this, abstract persuasion by itself, the eloquence of any one emissary alone will not do it. It will require a certain amount of pressure to bring it about. And I think they also have to know that we are determined to assist them in the guerrilla war and that we do not make an exact equivalence between what we are supporting and the guerrillas.

Q If I understand you correctly, to follow up, you are saying in your clarification that you are absolutely opposed to cutting off military assistance, no matter what, if it would lead to Marxist-Leninist victory.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, you know, "no matter what" goes very far; but I would think it is inherently illogical in the name of human rights to bring into power people who have never demonstrated the slightest concern for human rights and who have never permitted their governments to change from their totalitarian way in any country in which they were in office. So, in that sense, yes. But "no matter what" means that we have absolutely no influence over a government to which we give a large amount of aid.

After all, the intensity with which we support aid requests before the Congress, the scale of the aid requests, I mean, there are innumerable ways that we have. And, moreover, it is my impression -- it was our impression when we were there -- that there are many people in Salvador on the government side that would like -- that share our feelings. So it is not a question that nothing happens or everything happens.

Q I can understand your saying that -- as you do here -- that you would rather have U.S., American vital security interests protected than the human rights thing enforced vigorously --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, you know, when you put it that way you are already sort of loading it that, you know -- Yes, but fundamentally I'm saying it makes no sense, in the name of human rights, to bring Marxist-Leninists into office.

Q When you say -- I think -- aren't you saying to the death squads that "you people who have killed 30,000 of your own citizens, bad as you are, you are preferable to Marxist-Leninists"?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I'm saying, "I am confident that we can take care of the death squads without going to the other extreme."

Q So, hypothetically, you could see a statute that would require the administration to certify progress in the human rights area for assistance over and above a -- perhaps, a base level. Is that what you're --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I could -- You know, now, I'm going beyond what the Commission said. I certainly, as an individual, could imagine -- I could imagine a statute to that effect very easily.

Q You've made a big jump in logic I would like you to explain for us. When you say that this would just wipe away the existing structure, why do you think a requirement for certification would, as you seem to suggest, automatically destroy what's there and --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: But I'm not saying that. I have signed a report supporting the conditionality clause. I am saying it should be interpreted in a manner that, while it brings considerable pressure on the government to change, stops short of overthrowing the existing structure. I'm not --

Q. Give us a model then.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I'm not saying the certification procedure -- we have not, incidentally, used the word "certification" -- that the recording procedure would automatically overthrow the government. I'm not saying that at all.

Q. Give us a model then. What do you suggest? You've described --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I am suggesting that we make clear our concern as to human rights objectives and our unalterable opposition to the death squads. I have signed a report in which we say that this can be enshrined -- that this could be enshrined in legislation requiring periodic reports on the subject and, obviously, that the amount and kind of aid is affected by this.

The only point I'm saying that I want to make clear and on which -- I don't know what -- I didn't try to get a majority of the Commission, I didn't try to take a vote on that proposition for a variety of reasons. In interpreting this, I would like the administration and the Congress to keep in mind the limits beyond which it should not be pushed, but also to keep in mind the limits to which it should be pushed.

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But let's keep in mind, they're talking about one clause in a 140-page report. The fact that it has, unfortunately, led to a lot of discussion should not detract from the fact that we are -- that we tried to write a report about many aspects of Central America, not just about that one clause.

Q Why did you feel that you had to write the clarification unless you feared that the --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I do fear it.

Q -- that the consensus, or at least that the wording of the report might be interpreted by Congress as a green light to have tight strings and perhaps a cutoff on aid if certain human rights criteria were not met?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, I simply wanted to make clear that this was not how I would interpret it. I have no particular reason to suppose that they will do it or that they won't do it. If they won't do it -- if there's no danger that the Congress will do this, then my clarification is unnecessary. If there is a danger, then my clarification is relevant.

Did you discuss this clarification note with the President or anybody in the administration?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Absolutely not. I had no discussion with the President or anybody close to the President or anybody in the administration about my position. And as you heard yesterday, I do not think that the clause, which I, after all, signed, was greeted with total approval in this building.

Q Since your purpose, as you say, was to get a bipartisan consensus and since, very clearly from the nature of just these questions on key issues, do you think you've succeeded?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Yes.

Q It doesn't sound like you have on the issue of human rights.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Yes, I think we have succeeded on the issue of human rights. The only -- we have succeeded among the twelve people of our commission who represent a rather wide-spread of -- of opinion.

You can, of course, focus this whole discussion on the human rights issue, which is not the major theme of this report. The major theme of this report is to analyze the conditions in Central America, the conditions that produce the current turmoil, the outside support that gives it its international character, and the necessity for the United States to take a long-range, coherent view of dealing with both the conditions that produce the upheaval and with the security problem.

The human rights conditionality with respect to military aid to Salvador is one particular aspect of this report. It is not the central theme of this report, although it is the central theme of much reporting.

Q You described the military situation in El Salvador as a stalemate and I wonder if -- what -- how you evaluate the will of the leadership in El Salvador and, especially, the military leadership to prevail. Do they have the morale to do what they have to do?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: What we said in this report is we do not guarantee success if the program that we have outlined here is carried out. But without such a program we think there cannot be any success.

In any -- all of these guerrilla wars have similar -- many of them have similar characteristics. There's a systematic attempt to de-legitimize the government on the part of the force

that's hostile to it. There's a systematic weakening of the governmental structure which isn't all that strong to begin with or there wouldn't have been a guerrilla war.

We have elections at the end of March. We have -- hopefully, a democratic government will emerge out of this. And we shouldn't delude ourselves. If a non-democratic government emerges out of this, there's a new set of problems. A new set of problems will arise.

I think there is a chance that the situation in Central America can be first stabilized, and then given a positive direction. But I'm not saying that this is assured. We were asked to address what the United States should do. We were not asked to make an intelligence assessment as to probability.

Q Do you think that the --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: The administration has no choice

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except to try to do what is right.

Q Do you think that the death squad problem would vanish or be severely reduced if the guerrilla movement itself were stopped? In other words, do you think it's tied into the fact that there is guerrilla movement and that it's --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I am not an expert on Central America. I want to begin with this. I am told by people who served as ambassadors in Central America that there was no death squad problem before 1979. On the other hand, I do not think we can wait with solving the death squad problem until the guerrilla war is over. I think the death squad problem has to be dealt with in a short period of time, and I do not believe the guerrilla problem can be solved in an equally short period of time. But certainly there is an interconnection between the death squads and the degree of insecurity that exists in the society, but I think that it is also true that some death squad activity has nothing to do with the guerrilla war.

Q I only have one more question here. Do the majority of the Commission members believe that Central America can remain non-communist so long as the Sandinistas are in power? In other words, are the Sandinistas --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: What page are you talking about?

Q Are the Sandinistas the key to the non-communism in Central America?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: What page are you talking about?

Q Page? I'm not -- I am just asking a question. I'm just wondering whether that's the --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I could say -- because you said majority, I think it is the consensus of the Commission that a Nicaragua that continues to receive its present scale of outside military support, that receives -- that has over 10,000 Cubans and hundreds of East European and other intelligence experts in that country will become a growing and in time intolerable weight on all of its neighbors. And if there was any consensus among the countries that we visited, including democratic Costa Rica, it was on that proposition. And this is why we feel that the same principles we are demanding or recommending for the other countries of Central America are only appropriate for Nicaragua; namely, that it live up to what it promised the OAS in 1979.

And I would like to point out that this is also what the Contadora countries are asking Nicaragua.

Q Can I follow up on that? Your seven point program for these comprehensive regional settlements calls for a prohibition on all foreign forces, bases and advisors and so on. What assurance, if any, do you have that Nicaragua or the Sandinista government would go along with that?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I have none.

Q Do you have hope? You have no assurance. Do you have hope?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: At one point in recent months after the invasion of Grenada, or the event in Grenada, whatever the term of art is --

Q Rescue, rescue mission.

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COMMISSION OFFICIAL: -- the Sandinistas hinted that this is something that they might consider. But I would not pay too much attention to it at this point.

All we can do as a commission -- we cannot conduct a negotiation. We cannot say what the reaction of the United States should be to the ebb and flow of various proposals and counter-proposals that are made. What we can do is to state what we think objectively the terms, the conditions are under which security can be achieved in Central America. If we can reduce military forces in Central America to traditional Central American levels, if we can remove foreign military advisors and bases, if Nicaragua becomes another, a normal state in the region, and if there is advance towards pluralism in all of the states, then we believe there are objective conditions for security.

Now our President might well decide that he will compromise one or the other of those conditions in the process of negotiations. He will then run an increased risk, but he has to balance this against the risk of not coming to an agreement and the consequences of that. That is not for a commission -- a commission cannot, offering a program, also offer various alternative positions because they will then become the starting point for --

Q When you did your research on this, did you come to the conclusion that if all foreign forces literally were removed, all the Cubans from Nicaragua, and the Americans from Salvador, the indigenous insurgents in Salvador could be defeated today? And if some miracle occurred and all of the forces were withdrawn --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: First of all, all the Americans in Salvador, there are not that many Americans that would fall under this category in Salvador. The more

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serious problem would occur in Honduras as far as military forces are concerned. We only have 55 military advisers --

Q Well there are -- there are perhaps a few others, and other things -- but that wouldn't -- in other words -- military aid would cease also, wouldn't it?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No.

Q -- I mean, if the Nicaraguans were cut off from military, outside military aid, wouldn't the Salvadoran?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No, the proposition is that there would be agreed levels of outside military support. And that, of course, would have to be negotiated.

Our belief is not that insurgents be totally defeated in Salvador -- that's a big order. But insurgents reduced to normal -- what to the sort of proportions that have occurred previously in Central America as an indigenous problem, without part of an international intelligence and military apparatus. That, I think, can be achieved.

Q We were told that one reason you met last week with the President to -- giving him an early briefing on the contents of the report -- was so that he could take into account some of its fiscal components in preparing his budget. Have you any reason to believe that he's inclined to accept some of these on the fiscal side?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I don't know. It is -- you're quite correct -- I met with him in order to give him our preliminary -- our conclusions as they then stood, and I knew they weren't going to change, as to the budgetary implications. I must say, I met with a group of Senators this morning. They were of the view that this program ought to be presented as an omnibus program. That it should not be presented as being added to the -- to individual appropriations bills where it might fit. And that the Congress should be asked to commit itself to an overall approach.

Q Multi-year?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: That certainly would be put to them in our briefing. Now, these were all Republican Senators this morning -- it was not our choice --

Q Can you clarify your aid figure?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: In a second. -- and, I must say -- not speaking for the Commission because we did not discuss it -- I think that that is a good idea, and I think that it is important that a coherent vision of what it is we want in Central America be put -- so that people can take a look at it?

Can I clarify the aid figure?

Q On page 53, you talk about -- of the \$24 billion that will be required in five years, \$12 billion --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No. The \$24 billion -- that are required by 1990 --

Q All right -- six years --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: In six years.

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Q -- \$12 billion from the United States, and then you say, "We now propose an economic assistance over five year -- beginning in 1985, totally \$8 billion."

What's the discrepancy -- there seems to be a discrepancy between \$12 and \$8 billion.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: With one we're talking about fiscal years, and the other we're talking about calendar years.

Q It's very confusing --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: It is a little confusing, but one figure applies to calendar years -- and the other applies to --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: -- is by fiscal years.

Q Do you think you can achieve the larger goal of the Commission which is a cohesive bipartisan foreign policy toward Central America if the administration picks and chooses among your recommendations?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: If the administration what?

Q Picks and chooses among your recommendations. Or, do you see it as sort of a Scowcroft Commission Report -- where they should accept it all?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: We make a lot of recommendations in the economic, social and human development field -- and I cannot say that the administration needs to accept every last technical proposal that we make here. But, I would think that it is important from the view of the Commission, that the administration agrees with the general philosophy of the approach and to the orders of magnitude that we are describing. And I would not believe that it's possible -- consistent with what we're doing -- for the administration to pick, say, only the security analysis and not the analysis of what kind of a Central America we should strive for over a a period of five years.

Q That would then include the conditionality clause?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: If the administration can come to an understanding with the Congress on an alternative method of conditionality -- after all, the administration is, itself, committed to conditionality as it has proved by the mission of Vice President Bush to Salvador.

So here we are talking about a method by which conditionality is carried out. If the administration can come to an alternative agreement with the Congress on how to operate conditionality, I would certainly see no reason

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why the members of the Commission would oppose it.

But the basic philosophy that we have to start for progress towards democratic freedoms while we are fighting the Marxist-Leninist guerrillas has to be embodied in an American program for the area.

Q Can I just get clarification. Which is the better figure to use?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Aid.

Q Aid over five years?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Aid. Aid over five years.

Q You're not talking about an extra \$4 billion in assessments?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Frankly, I don't quite --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: In the report in an appendix is an analysis of the financial.

Q You speak in -- I forget the exact terms, but strategic disaster, in effect, if Central America is not addressed immediately. Could you give us some ideas of the contours of that disaster, what it would mean to the U.S. and the world?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I think strategic disaster is used -- is not used -- if it is not addressed immediately, I think strategic disaster is applied to the circumstance of the whole area becoming Marxist-Leninist.

I know that it's fashionable to make fun of so-called domino theories. It is also true that they happened, if not in the immediate area, then on a global basis. It is hard for me to imagine, and I think that is true of our colleagues, that if Salvador were to become Marxist-Leninist, that we would not have greatly stepped up guerrilla activity in Guatemala and a near disasterous situation in Honduras.

We were told repeatedly in Costa Rica by the leaders of that country which, as you know, is a democratic country, that even in present circumstances, in Nicaragua armed to the present extent, with its present intelligence capacities, would, over a period of time, present an intolerable situation for Costa Rica. And here, we're not talking about an oligarchic government, but it's also democratic, freely elected.

And the impact on Panama, again, judging by these statements of all of the leaders that we talked to, would be equally serious.

Now, I don't want to go on projecting impacts on Venezuela, Columbia, and Mexico, which I think most of you are in a position to do for yourselves. But this is, in our view -- will be the consequence.

Again, I want to repeat, we are not saying this is a purely military problem. We are saying that it has to be dealt with as a coherent problem.

Q If I can follow up for a moment. How is it possible that a country like the United States allowed its peripheries to -- the countries where these signals were coming for the last twenty years to get to this poisonous situation? Should you make some recommendations about building things into our diplomacy?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, I think it is unfortunately true that our governmental process is more geared towards dealing

with the immediate crisis than with the long-range crisis. Certainly, I was in a position of responsibility during those twenty years and I cannot recall, although probably some smart person is going to find that I'm not telling the truth right now, but I do not recall anyone ever submitting a memorandum saying, "Look at the situation in Central America. It's getting out of control and you'd better start thinking about it before ten years later, you may have to have a bipartisan commission on Central America."

The general attitude of government is, "If it isn't broken, don't fix it." So they wait until it's broken. And that's true of every administration and -- how to build into our -- when you're Secretary of State, what awaits you when you come into the office is a file selected by your staff of incoming cables that require immediate attention. And there's nothing in the system that naturally leads our top officials in any administration towards long-range problems. That is a great problem and I have often thought that -- I think a reorganization of the Department I know best, the State Department would -- you see, unless you have somebody who's entitled to raise the issue and unless some time is freed on a calendar, it doesn't

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occur because there are always immediate problems that you have to deal with. That's a very fair point.

Q I would gather from the final point on page 9 of the summary and the second point on page 10 that the Commission supports continued U.S. support of the Contras in Nicaragua.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well --

Q And that it -- the United States recommends direct U.S. military action against any Soviet attempt to establish a military base in that country?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: To take your second question first, we have -- I interpret the Commission Report to indicate that we should oppose, by all means necessary, the establishment of a Soviet military base in Nicaragua and, indeed, to oppose the spread of any Soviet military influence in the Caribbean and Central America beyond what now exists in Cuba, which does not mean that we like what exists in Cuba.

With respect to the first question, we did not deal with the Contra issue systematically, partly because that would have gotten us into issues of classification and partly because the government, due to the nature of its -- the covertness of the operation has never formally admitted a U.S. role; so we thought it was inappropriate for us to -- indeed, embarrassing to raise this as a governmental problem.

But what we did do, and I think, except for two people that filed a dissent, 10 of the 12 members believed that whatever the varying views were about the wisdom of establishing the Contras to begin with and whatever the views were about large-scale covert operations to begin with, that now the Contras were essential as -- in the present, as an -- were an essential aspect of the negotiating process and should not be abandoned except as part of a settlement in which, according to our proposals, they could then participate in the political process of Nicaragua, just as we are prepared to permit the insurgents in Salvador to participate in the political process of Salvador.

Q May I ask, in this connection, the Commission objects -- disapproves of containment --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No.

Q -- as a long-term policy --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Yes. The Commission does not oppose containment as a long-term -- It says it cannot work.

Q But it cannot work. And you -- the majority supports the -- pressure, such as the Contras. But it's a little unclear to me, how the Commission expects to -- that the Nicaraguan Sandinistas will yield. What form of pressure beyond the -- What are you calling for? Military pressure? Economic pressure? It isn't clear. Or how you expect to get the Nicaraguans to comply?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: We have indicated the Contadora process, we have indicated that there are economic pressures that have not yet been used. We did not make a catalog -- We did not write a tactical game plan for the administration of what pressures it could use and what combinations of incentives and penalties

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could be assembled. I would like to point out to this group that we have made one contribution to report writing, for which I hope some of you will give us credit, we dropped both the phrase "carrot and stick" and also the phrase "hearts and minds." (Laughter.) And I hope somebody will give us credit for making that contribution to --

Q Do you think this report could be interpreted as an endorsement of a particular candidate in the coming election in El Salvador?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Oh, look, I don't know how this report is interpreted; but I think I am not giving away any secret if I tell you that it was the unanimous conviction of the Commission that a victory of Duarte would be compatible with the objectives of the process towards democratization. But, obviously, our assignment was not to endorse any particular candidate. But it would be wrong to leave any doubt on that subject. That --

Q -- the converse also the conclusion, that the victory of his opponent would be detrimental to the objectives of this report?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: You're speaking now about the private views of the members of the Commission, which I am interpreting for you and it may be that I will be shot down by some of my colleagues.

MORE

But, I think it would be the view, privately expressed around the table, that a victory of his opponent would be detrimental to the process. But I repeat: This is not in the report. It's not appropriate for us to make this as a formal recommendation. But that is my sense of what people were saying around the table.

Q You've offered a program which, you say, does not guarantee success. But -- what if it doesn't? Would you use all means -- U.S. forces -- all means possible to prevent a takeover in El Salvador? Is that required in our national interest -- if it comes to that?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: There is only so much that a Commission can do. And that is a question that the President will then have to answer in the fullness of time.

I, myself, am not in favor -- as an individual -- of the use of American forces in Salvador. It would get us again into the same sort of guerrilla situation where the enemy can regulate the level of casualties. But, I think, there was a significant percentage of the group -- maybe all of them -- who were convinced that a defeat in El Salvador brings a war measurably nearer.

Whether there, or somewhere else, or somewhere along the line -- or as the sequence of events develop -- this was a conclusion to which, I think, many members of the Commission came.

Q A personal question -- do you expect to take on any other assignments from the President?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: No. I absolutely do not expect to take on any other assignments. When this report is -- I will do the briefing that is necessary to explain this report, which was the assignment that the administration gave me -- I will testify before two Committees. When this report is translated into an administrative program, it will be the administration that will have to defend its programs. Of course, I don't exclude doing an occasional testimony, but -- this concludes my connection with the government, and it concludes, also, my relationship to the Central American problem except that, of course, I want us to succeed. I would like this -- I believe that the only hope we have is in a coherent program of this kind.

I feel very strongly that we cannot afford another debacle. I feel very strongly that we cannot afford another bitter division. And I feel that the fact that twelve of us could get together and come out with such a wide consensus is a hopeful thing for America. And that we should, therefore, try to build on that. And I can say that, because I will bear no responsibility in its execution.

I'm going back to private life.

Q Since this issue is likely to play a part in the campaign -- despite the bipartisan nature of the report -- do you expect to be a Reagan campaign adviser in '84 as you were in 1980?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I wasn't a -- you mean --

Q You were on the plane, I mean.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: In 1980, candidate Reagan asked my views on foreign policy. He never asked my views on the campaign.

Q Well, but you are a foreign policy adviser to candidate Reagan -- and --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, but now he is President Reagan and I don't believe --

Q Well, he will also be candidate Reagan for a period of some months --

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, but if he needs a foreign policy adviser on the plane, he's in deep trouble, I mean -- (laughter) -- he has a Secretary of State, he has a Secretary of Defense, he has the whole machinery of government. (Laughter.)

So, I think that issue is certainly not going to arise.

Q We will not see you in public life again?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I'm not --

Q We're not going to have -- to kick around anymore?

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: I'm not saying that -- I certainly have no aspirations.

Q Is there any need -- in one manner or another -- to "go to the source" in this connection? Is there anything either diplomatically or militarily that we should be doing vis-a-vis Cuba, or diplomatically with the Soviet Union to solve these problems.

COMMISSION OFFICIAL: Well, we have stated in this report that we don't really see how we can negotiate on this problem with the Soviet Union without getting into a spheres-of-influence kind of discussion -- which would be very difficult to conduct or to sustain politically.

We did not address the issue of negotiations with Cuba which has a long, and complicated, background -- but which, at some point in this process, could certainly occur.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

3:32 P.M. EST

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Tues. - 2:30

Roosevelt Room -

Susan 2270 - with 2-3:00

Bes. liaison discussion group -
w/ Smith - B-23 - one a mo. -

Cap. Room - car & dc.

Herb Hatcher - 466-6911

NSC conf Room -

submerged till 3:00 - used a conclusion of ^{new} conf.

Krisinger, Hatcher, Kralovic -
columnist, commentators

4 - 1 network each of 4 or 5

4 - 1 from Time

Newsweek

US News

Bes. Week

+ columnists

Man Helt + deplomat - Tues.

7:45 Wed. breakfast at dantes, (15)

wire - large group

10:00 comm @ State

11:00 - w/ RR

4:50
EAB

Wed. non - major Ag -

this type net. w/ all 3 main shows
+ Mex. TV

Thurs of Brussels & NSC conf.

call Herb at list - proposed

Room #08 - OK

Laura Wyatt 4282

taken from 1:30 -

3:30

~~18~~ 25 map. -

13 taken

OK call Kim re steered - backpack
w with record?

clear in Kinsinger
Herb Water

PROPOSED CALL OUT LIST FOR KISSINGER BRIEFING TUESDAY, 1/10 at 2:30

William Beecher ?

* ✓ Pat Buchanan

~~Charles Cordery~~ (?)

✓ Elizabeth Drew

✓ Rowland Evans (or Bob Novak)

✓ Suzanne Garment

✓ Jack Germond

✓ Georgie Anne Geyer

~~Meg Greenfield~~ (?)

✓ Jack Kilpatrick

✓ Morton Kondracke

✓ Joe Kraft

* ✓ Jim Lehrer (or Robert MacNeil) - ?

John McLaughlin ?

Marianne Means ?

Cord Meyer . ?

Lars Nelson (?)

✓ Scotty Reston - ?

* ✓ Allan Ryskind

Bill Safire (?)

✓ Hugh Sidey (?)

* ✓ Nick Thimmesch

* ✓ Ben Wattenberg

✓ George Will

Bob Toth - ?

~~Aram Bakshian~~ ?

Carl Rowan - ?