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STORY:BAKER
MA:60 FMT:

QUEUE:JWM-JWM
HJ:

MSG:
INI:

OPR:JWM ;04/27,13:32

TO: MLS, LT, DR, JF, DCB, SJF, DAW, File
FROM: JWM

Re: Political Writers Dinner with Senator Howard Baker
Background Only

Central America: Baker wanted Reagan to address the nation on television and not speak to a joint session. Thinks it is a crisis, but not a major crisis and raises expectation levels too high in an overselling manner. (Whisper). Advises against any bellicose or sabre rattling kind of speech. Hasn't seen speech.

Doesn't think, however, that Democrats, will try to scuttle RR effort "because they don't want to see a 1984 election issue of who los Central America?"

On policy, he plays down Clark's role, described him more as minor policy in grand scheme. Indicates his influence has been exaggerated in press lately. Also thinks the Baker-Clark rivalry is overdone and claims Clark is more pragmatic than given credit for.

Soviets: Baker thinks something is brewing in Moscow and it is likely Andropov is in trouble. Emphasizes this is not from any secret documents or White House briefing but his hunch. (He was obviously dropping one with reporters though.) Believes Andropov hasn't reached out enough to consolidate his power and is in hot water with the technocrats. Adds that Andropov "isn't in control yet."

Wouldn't be surprised if Soviets made a move in Afghanistan or tested us anew in Central America, as Andropov looks for a way to demonstrate he's in command in Kremlin.

Defense: Baker is upset with Weinberger. Thinks DOD intransigence on spending has been the biggest legislative mistake at the White House. Can't understand Cap's stonewalling and, in effect, encroaching on Baker's turf on the Hill because there's no room to compromise.

Agrees that RR is going along and "I know this man and like him but he can be very stubborn."

Thinks they could have gotten 7 1/2 in spending increase if Cap had budged a little but now it looks like 6 1/2.

Senate: Going to be a tough year on budget, any other matters. Figures he can round up 40 GOP Senators now on budget front but a lot of people are going there own way.

Nixon: Talks to Nixon about once a month and attended party at Mark Hatfield's house a few weeks ago with Nixon as guest. Lots of monologue from RMN at these affairs. Of course, the subject of Watergate doesn't come up and there are no reporters invited. Says Nixon retains big interest in politics.

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President: Baker is 99 per cent sure RR will run. If he does, Baker will go back to Huntsville, make some money and start traveling around country "without entourage" in preparation for 1984. Sort of an idyllic journey. Says he's determined to do it right this time and not repeat goofs of 1980. Will do lots of campaigning around country for GOP candidates in 1984 as part of the effort.

What about lack of meanness in his psyche? He thinks "civility can still win."

If RR doesn't run, it'll be a wild chase in GOP. After Bush, he thinks he has the most people in place now to get going quickly. Claims Lou Harris showed him a poll which had him ahead of Bush, Dole and even Kemp with conservatives, second only to RR. (Harris is demonstrating anew that he is a fraud on the make with his numbers.) Confident Dole will get in quickly, too, if RR gets out. Gave Kemp short shrift as candidate.

Tip: He and O'Neill talk more often now. Thinks Tip is on top of job more with those added 26 seats. Indicates Tip is probably happier to talk to him than Robert Byrd on legislative matters etc.

Tennessee: Baker is going to work on Governor Lamar Alexander, a disciple of his, to change his mind about running for the Senate. Says polls show Alexander extremely popular and far in front of Rep. Albert Gore.

Thinks Alexander can be coaxed into running because "he really wants to be a Senator."

Unsaid line: Baker is probably taking some heat from Republicans for giving up seat because it looks like to sure Democratic turnover now with Alexander, Bill Brock and Winfield Dunn saying they're not interested. If Alexander gets in, Baker is off the hook.

Democrats: Doesn't think Mondale has what it takes, but also believes Glenn may fizzle out when the heat is on.

Impression: Baker, coming off an overnight stint in the hospital for just a reaction to medicine, is intense about his presidential aspirations. He wants it real bad. He did not dump at all on Reagan, only critical of Central American strategy and stubbornness on defense.

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STORY: CENAM
MA: 62 FMT:

QUEUE: NRD-NRD
HJ:

MSG:

INI:

OPR: PAE ; 04/23, 09:40

TO: MLS, LT, JG, BFP, DR, JG, GP, LE, DXB, DCB, JWM, SJF,
PA, PGH, SXM, DLB, DAW

FROM: RAK

RE: Reagan's appeal on Central America

The following was provided at a background-only briefing in the Roosevelt Room by deputy NSC adviser Robert C. McFarlane, Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Enders and former Senator Richard Stone. They are to be identified only as senior administration officials.

Objective. The officials made it clear that the President is going before Congress largely for public-relations reasons: To go over the heads of lawmakers and mobilize popular opinion behind Reagan's Central American policies. Said McFarlane: "That is the self-evident truth. We're having a tough time getting congressional support for what we're trying to do...The objective is to build broad public support...The stakes simply are not understood" by lawmakers and the public. The President is appealing to Congress "because he believes the challenge we face requires a national consensus and a strong bipartisan response."

Reagan is, as always, seeking bipartisan support from Congress, but he is standing firmly behind his basic hardline policies. He is not shifting ground to satisfy lawmakers, despite Stone's assertion that the speech "is

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an effort not just with words but with policy to draw as close as possible" to previous "congressional intentions" as spelled out in such legislation as the Boland amendment and the law requiring certification of human rights progress in El Salvador as a condition of continued American assistance.

Economic assistance. The White House will continue to stress that 77 cents of every dollar in U.S. aid to Latin America is economic. Reagan will emphasize in coming weeks that U.S. military aid is necessary only, in Enders' words, "as a shield to allow...political and economic changes to take hold." Similar administration efforts to de-emphasize American military assistance have not worked to date.

Elections. Enders stressed that the administration is not backing away from its opposition to any formula for sharing power with the rebels in El Salvador. He said Reagan "is in favor of negotiations on elections but he's not in favor of negotiations for power sharing." A White House fact sheet handed out with the speech states: "We cannot support the kind of dialogue or negotiations which would begin to diminish what the people of El Salvador have so clearly said they want--a system of government based on democratic principles."

Special envoy. None of the officials, including Stone, would give any hint who the new ambassador will be or why Reagan did not announce his choice. If there is a problem in the selection, no one would admit it. Stone did nothing

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to discourage speculation that he is in line for the job.

Eniers stressed that the special envoy's mission will be to work with all of the countries of the region, not just with El Salvador. The envoy also will be charged with working closely with Congress to build a bipartisan consensus. This undoubtedly will be the envoy's primary function--to assist the White House in building support among lawmakers.

Assurances. The President's "assurances" to Congress do not amount to great concessions and are not new. The four assurances:

* The U.S. will support any agreement among powers of the region calling for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and military advisers, so long as the conditions of the agreement are "fully verifiable and reciprocal."

* The U.S. will support steps to encourage opposition groups to participate in free elections.

* The U.S. will support any verifiable, reciprocal agreement halting insurgencies on neighboring countries.

* The U.S. will support any verifiable, reciprocal agreement banning the importation of offensive weapons.

U.S. advisers. Reagan is not retreating from his suggestion several weeks ago that it might be necessary to increase the number of American advisers in El Salvador above the current self-imposed limit of 55.

The battlefield. Eniers was asked whether the government in San Salvador is losing the war to the rebels. "No, but

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the insurgents have had the initiative on and off since October....and have been able to knock off rather large numbers of small outposts...and have extended their base of operation."

Stone stressed that U.S. military aid to El Salvador is intended to help the government regain the initiative against the rebels. "That is the only thing that can force the insurgents to join in the political process." Such a change can't be accomplished in only one year, but rather "over time." Stone cited Colombia as an example that El Salvador could follow with U.S. backing. In Colombia the so-called "M-19" urban guerrillas were "reduced over time to an irrelevancy" by the democratic regime in Bogota.

When McFarlane was asked how long it would take to foment such a development in El Salvador, he said, "It's going to take a long time. I couldn't give you a number of years." He said Reagan's public show of determination "carries as much a message to the Left [in El Salvador] as to anyone else" and that determination will "shorten the time required to turn the tide" against the guerrillas.

Nicaragua. Enders again restated the administration's position that the CIA operation in Nicaragua is strictly intended to halt the flow of arms to guerrillas in El Salvador, and not aimed at overthrowing the Sandinista junta.

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STORY:ANALYSI
MA:60 FMT:

QUEUE:NRD-NRD
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MSG:
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OPR:PAE ;04/23,11:08

TO: MLS, LT, JF, BFP, DR, JG, GP, LH, DXB, DCB, JWM, SJF,
PA, PGH, SKM, DLB, DAW
FROM: RAK
RE: Reagan's fumbling on Central America

A few thoughts on Reagan's new public-relations offensive:

The President's efforts to build broad support among Americans for his hardline policies in Latin America, and thereby induce Congress to approve his policies, face relatively poor prospects of succeeding. There are several reasons why Reagan is not likely to come out on top of this one:

* First and foremost, he has not made a convincing case to Americans that the civil war in El Salvador is a direct threat to their national security. The White House assertion that the conflict threatens the Panama Canal and "sea lanes through which 50 percent of our trade passes" is hardly sufficient to rally the country behind Reagan's policies. The link to El Salvador is just too tenuous.

On the contrary, the President's bellicose rhetoric serves more to heighten uneasiness among the public and lawmakers over Reagan's use of American military power. Private White House polls have plainly demonstrated that Ronald Reagan still is plagued by latent fears among voters that he will lead the country into a reckless war.

Moreover, the administration announced the "crisis" in

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El Salvador largely out of the blue in mid-March. No steps were taken to prepare the public in advance for the need of strong U.S. action to counter the growing threat that Reagan perceives. The reason there was no preparation was that UN Ambassador Kirkpatrick pushed the "crisis" to the front burner overnight with her trip to the region and subsequent Oval Office discussion with the President.

Reagan himself did not view the situation in El Salvador as a grave crisis until Kirkpatrick returned and told him it was a grave crisis.

* Secondly, the President really has done very, very little to develop a bipartisan consensus in Congress. His joint address in the House chamber was less an effort to reconcile his policies with the views of key lawmakers than a bid to, as he likes to say, make Congress feel the heat since it won't see the light. The problem with this approach is that Reagan's speech is unlikely to generate much heat on lawmakers from their constituents.

Reagan did not offer Congress enough in the way of concessions to ameliorate the opposition of influential members who control the purse strings and wield much more personal power on narrow issues such as El Salvador than they do on the bigger issues of taxes and spending. Dialogue between the White House and lawmakers has been minimal, with the exception of Representative Long, who even after his major demand was met by the White House was willing to give the President only half a loaf.

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* Thirdly, the White House has placed too much emphasis on Reagan's television appeal as a panacea for the administration's problems. Over and over again the President and his senior aides have expressed the simplistic belief that if only the public and Congress had the facts they would fully support the administration.

A prime reason cited repeatedly by senior aides for the joint address is that Reagan's earlier definitive Central American speech (to the National Association of Manufacturers in mid-March) was not covered adequately by the television networks. A joint address to Congress assured Reagan access to America's living rooms, but the task of building support for his Central American policies is not merely a public-relations problem. Yet Reagan's solution is largely a public-relations campaign.

And, frankly, Reagan has gone on television so often these days that his impact has been diluted considerably. His "star wars" speech on defense policy and related attempts to reinvigorate support for high Pentagon spending brought him into our living rooms at prime-time only a few weeks ago. After awhile, skeptical Americans begin to wonder whether the great communicator is crying wolf.

In addition, recent Presidents abilities to sway the public have diminished during the second half of their terms. This is particularly the case for Reagan after the Republican setbacks in the mid-term elections.

* Fourthly, the covert CIA operation in Nicaragua is,

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ironically, hurting rather than helping Reagan's campaign to strengthen the government in San Salvador. The CIA plan has increased distrust among lawmakers and the public over Reagan's intentions in Central America.

The CIA operation detracts from the more critical issue of U.S. aid to El Salvador. The understandable preoccupation in the media and on Capitol Hill with the secret war in Nicaragua only creates political complications for the President, both at home and in Central America. Meanwhile, the arms to the Salvadoran insurgents appear to be flowing unabated.

Reagan's attempts to de-emphasize U.S. military assistance to the region and stress instead economic assistance is also complicated by the CIA operation.

* Finally, the broad skepticism Reagan is encountering demonstrates that the hangover of Vietnam is still with us. Many Americans believe they were deceived by the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and are wary about their government becoming involved in a civil war that does not directly threaten our security. These concerns are so strong that the President is forced again to promise that he won't send in combat troops. And a White House fact sheet put out last night stresses that there will be "no Americanization of [the] war."

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