

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN LES AUCOIN
DEBATE ON COVERT AID TO NICARAGUA
APRIL 23, 1985

sp. of State
file

MR. SPEAKER:

OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS CONGRESS AND THE WHITE HOUSE HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN AN EMOTIONAL TUG-OF-WAR OVER UNITED STATES POLICY IN NICARAGUA. WHAT BEGAN AS A CONSENSUS THAT U.S. COVERT AID WOULD BE USED SOLELY TO INTERCEPT ILLEGAL ARMS TRAFFIC HAS EVOLVED INTO A POLICY OF MILITARY AID TO THE 15,000 "CONTRAS" SEEKING TO OVERTHROW THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT.

ALONG THE WAY THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ENGAGED IN A LOT OF RHETORIC, A LITTLE NEGOTIATION, AND SOME DISTURBING SIDESHOWS SUCH AS A WALKOUT AT THE WORLD COURT AND THE MINING OF NICARAGUAN HARBORS.

NOW, THREE YEARS AND \$80 MILLION WORTH OF PERSUASION LATER, THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT SHOWS NO SIGNS OF CRYING "UNCLE." A CLOSE LOOK AT OUR POLICY TELLS WHY. THOUGH THE COVERT WAR HAS UNDENIABLY TAKEN A TOLL, IT SIMPLY DOESN'T POSE A DIRECT THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF NICARAGUA. AS GENERAL PAUL GORMAN, FORMER HEAD OF U.S. FORCES IN CENTRAL AMERICA ADMITTED EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE CONTRAS, RIGHT NOW, HAVE NO HOPE OF OVERTHROWING THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT. CAN THE CONTRAS DO ENOUGH DAMAGE TO MAKE THE SANDINISTAS SEE THE LIGHT? ACCORDING TO GENERAL GORMAN, THAT WOULD TAKE "YEARS."

MR. SPEAKER, THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH THE STRUCTURE AND POLICIES OF THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT. WE'VE KNOWN THAT SINCE 1980

WHEN PRESIDENT CARTER MADE THE DECISION TO SUSPEND U.S. ASSISTANCE TO NICARAGUA. BUT, INSTEAD OF PURSUING A POLICY OF FORCEFUL DIPLOMACY, WE'VE CREATED A MERCENARY ARMY TO MAKE WAR AGAINST THE SANDINISTAS, PROVIDING THEM AN EXCUSE TO CONTINUE THEIR "STATE OF EMERGENCY" -- WEAKENING THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM, CRACKING DOWN ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION, IMPOSING BROAD CENSORSHIP, AND SILENCING FREE LABOR GROUPS,

INSTEAD OF A REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF THE NICARAGUAN MILITARY, WE'VE GOTTEN A LOT OF SCARE TACTICS AND INNUENDO -- INCLUDING THE NONSENSICAL IDEA THAT NICARAGUA, WITH VIRTUALLY NO AIR FORCE OR NAVY, POSES A THREAT TO U.S. SHIPPING LANES.

AND, JUST LAST WEEK, INSTEAD OF AN THE INNOVATIVE NEW PEACE PLAN WE WERE PROMISED, CONGRESS RECEIVED A REPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATION THAT CALLS FOR A DOUBLING OF THE CONTRA FORCES.

INCREASING THE "SIZE AND EFFICIENCY" OF THE CONTRAS ISN'T GOING TO DESTROY THE SANDINISTAS OR SUDDENLY CREATE AMERICAN-STYLE DEMOCRACY AND FREE MARKETS IN NICARAGUA. WHAT IT WILL DO IS TO INCREASE THE POTENTIAL FOR A BORDER SKIRMISH WITH NEIGHBORING HONDURAS THAT COULD PULL IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY.

EVEN THOUGH IT'S FORMER SOMOZA GUARDSMEN INSTEAD OF OUR MARINES; THE UNITED STATES IS STILL PURSUING A MILITARY POLICY IN NICARAGUA. IF THERE IS ONE LESSON WE SHOULD HAVE LEARNED OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS IT IS THAT A MILITARY POLICY THAT DOES NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IS DOOMED TO FAIL.

MR. SPEAKER, A VOTE AGAINST COVERT AID ISN'T A TICKET TO THE SANDINISTA FAN CLUB. IT'S A CALL TO END THE CURRENT STALEMATE AND PURSUE OTHER POLICIES THAT HAVE A REALISTIC CHANCE OF INSURING OUR INTERESTS, AND THE INTERESTS OF OUR ALLIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

THE UNITED STATES HAS YET TO EXPLORE ALL OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A REGIONAL PEACE PLAN UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE CONTADORA GROUP. OUR NATION HAS NOT USED ITS INFLUENCE IN ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES TO WORK WITH THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT. AND, FINALLY, WE HAVE NOT LOOKED AT THE POSSIBILITY OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS OR AN END TO DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION OF THE SANDINISTAS.

LAST WEEK MY SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS, WHICH OVERSEES THE COVERT AID PROGRAM, HEARD TESTIMONY FROM CIA IN SUPPORT OF THE \$14 MILLION IN MILITARY AID. THOUGH THE HEARING WAS CLOSED, I'D LIKE TO SHARE SOME INFORMATION FROM THE UNCLASSIFIED PORTIONS OF TESTIMONY PRESENTED.

THE CIA TESTIMONY CONTRASTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF "MARXIST-LENINIST GOVERNMENTS" IN FIVE NATIONS; THE IMPLICATION BEING THAT NICARAGUA IS EVOLVING THE SAME WAY. THE POINT THAT HIT HOME FOR ME WAS THAT EVERY REGIME STUDIED CAME TO POWER BECAUSE OF POPULAR OPPOSITION TO A PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT -- EXACTLY WHY THE SANDINISTAS EXIST.

THE SANDINISTAS DO NOT RULE NICARAGUA BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF THAT COUNTRY ARE COMMITTED MARXIST-LENINISTS. THEY RULE BECAUSE FOR YEARS THE UNITED STATES PROPPED UP SOMOZA, AS BRUTAL A DICTATOR AS WE'VE SEEN.

AND THE SANDINISTAS ARE CONSOLIDATING THEIR AUTHORITY NOT THROUGH MASSIVE INFUSIONS OF SOVIET AID, BUT BECAUSE OUR COVERT WAR GIVES THEM LATITUDE TO IMPOSE REPRESSIVE "EMERGENCY MEASURES."

WE SHOULD HAVE LEARNED BY NOW THAT WE CAN'T FORCE CHANGE IN NICARAGUA AT THE POINT OF A GUN. ESPECIALLY A GUN POINTED BY FORMER SOMOZA GUARDSMEN.

IT'S TIME TO END THE COVERT WAR AND WORK FOR A TOUGH, BUT REALISTIC POLICY TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS IN CENTRAL AMERICA.