

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

June 5, 1986

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Dante B. Fascell
Chairman

FROM: George Ingram
Sr. Staff Consultant

RE: *McCurdy Central American Trip (Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, and El Salvador) June 1-4, 1986; highlights of meetings with the five presidents and contra leaders.*

CONTADORA

- delegation developed the strong impression that the four democratic presidents are negotiating in Contadora on their own behalf and are not operating at the behest of the U.S. government. They each have a strongly developed sense of what they are seeking through Contadora, particularly in reference to democracy, and some are skeptical of the role being played by the nine Contadora and Support countries (once a document is signed, they will walk away and wash their hands of Central America, so the four democracies must be very careful to insure the treaty protects their interests). In fact, it appeared that the U.S. government is not informed of everything that occurs within Contadora (the U.S. Government has not seen the draft of an annex on verification of political reconciliation).

- the Contadora Treaty will not be signed on June 6th. It will take two-three months of additional negotiations; beyond that time period it may become increasingly difficult to secure an agreement.

- still to be negotiated are arms reductions, troop levels, military maneuvers, and verification and control (chapter three) and political reconciliation. Ortega says the political reconciliation (democratization) provisions are already agreed upon; the other four agree there is a reluctance to reopen those provisions but also that they are inadequate (because of lack of confidence in Nicaraguan compliance), so what is likely to be proposed is an annex that will provided for verification of political reconciliation, in the form of benchmarks and a timetable for compliance (such as allowing a free press, the archbishop to deliver his homily on radio, political meetings).

- there is a sense that Nicaragua will sign a, maybe any, Contadora Treaty (principally as a tactic to secure termination of U.S. assistance to the contras), and that the other four countries are becoming more reluctant to sign an agreement unless it clearly is in their security interests. Nicaragua has dropped its insistence on the

U.S. committing itself to honoring the agreement. The four democratic presidents expressed a strong distrust of Ortega and Nicaragua's compliance with an agreement.

- there appears to be a consensus among the four democratic presidents on the goal of democracy. Two of the presidents expressed in nearly the same terms the view that peace in Central America is impossible without democracy in all five countries. Arias of Costa Rica was particularly strong in saying that democracy is a necessary precondition for peace in Central America, which in turn is a necessary condition for economic growth and stability (as only under such conditions will the region attract the needed domestic and foreign investment).

- agreement has been reached on the concept underlying the proposal to achieve arms reduction through a point system (each weapon system is assigned a numerical value and no country can have a military capability above a set numerical level). However, Nicaragua has not agreed to the specifics of the proposal, has proposed to distinguish between offensive and defensive weapons, and refuses to include certain weapons systems in the formula.

- none of the four democratic presidents except Azcona of Honduras would express support for U.S. assistance to the contras. The other three would express neither support nor opposition to U.S. support for the contras, saying they did not wish to be involved in a matter of U.S. domestic politics and that support for the contras would invite foreign support for guerillas in their countries. All of the four called for expanded pressure on Nicaragua (especially expanding it beyond the United States to the democratic countries of this hemisphere and Western Europe).

CONTRAS (met with UNO leaders Cruz and Robello in Costa Rica; visit to contra camp at Yamales and met with Calero and Bermudez)

- contras better armed and trained than expected; need more training; morale appeared good.

- \$27 million will run out in July, at least for food.

- view of those not connected to contras was that they cannot win; that contras have both positive and negative effect — positive in keeping pressure on Sandinistas to negotiate and on diverting Nicaraguan resources from subversion of other countries; negative in providing Sandinistas excuse for economic malaise of Nicaragua and for repression of liberties; need to support not just the contras but the democratic opposition in Nicaragua.

- UNO meeting in Miami in late May resulted in important structural changes in UNO, particularly an increase in civilian control, greater unity, and majority vote of the three leaders on most issues. UNO leaders said there is no misuse of funds, welcomed scrutiny, and said would establish own investigatory commission; did

say there could be some syphoning of funds by Honduran officials.

- Nicaraguan economy is in dire straights and predictions are for the appearance of an insufficient amount of food and hunger this year.