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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
AMBASSADOR JEANE KIRKPATRICK

April 28, 1983

The Roosevelt Room

12:32 P.M. EDT

MS. SMALL: Welcome, everyone. Let me just say welcome to everyone. I've seen many of you here before. We're happy that we could arrange this gathering for Ambassador Kirkpatrick, particularly. Dave Gergen will be joining us in a few minutes. And we might say that we are making a transcript of the exchange, which probably won't be available until late tomorrow morning, by noon, because we have Trudeau here, we have departure statements, and briefings and other things that are also going to have to be typed. It's a little hard for the stenos to get it all out. But by noon tomorrow, there will be a transcript in Room 45 for you all if you want to send a messenger. And this would be on the record. Everything today is on the record.

We can go ahead and start our salad. The main course will be up in a few minutes. And if the Ambassador would like to -- Ambassador Kirkpatrick, if you wanted to open up with some remarks yourself, we'll just then go to questions and make it sort of a working lunch, however you would like to proceed with your remarks.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: What can I say? As I think most of you here know, we think Central America is very important for the United States and for our future as well as, even more than, our present and for a lot of different reasons which the President laid out last night and which a good many people in and out of our government have laid out many times, as -- all of you know that and all of you know what the President said last night.

I might comment briefly on what I thought about some things that Chris Dodd said last night. (Laughter.) This might be the -- you probably now want to think of that, too. I would -- but I guess there are a few simple observations I would like to make. The one is the extent to which the terms of the debate have changed in the last year.

A year ago, a significant number of persons engaged in public debate on this issue doubted -- continued to doubt on the record that the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the Soviet bloc, in fact, had and were interested in having and had developed an -- a significant presence in this hemisphere. There was a lot of pooh-poohing about the suggestions of the development of Soviet power in the hemisphere and the efforts to develop bloc power in the hemisphere; and, specifically, the Soviet interest in Nicaragua, Central America, et cetera.

Even six months ago, significant numbers of people engaged in this public debate were still doubting on the record the presence of a significant flow of arms into Central America, specifically Nicaragua, and the other countries of Central America through Cuba. And as recently as three months ago, I think there was a lot of doubt about whether the struggle in El Salvador was a truly indigenous affair or whether there were -- whether there was a kind of a regional agenda, whether other countries in the region -- like Honduras and Costa Rica were or were likely to be involved.

These are interlocking questions, because, obviously, if there was a significant arms flow from the Soviet bloc through
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Cuba into Nicaragua and from there to Salvador through Honduras, then Honduras was involved significantly by way of the continuing flow of arms through Honduras. And whether or not there were safe houses discovered in Honduras and whether or not there were some kinds of threats going on to Costa Rica, those questions today, I think, are no longer considered as very lightly opened questions by most of the people participating in this public debate today.

As recently as six months ago, certainly, almost nobody was talking about the establishment of a Marxist state in El Salvador as a likely possibility. Now, that's changed. You know, even Dodd begins last night by saying we will oppose the establishment of a Marxist state in Central America. Steve Solaris (phonetic) and his MacNeil-Lehrer show with me last night, and Congressman Long began by saying the same thing, basically. Of course, we oppose the establishment of a communist state in El Salvador.

Six months ago -- even three months ago -- nobody even raised that possibility -- virtually outside the circle of those of us who have been long concerned about the question. Nobody was talking about the possibility of establishment of Soviet bases. Last night Dodd began by saying that we will oppose the establishment of a Marxist state in Central America, would oppose the establishment of Soviet bases. We will not tolerate -- that's the strongest language I think anybody has used yet that I have heard -- the introduction of offensive Soviet missiles or Soviet missiles with an aggressive -- aggressive capacity or offensive capacity into the -- Central America.

He said we will oppose these by war if necessary. That is very interesting. That's the kind of -- if I may say so -- purple prose that nobody in this administration uses in talking about these issues. That's just kind of interesting, I think; worth noting.

Q Who was that?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: No, Dodd -- Dodd did that. I was -- I hope I got my notes right. I haven't seen a text, a written text of the speech, but I took notes on it as he was speaking and I think that's what he said all right. Professors, like journalists, are practiced in taking notes -- (laughter) -- but they should know that -- better, I think, at taking notes than at a lot of things.

The interesting thing that I thought about his discussion was -- which I thought paralleled in certain ways Steve Solaris (phonetic) discussion on the Lehrer show where I had been with him -- was that he -- what he didn't do was deny that these were legitimate concerns or that -- realistic concerns, but he moved on to say the administration misunderstands the basis of the conflict. He said we know as little now about Central America as we knew about Indochina in the '60's. He then went on to say the people of Central America are appallingly poor and that there are appalling disparities in wealth in Central America; that Central America is wracked with poverty. I would just like to say I wholly agree that the people of Central America are appallingly poor and that there are appalling disparities of wealth and that the people of Central America are wracked with poverty and that there is, in fact, hunger -- real hunger and a great deal more malnutrition that is hunger-derived, in a sense, in the sense that there's no alternative to the -- no practical alternative to the malnutrition for a great many rural Central Americans.

It seems to me, therefore, if the question is not whether anybody opposes a Marxist state -- there's also no question about whether the people in Central America are appallingly poor and whether there is hunger and whether they are wracked with poverty.

He even went on to say, instead of trying to do something about this, they -- that is, we, the administration, try endless military aid, endless military training. I would like to say there that when he talked about our trying endless military training, reminded me of some hecklers I encountered at Berkeley and

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then at Minnesota. I think it's the same group actually, because they were saying the same things. And one thing they kept saying is: 30,000 dead. U.S. out of Salvador, 30,000 dead, as well as those -- we've had an average of about 37 trainers in El Salvador through this period, you know, as though they were somehow responsible for the 30,000 dead. I thought about that 37 trainers or 55, which is our sort of top figure, and

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I felt that same quality of statistical surrealism was involved here. If -- Anybody who can think of that meager US training presence as endless training for El Salvador has got a notion of what's endless that I don't understand.

He said that -- What gets really interesting, though, in these causal arguments, if Central American were not wracked with poverty, hunger, injustice there would be no revolution. And here we really get to the question that I think is the most important question that remains between the Administration -- between those people that are concerned about doing something about Central America and the people who oppose any kind of program that's been so far offered in any way.

And I'd rather put it that way than in terms of administration/non-administration. The question is what it is that causes what it is we are concerned about. Now, we can say that we are and should be concerned about wracking poverty and hunger in Central America.

We should have always been concerned about it. We should be concerned and I think we are in some sense concerned about wracking poverty in Bangladesh and in Burundi, where I was this summer -- I found what may be the most wracking poverty I have ever seen -- or Ruanda. That's one kind of question.

Now, whether that wracking poverty and hunger is the cause of the strategic, of the revolution, as Chris Dodd called it, in Central America is quite a different question. I think this is very important and very basic. It's quite clear that if poverty and hunger caused Marxist revolutions then there would be Marxist revolutions in all the countries where there is wracking poverty and hunger.

And, presumably, we would see a correlation between the levels of poverty and hunger, on the one hand, and levels of revolutionary activity, on the other. But, of course, no such correlation exists and, I mean, it's not so. The poorest, the very poorest countries in the world are, in the great course, peoples of the world in the poorest countries are not, in fact, in making revolutions of any kind, least of all Marxist-Leninist revolutions.

Central America -- You know, Great Britain said all this. I don't know why one has to keep going over it, in fact. But it's not the poorest countries who foment Marxist revolutions and -- it's the poorest people who do. Usually it's countries who have been poorer than they are, and that certainly fits the Central American model, by the way, and who had already improved the living standard quite a bit.

And in Central America what causes our particular problem is the fact that there is a -- what differentiates it from our humanitarian concerns in Asia or in Africa or in the Middle East, differentiates our appeal for aid in Central America from our humanitarian aid to the UN, and through the USAID, and so forth, is a strategic problem.

And that strategic problem is caused by the introduction of a lot of weapons and a fairly high level of trained guerrillas, who were trained in Cuba and Nicaragua and other places into the region, and who are making war on those societies. There is no sense in which this government opposes change in Central America, or seeks to maintain a status quo. You know, that is an impossibly silly argument. All you have to do is look at the historical record over the last decade to see that we have, in fact, done the opposite to maintain our status quo. We have, in fact, promoted

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change. That was true in the previous administration; it is true in this administration. It's not change we're talking about, it's a particular -- it's not even violent change we're talking about. It's a particular kind of violent change, caused by a particular kind of people trained and armed and equipped and linked to our adversaries in the world.

That's really -- that's the point I want to make. I would like to say about -- and the only reason I am laboring it is because people keep talking about it, you know, all the time. You know, the other things I would like to say about -- it's obvious that his figures were wrong. He talked about the -- he said this administration, that we had provided \$700 million in economic and military assistance to El Salvador since his administration came to power, and that's just not true.

We have provided a -- We requested \$720 million, and we have provided about \$461 million.

Q Since Reagan took office?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Since Reagan -- right. Those are Reagan's figures.

Q Four fifty-one, did you say?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: The Reagan administration -- I just got all these figures. They are very complex, as real figures usually are.

Q Does that break it out for --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: In military assistance. Since the Reagan administration has requested since its arrival in office for a fiscal '81, '82 and '83, \$525 million in economic assistance.

Q Five twenty-five?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Plus \$195 for FY '84, but that's not -- that's requested. Congress has provided \$461.5 million so far in economic assistance for El Salvador. The military assistance, the administration has requested for FY '81, '82, '83 and '84, \$340 million. But Congress has approved so far only \$143 million. So if we look at the grand totals approved to date requested by this administration, '81 through '84, the grand total is \$600 million, not as Chris Dodd said, a billion through '84. It's not a terribly important point, but it's a kind of important point. You know, it's like a 40 percent error.

Just one other point. On negotiations, you know, he talked about the dogs of war being loose in Central America, and when the cheering has stopped and there's going to be a regional conflict. And I would just like -- And how the government ought to use its power and influence to bring about a negotiated end to the hostilities.

And I would just like to say that that's exactly what we try to do all the time. And if -- And what I think is very badly needed and, hopefully, will be forthcoming is that if anybody has some good ideas, practical, constructive ideas about how to leash those dogs of war in Central America and Nicaragua, for example, and El Salvador, Honduras, they should give us some concrete suggestions. And they would find us interested, you know -- attentive, really.

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Q Would you address the Rabinowitz-Scala-Plaza (ph) thing, Mrs. Kirkpatrick? Particularly, the emphasis they put out on the Contadora process?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I would just say that things keep changing. Among the things that keep changing is the Contadora process. The association of those countries -- Venezuela and Colombia and Panama and Mexico -- is obviously one that is ongoing, and they change

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their minds, too. As I'm sure you know, the foreign ministers of those countries have been meeting intermittently -- it sometimes seems almost continuously -- and with the foreign ministers of the core countries of Central America, the Central American five. For weeks now, almost, they've been meeting and they've been communicating, talking to each other and trying to put together some kind of solutions for the region. And those have taken various forms. And most of those forms, by the way, have been thoroughly welcomed by the administration.

We are entirely willing and ready to stand aside for any kind of regional negotiations which meet the -- satisfactory and it's a -- which can be organized among the countries of the region by the Contadora group in conjunction with the countries of Central America.

Q Ambassador, if the problem is the introduction of arms and money and so forth by the Soviet Union and its surrogates, why could that not be cut off by making it unpleasant for the Soviet Union in places where they are more vulnerable such as Afghanistan and Angola and Ethiopia?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I'm sorry. Would you say that again?

Q If the problem of the Soviets -- is just the Soviets introducing -- Why can they not be gotten to agree to stop it by making it unpleasant for them in areas that are much more vital to them than El Salvador is, such as Afghanistan, by supporting the -- and so forth?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Are you suggesting we go to the source? (Laughter.)

Q Yes, exactly, precisely. I don't see any point in letting the enemy choose the ground upon which you fight because that's very unpalatable ground down there.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: First of all, I think that not all the -- I don't want to either seem or sound indifferent to the suffering of the Afghan people, which is very, very large and, indeed, tragic. But I would say that not all areas of the world have the kind of direct strategic relevance to the United States that Central America and the Caribbean do. And I think that we don't have an abstract interest in controlling the Soviet flow of arms in the world. We have a very specific need to prevent the establishment of bases for the projection of Soviet power in places that are vitally important to us. And Central America and the Caribbean are such places. And I think, therefore, we cannot try to deal with those problems in other places. I think that's the answer --

Q Did you see more of a stress on the political solution versus a military solution in the President's address last night?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I think if we want a political solution in either El Salvador or Nicaragua or any place in Central America, we have to provide military assistance. If we don't provide military assistance, there will be a military solution in El Salvador very quickly and it will be an imposed peace based on essentially the surrender of the people of El Salvador to the guerrillas. I just don't find that military/political solution language very meaningful, frankly, because there's only one group that has imposed a military struggle on El Salvador and those are the guerrillas. And there's only one other country that continually tries to persuade the guerrillas to stop fighting and accept some other kind of -- settle their differences in some other kind of way.

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I think we have been trying to promote, we, the United States, have been trying to promote political settlement in Nicaragua for a long time. We did -- the Carter administration tried that, the Reagan administration's tried it. I don't think we have ever tried to promote military settlement any place. There is somebody who's trying to promote a military solution. They're the people who come in with arms and try to conquer the place.

Q Ambassador, a lot of people are puzzled by the difference in the strength that exists between the guerrillas and the government forces in El Salvador. It's generally reported to be about 30,000 on the government side and somewhere in the neighborhood of 5,000 on the guerrilla side. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I don't think anybody knows exactly how many guerrillas there are.

Q Well, a rough --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: The figures that I usually hear are six to eight thousand guerrillas.

Q All right, six to eight thousand --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Five, six, eight -- I don't know exactly.

Q How many thousand on the government side?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Again, it depends on whether you're talking about army or militia.

Q Well, police, army, whatever -- the government --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Well, it matters as the Nicaraguans are always pointing out. Some -- maybe let's say 20,000 in the army and plus some assorted police and National Guards and --

Q They certainly have a substantial majority just, you know, as far as the

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numbers. Why are they not more successful and -- Well, how do you explain this discrepancy if there are less guerrillas -- Why don't the government people prevail? How do you read that?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I think it's -- That's like saying how can so few criminals tie up so many cops?

Q I don't think that's really comparable, though.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: And I -- Well, I think it's entirely comparable.

Q I would add that --

Q But isn't there a concept about guerrilla warfare, as well as a ten to one --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Well, there is. And it isn't exactly -- I think it is comparable. And the reason I think it's comparable is that the guerrillas are the attackers and they can choose where they want to attack, when they want to attack, how they want to attack. And they can benefit by surprise. And let me say in Salvador they do and they benefit by surprise because they have such top flight, sophisticated communications equipment for directing the attacks. And they can supply -- And the government forces are trying to defend the whole country. And guerrillas can decide to attack here and if the government doesn't know in advance, then they get there after the attack. And then they can decide to attack there. It's a relatively small country and they've got fairly high mobility.

Q Well, let me ask you, it's been suggested that one of the reasons might be that there isn't a sufficient amount of dedication or zeal or commitment on the part of the government, that there is not the willingness on the government's side to, in effect, give up their lives for what they believe in that you have on the guerrilla's side. How do you evaluate that factor?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Well, I think there's been probably more government soldiers killed in the last two years than there have guerrillas. So -- if I may say so.

I believe -- By the way, reliable figures on this are very hard to come by in fact, about who was killed and how many and who killed whom, in places like El Salvador, not just El Salvador.

But the fact is that it's very hard to fight a guerrilla war. I mean, everybody knows that.

El Salvador is a miserable, poor -- let's use Chris Dodd's language, you know, appallingly poor, small, parochial little country, which, like other countries in the region, has a tradition of what's known as "a barracks army," which is to say the armies aren't very much accustomed to fighting wars. They're accustomed to being -- maintaining internal order and a variety of other things. And they are not trained to counteract guerrilla tactics.

Now, you introduce --

Q We've tried to train them and --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: No, but it's --

Q -- it hasn't been successful.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Well, we haven't tried very hard. And, by the way, we, you know, we still aren't because we haven't had the money. You can't take fifty-five trainers into even a little bitty country like El Salvador and get very far in

a year and a half or so, two years, in training people. You can't train very many.

There is a big difference, as everybody has commented on, between the military performance of those brigades who have been trained by Americans and those who haven't. That's because they've learned something about how to respond.

I think -- See, I don't think this is any mystery. The guerrilla tactics and guerrilla war are a very different kind of operation.

In addition, by the way, the guerrillas enjoy sanctuary, ready sanctuary in Nicaragua. They even have, as I understand it from some Costa Rican friends, they have enjoyed, maybe they don't now, rest and recreation facilities in Costa Rica, just over the Nicaraguan border.

Q You know that?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I said that I am told by -- I have been informed by some Costa Rican friends that this is the case. It may be that those have been shut down. Efforts were made to shut them down. I do know that for a period that was the case. And we all know that there are rest and recreation facilities inside Nicaragua, which the Salvadoran guerrillas regularly repair to. So they've got a sanctuary and that makes it easier, too. And they've got high mobility. And they're well trained. They're better trained for fighting a guerrilla war than the government troops in El Salvador are trained for countering guerrilla war, which is a --

Q Let's turn to the success of our policy. Do you feel that, if we gave them what you would regard or the experts regarded as adequate arms, adequate military training, that that would make the difference, that they would immediately prevail? Or -- not immediately -- that they would be able then to prevail over the guerrillas? I mean, do you think their dedication, their commitment and all the rest of it is there?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Oh, yes, absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. I think there is simply no question about that. I think that the notion that the people of El Salvador are indifferent to the idea of guerrilla triumph in El Salvador is a terribly mistaken canard. You know, I mean, it's -- that's just really wrong. The people of El Salvador care a lot about this. And among the people who care are the soldiers. They don't necessarily know what to do about it, but they care a lot. That's -- The only way they've really had to prove it was in that election, as a matter of fact, where they did prove it.

They're not at all indifferent about whether they're governed by Sandinistas and neither, let me say, are the people of Costa Rica or the people of Honduras. Probably, neither are the people of Nicaragua.

Q Could I follow that up, Jeane, with two questions?

If the President got what he asked for last night, would there be any major changes in our approach to the region?

And, secondly, have we, on any levels, talked to the Soviets directly about this? And, if so, what have been the responses?

First, would there be any difference in our policy if the President gets what he wants? I sense differences in his last points. But --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: If we -- if Congress provided all the assistance --

Q Yes.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: -- which the President has asked for, then I think we would be able to undertake even more effective measures, for example, in the training field.

Q Can't hear you.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: In training, for example. We would be able to continue training at a somewhat higher level and that would help a lot.

We have -- It took us a while to put in place our own capacities for surveillance, you know, aerial and that sort of thing. So we're in a position to make more effective use of resources today than -- we, the U.S. government -- than we were a year ago, or even six months ago. I think that -- you know, I think that represents our best estimate of it. That's --

Now, on the Soviets --

Q Could I just follow that? What about pressures on the Salvadorans to clean up their own situation? Are we willing to do that after this?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Oh, listen, we do it, you know, to a very, very, very great degree, of course.

I just wish, in fact, that you, for example -- (laughter) -- would -- would, really, would take a good hard look at the record of U.S. pressures on the government of El Salvador over the last three years down to this week, let's say. There, I mean, I think that it is no exaggeration to say that the U.S. government has put a very great deal of pressure on the government of El Salvador to meet our standards in judicial, moral and political domains and that they have moved far in that regard. Far.

I think we put, really, really maximum pressure. And, I may say, I think I know quite a bit about this --

Q How do you say they've moved farther? Fifteen-thousand, as Long pointed out to you last night, over 15,000 instances of unresolved crime.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: That isn't -- Of course, that isn't --

Q And not a single conviction.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Yes. That isn't, you know -- That isn't what he said. People are always using those figures and sometimes they use 15,000 and sometimes 20,000 and sometimes 30,000 civilian deaths, you know, attributed to the government and unresolved. What that means is that there have been that many people killed in the ongoing conflict, that many civilians killed in the ongoing guerrilla war and in El Salvador. You know -- And that nobody knows who's killed those people. A very great many of those people have been killed by guerrillas and a good many others of those people have been killed by their being caught in crossfire. And virtually all of them have been killed as a direct consequence of the existence of a guerrilla war in El Salvador.

Q Where is the evidence --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: You know, stop the war and you'll end the killing. That's --

Q Do you dispute the statement --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I understand that there were 45 unexplained deaths in El Salvador before the onset of guerrilla war in the fall of 1979 and the year before that.

Q Where's the improvement?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: The improvement is in judicial process. The improvement is in the establishment of democratic processes, democratic elections, constitutional processes for law-making in El Salvador, land reform.

Q Do you --

Q There is a --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Mort.

Q Do you dispute the --

Q Don't forget my Soviet question.

Q Let me just follow this --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I don't know -- Listen, the only thing I know about your Soviet question -- And I suppose -- I know what I know. I only know what I know. The only thing I know about that was what was basically leaked from the Haig period about the conversations which he had with Gromyko about Central -- in which Central America figured. But that's -- you know, you have as much access to those newspapers as I do.

Q Enders has said that they warned them on the introduction of aircraft into Central America.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I think that was in that Haig conversation, Smith, actually, presumably, in the Haig-Gromyko conversations.

Q Two things. First, the -- in describing civilian casualties in El Salvador it's -- the figure is often -- thirty-some-thousand have died, the overwhelming number killed by government security forces.

Now, first question is do you dispute that --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I'd just say nobody knows.

Q But, presumably, when we put human rights pressure on the government, we must tell them something like, "You keep doing this and you are going to alienate your own population, including Mr. D'Aubisson, Major D'Aubisson."

Now, what is it that we get back? I mean, these are high ranking politicians, some of them, with a stake in the country, presumably, and do they just dismiss that theory or what?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Mort, I don't think that -- I think that the thousands of people who are killed in El Salvador are killed in the process of fighting a war in El Salvador. That's -- I think there are a few cases of clearcut murder by security forces. The nuns were such a case. The murder of Mike Hammer and Pearlman and Rudolfo Biero were such a case.

There are then -- And there are others. There are some cases which are known -- well, in which there's powerful evidence to suggest, let's put it that way, as well as we can know anything, were killed, were victims, civilian victims of security forces in El Salvador.

And then there are a very great many dead Salvadorans who have been civilians, that is neither people whom we knew to be guerrillas, nor people whom we knew to be in the army

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but were found dead in streets and nobody knows who's killed them and they are casualties of war, literally. And what we say continuously to the government of El Salvador -- all parts of the government of El Salvador, and the security forces in El Salvador -- is that from their point of view and our point of view, it is absolutely essential that they must fight the guerrillas who are after all trying to kill Salvadorans in ways that don't kill innocent civilians and other persons and that they may not. And if they have other scores to settle, I mean they must not do it. And we also insist that there must be judicial processes which put an end to private violence on the government side.

The question is really private violence. And we tell them all the time that this is terrible -- a mistake for them, and simply intolerable to us.

Q Let me follow that up. Do you think there is any possibility that that kind of message can get through sufficiently to encourage Rubin Zamora, for example, to actually come back in the country -- that we could guarantee his safety so that he could come back and make these elections cricket?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I believe we can guarantee Rubin Zamora's safety. I just really don't doubt that. I do not doubt that we can guarantee Rubin Zamora's safety. If we can guarantee his safety furthermore as a campaigner, and that we can guarantee and devise with the government of El Salvador, and get their cooperation by the way, ways to protect their supporters -- Kaunga or, you know, anybody else who is willing to enter an electoral process.

Q But, Howard, if we could do that, that would be a really new thing because we haven't been able to do that. How could we do it? They were all wiped out when they came in in 1980.

Q They were all what?

Q The ones who came into the elections were all wiped out.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I don't know who you're thinking --

Q Oh, the whole, the whole Directorate of the region --

Q The FDR leaders who were killed in November --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Right. Right, right. But that means they weren't killed coming into elections.

Q They were, actually.

Q And if we can guarantee it, that's something new --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I think we can. I think we can.

Q Would the government agree to it now?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I think they will, yes. I think they will. I think that will be negotiated out -- and I don't want to anticipate the outcome of negotiations, but I would like -- which will be undertaken by a negotiator -- but I personally do not doubt, one, that we can do it, and that we can negotiate such an agreement and that we can deliver on security.

I don't know whether we can do it with 55 Americans, but I don't doubt that we can do it if we decide to do it. And I think we've decided to do it.

Q You mentioned the magic word which is Haig. There was a big story in The New York Post yesterday about what they called the secret guerrilla war in the White House -- Team A, Team B, who the hawks are, and who the doves are --

Q -- talk to Winnick --

Q Well, that's my question -- in early Haig there was an effort, apparently at the State Department, that this should be a front burner issue, El Salvador. Allegedly, the White House staff -- we were told Jim Baker was going to be here, this was a question for him. Then allegedly the White House staff said "No, that's not who we're going to go with, we're going to go with" -- Is one to assume that the President's speech to the Congress yesterday means that this issue is resolved for now, for the rest of this term of this President -- that this is going to be so-called front burner -- that he will make his case to the American people regularly and methodically, and be prepared to do political --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Ben, I think one can assume that this administration is at all authoritative levels persuaded that this is an issue of capital importance -- it's an issue of great importance -- of very great importance, but it will stay on the front burner in this administration until the problems have been resolved in Central America.

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That's the reason of course, that -- The President thinks that it's got to be on the front burners of the Congress and for the American people. And I guess everybody in this administration now is persuaded that objectively that -- as Marxists might say -- that the objective situation has this issue high on the agenda of priorities --

Q Including all the people who were cited in the Post yesterday as saying they're still against it?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Yes, I --

Q You saw that story?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I saw that story.

MR. GERGEN: Can I comment on that as a member of so-called Team B? The Latham story in The New York Post yesterday which -- what I and several others regard as a rather scurrilous piece. The fact is that Baker and others around here enthusiastically endorse the idea of the President going to the Hill to give that speech. They are strong supporters of the policy.

And there has been unity in this building and in this administration to the President taking this issue on.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Then, the reason -- But the point is that the reason that there's a consensus is because nobody thinks there's any choice, which is exactly the President's message to the Congress and people, that there really isn't any choice. I mean, it's just objectively so important to the United States today that it's got to be faced.

Q When do you think the country will come to the same conclusion?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I don't know. But I believe that the dialogue, trialogue, the discussion on this and all other issues of public policy is not just one that's determined by any president or administration. It's one that's determined by the whole, as it were, political class, by the administration, by the Congress, by the media confronting issues.

I think that's going to be as much decided by our communicators.

Q But why do you think you have so much difficulty in arousing the country to the dangers to the south as the administration sees them? I judge you would grant that you do have difficulty.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: No, I don't think we have difficulty. No, I don't think the country is very aware of it, but I don't think the problem is we arousing the country. Why isn't there broader understanding of this issue in the country generally, I think, is the question.

And I think the reason for that is that we are accustomed to taking for granted security in our hemisphere. Our whole national experience has led us to be sort of a -- certainly in the modern period -- to be safe and secure in our hemisphere.

We are not accustomed even to giving any thought, to speak of, to those small countries of Central America. We have -- The really interesting thing, I think, about the post-World War II period is the lesser interest in Latin America generally in the United States -- interesting to think about the fact that the

Rio Pact was the first of the series of alliances negotiated and signed by Harry Truman in the postwar period when he decided and the Congress decided we had to have a series of alliances.

Before NATO was ever negotiated came the Rio Pact and the Rio Treaty. And there used to be a good deal more attention paid to hemispheric affairs politics in the United States than has been the case in the last few decades.

I think part of the problem is just that, a sort of slide from the forefront of American attention of hemispheric affairs. Generally, Central American countries, as people keep saying, "Those are little countries."

We're not accustomed to thinking geo-politically. We're accustomed to thinking in terms of big countries, big armies, big bank balances and credits and problems and such.

Q May I --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Wait a minute now.

Q I'm --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Little female chauvinism --

Q Thank you.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Phil Houston hasn't had an opportunity.

Q As you, I think, correctly pointed out, there's an emerging consensus about El Salvador, even here in Washington, even if no one else wants to admit it. But where I think that we're going in exactly the opposite direction is on Nicaragua.

And last night, the President really gave only a little bit of rhetoric to the question of Nicaragua. And I wondered if you could talk a little bit about how to develop consensus about Nicaragua or what the prospects are.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I think that, first of all, the first challenge, the first prerequisite -- the first requisite of good public policy in a democracy is, I think, a reasonably and well-informed citizenry and Congress. And I think the first pass before not us, the administration, but the American people, the Congress, is to become informed, as

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it were, about the government of Nicaragua. Who is it, what is it, what are its policies? What does it intend? How does it treat its own people? How does it treat its neighbors? How does it respond in international negotiations?

That's the first task, I think. And, again, I think that there's a big problem. Nobody, none of us is accustomed to thinking about Nicaragua as a very interesting place. I think it is also kind of cultural snobbery almost, by the way, that's involved in attitudes towards Central America. Who cares about Nicaragua, El Salvador --

Q We had the Marines in Nicaragua on a number of occasions and --

Q But isn't Nicaragua the issue now? We --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: "We" didn't. You know, our grandfathers did, but "we" surely didn't.

Q I'm not talking about "we". I'm talking about the United States.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: We haven't thought about Nicaragua in a long while. It's like saying, "we" had slaves. "We" didn't.

Q But isn't Nicaragua -- I mean underlying --

(Laughter)

Q --underlying Dodd's remarks, is it really Nicaragua behind it? I mean Dodd is talking about one issue or responding, but really what the issue now is is Nicaragua, and the covert operations.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Well, let me ask a question: whose issue?

Q Well, but isn't that the origin of more of the opposition in Congress to the -- I mean the --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Well, it surely, presumably, wouldn't be the origin of opposition in Congress to military economic assistance for El Salvador. That would be very odd.

Q Okay.

Q Mrs. Kirkpatrick, I think one of the reasons or some people believe that one of the reasons why there might not be much support in the country is that the Reagan Administration doesn't appear to have made up its mind if it wants to fight or feed the Russians. And I wonder if you could explain the rationale behind the decision just a week before the President going on television to announce the offer of a long-term grain agreement to the Russians.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: No, I think I will just pass, and toss that question to my friend, Ben Wattenberg.

(Laughter)

Q What, in your assessment, are the chances of the Soviet missiles being reintroduced into that part of the world? I mean let's extirpate this clear down to the end. Supposing El Salvador

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goes to pot; supposing we get in terrible political problems in trying to place the missiles in Europe. How much of a chance is there of the Soviets attempting some major effort? Maybe not missiles, but maybe something related in Nicaragua, in that part of the world?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: You know, Soviet military power in this hemisphere is the most ignored, important politico-military question that I know about. The -- I find it extraordinary that our media pay as little -- and our Congress -- pay as little attention to Soviet capacities for -- and not only capacity, but actuality for over-flight and electronic surveillance of the United States as we do. You know, planes periodically slip through our radar and end up taking pictures in Vermont or someplace and people sort of shrug.

There was a lot of attention paid at a certain point in the Ford-Kissinger foreign policy period about the development of an agreement not to develop nuclear servicing, submarine servicing capacities in Cienfuegos, and that was hailed as a great victory when the agreement was won. And then those capacities to service nuclear submarines were developed at Cienfuegos, and nobody really much noticed them. We know, you know, the Soviet nuclear missile-bearing submarines that roam around off our shores.

And Soviet aerial reconnaissance over-fly us. And all the important portions of the Southeastern Caribbean and the northern rim of Latin America -- Venezuela, for example. You're going to get the -- People that study these are always drawing circles

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about overflight capacities and the circles are very interesting. They change a lot when you move them from Cuba to Grenada, for example.

The Soviets -- what do we know? We know that Brezhnev, himself, mentioned the possibility, if you will, or the potential, necessity of stationing nuclear missiles in this hemisphere. We know that Vladimir Zagladeen, who is described as the Deputy Minister of the -- Foreign Minister -- I don't really know much about Vladimir Zagladeen, let me say, is -- a week ago reiterated the what, assertion that in case of the stationing of Pershings in Europe, the Soviet Union would need to find places to station nuclear missiles in the Western Hemisphere -- as he put it, an equal time and distance from American cities and he then said something of five to seven minutes.

We know that plans have been undertaken for the construction of a deep water port in Grenada at which is on the Atlantic Coast, which is on one of that -- exactly that sea lane through which virtually all the oil tankers passes between Grenada and the Venezuelan Coast. It's a very narrow strip. We know that there's discussion between the Soviets and the Nicaraguans about the construction of a canal -- a canal, an alternative to the Panama Canal. We know that there is discussion, what the Nicaraguans have said, Ortega himself, one of the Ortegas said that they were involved now in the construction of a platform which will -- which Soviet ships can be repaired and serviced.

So, we know about the airstrip is capable of handling high performance jets in Grenada that's being developed. We know a great deal about the development of air strips, again, capable of handling high performance jets; bombers as well as others in Nicaragua under way now. We know about the stationing of the MIG-23s in Cuba which we know that with just a couple of hours of alteration of some of the mechanisms, they can be transformed into MIG 27s which are capable of launching offensive nuclear weapons. I mean, we know all of those things.

I see little reason to suppose that they would not, in fact, act on Zagladeen's and Brezhnev's warning to undertake the stationing of nuclear missiles in this hemisphere. Everything we know about their behavior suggests that this is, in fact, what they are doing, that they are moving as rapidly as possible to the development of major facilities for the projection of Soviet military power, not just in the hemisphere but right around the American rim in the hemisphere. One of the, by the way, striking things about this is the speed with which they build and, for example, Nicaragua, between the time they undertake the development of new air strips, for example, on that Nicaraguan-Atlantic Coast where the mosquitoes used to be and the speed with which they developed this.

Q "Missiles" becomes the code word. I mean, the bombers and that we've lived with now for a couple of decades.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: No, I don't think we've lived with those bombers for a couple of decades.

Q The surveillance on the East Coast and the submarine base and we've debated --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: But not the MIG-23s.

Q Yes, perhaps not. But I don't know, but I would suspect though that missiles, that changes the dialogue in such a dramatic way. You feel really there is that chance?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I don't feel anything about this. I only know what they have

said. They are the ones who have introduced this possibility into the discussion. Brezhnev introduced the -- you know, this idea into the discussion. I don't have any independent opinion about it.

Q Did he --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: -- being reiterated --

Q --in your discussion of it must take -- must encompass that. I mean your diplomacy, your work must encompass the possibility.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: My work, no. I mean I just know what I read.

Q Your work is dealing with the allies in part. Why is --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I mean that quite seriously. I mean I don't have any special responsibility or competence in relationship to weapons or missile installations anywhere in the world. I do try to follow their press and strategic writing with regard to this hemisphere. It's harder to do from the UN than it used to be from Georgetown, if I may say so.

Q Why have -- or are you trying to deal with the allies on this and to get them on board? For example, West Germany and France, by my recollection, is contributing about \$50 million each to the Sandinistas. And how about Spain? Can't we get Spain on board and be a little -- what we did for them in getting them into NATO and the Common Market and staying out of the Gibraltar issue, and also in staying out of the enclaves in Morocco issue.

Could some leverage be exerted on the allies to get behind us in Mexico, too? Why can't we squeeze Mexico?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Ask somebody else.

(Laughter)

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: With the European allies, I would say we do quite a lot of talking to them in capitals and in Washington, you know, about these problems. And I think that the German government, the Federal Republic has said that there would be -- they are no longer extending assistance to the government of Nicaragua. Almost all, by the way, of the assistance to Nicaragua, economic assistance to Nicaragua has come from the west.

Our best estimates are there has been some -- about \$2 billion in economic aid that the government of Nicaragua has received since July, 1979, when they came into power. They have about \$1.7 -- let's say \$1.4, it's either \$1.4 or \$1.6 has come from western sources, and the remainder from Eastern bloc sources. I think actually -- Actually, I think it's \$1.6 has come from western sources, and \$.4 from Eastern bloc sources. The French government is a very special -- you know, they have some special perceptions about Central America, which I think one has to go back to Chateaubriand to fully understand, in fact, in "The Noble Savage" and the dream of revolution and the state of nature.

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You know Rousseau. In Rousseau's discourse on inequality, when he wanted to picture the ideal state of nature, he put it in the Caribbean, he would say that. And I'm not just kidding when I say I think this is an important kind of foundation for some of the dimensions of French perception of that policy today. We keep talking to them a lot about it. And I think that they have come to understand at least better some of the dimensions of strategic importance to us.

Q Just to follow that through. The French takes -- Mitterand takes an admirable position vis a vis the Soviets, and he lobbied hard for the installation, indeed, of the cruises and Pershings, and he had his own strong military defense against the Soviets. So he is aware of the Soviet threat. Can't you just close the circle with him and say that we're very aware of that threat right here in the hemisphere and move them around?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: We just do a lot of discussing with the French government about this question; that's really all I can say.

Q Steve Solars says that when he and Jim Leach were down in Nicaragua that what --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Excuse me, could I get a cup of tea? Is there anybody around?

Q In fact, one of the Ortegas said that they were perfectly willing to have negotiations, direct negotiations with the United States, and he says that Ambassador Quainton (ph) said that this was a very significant departure.

And he came up here and he said that he reported to the State Department, Solars says,

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and nothing happened.

Now, the Democrats claim over and over again that when Enders went down in August of '81 that there was a kind of a take-it-or-leave it attitude. And the whole impression that gets created is that we have really not done all we could to negotiate out this problem, that we have opted for the covert route instead of trying as hard as we can to get this situation settled diplomatically. What do you say to that?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I just say it's, you know, it's just not so. That's all.

We have tried repeatedly by all kinds of means to persuade the government of Nicaragua to, at a minimum, at a minimum, live at peace with it's neighbors. To -- Mort, the best, maybe, example is the San Jose Communique, are the San Jose principles, which we reiterate all the time, which look toward the end to the importation of arms and an end to the export of arms across borders with mutual, you know, mutual respect for each other's national independence and territorial sovereignty and verified respect for the borders of all countries by all countries.

The Nicaraguans have been very interested in having a border agreement which would protect them against any crossing of anybody into Nicaragua while leaving them perfectly free to violate, ignore the borders of Honduras and Salvador and Costa Rica during this same period.

Nicaragua has denied Costa Rica the use of the San Juan River, for example. By the way, that's where they're talking, making motions about a canal. Costa Rica has treaty rights to the navigation of the San Juan River and they have had free use of it for a century and they've been denied it. There have been a lot of violations of the Costa Rican border by Nicaragua, a lot of violations of the Honduran border by the Nicaraguans -- continual just penetration, perforation of the Honduran border by Nicaraguans infiltrating arms and guerrillas into Salvador.

And what they have wanted to talk about was never the -- never included their respect for the borders of other countries. It always consisted of other countries' respect for the sanctity of their borders only. That's a very special kind of a topic.

If you just look at -- They have been offered again and again an end to the -- all importations of arms into the area with international verification of that, an end to the importation and use of all foreign advisors in the area with international verification of that, respect, mutual respect for the borders of all countries with international verification of that.

They've also been -- There are -- all kinds of proposals have been made for internal reconciliation in all countries and, of course, for democratic elections and democratic freedoms in all countries. Again, with international verifications and guarantees. And they simply turned them down.

Q Well, let me just -- Solars' point was that maybe all of this is propaganda, you know, that these offers get made for the purpose of not being accepted, but, nonetheless, the impression gets created that we have not done our level best to try to settle the situation.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I know. That's, you know, that -- I'm afraid that the impression gets created above all by them, though. I was saying to Joel coming down, I have the feeling that if we were living today at World War II and we heard, you know a

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Roosevelt or, let's say, Churchill, "We will fight them in the streets and on the beaches," the announcer would say -- CBS would say, "And now, for another view of this question" -- (laughter) -- "we will bring you from Berlin -- " This is -- "

Q But isn't the question in Nicaragua really one of whether or not the Sandinistas are willing to talk to their own -- I mean, I agree with you that there's nothing new in Ortega saying that he's willing to talk to the United States. But why can't the United States put a condition on that that they talk to their own opposition, which is really what the internal dispute is about, isn't it?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: All I can do there is assure you that we have said privately and publicly in many arenas, on many occasions, that we wholly support -- and the President said it last night -- the negotiated settlements that provide for all the good things that I just described, you know, the respect for each other's borders and the --

Q No, but I'm talking about --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: -- and internal reconciliation --

Q Okay.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Internal reconciliation -- I mean, we -- you know, that's a -- as you know, that's one of the basic principles. The San Jose communique is internal reconciliation.

Q Mrs. Kirkpatrick --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: -- a respect for opposition, the negotiated settlements.

The Nicaraguan government is really very interesting to observe. When -- the last time that they came to the U.N. -- well, not the last time that they -- a year ago -- they've been there twice since -- but in March a year ago -- I guess it was the first time they came to the U.N. -- coincided with the trip of Enders and a very serious American approach to them. Conversations -- this was the period, the Haig-Enders-Kasten -- et cetera, conversations in Mexico, and the proposals and negotiations with Nicaragua. And they, interestingly enough, chose that moment to come to the United Nations to level all sorts of extraordinary and untrue charges against us. And they, as they say, heightened the rhetoric and inflamed the disagreements at exactly that moment. Just that pattern has occurred three times with them.

Q Do you think the --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I wouldn't want to say about the Nicaraguan government what D'Escoto said last night about the President, namely that they simply lied. Because I don't think that's quite the appropriate language which heads of governments and members of administrations talk about each other. But the truth is they do lie -- (laughter) -- and they lie fairly regularly about what they have done and what they are doing. And D'Escoto lied in that interview when he talked about the absence of the 2,000 military advisers that probably is -- as a matter of fact, he's probably right. That's not quite an accurate estimate; that's an underestimation of the number of Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua today.

Q Mrs. Kirkpatrick, I'd like to ask you a couple of questions. When you passed, as you did, on the timing of the Soviet grain offer, is it because you don't know the rationale, or because you do and disagreed with it? You don't duck many questions.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Sometimes -- Ben Wattenburg (phonetic) can handle the questions better. (Laughter.)

Q It's a fair question.

Q And you don't duck many questions. Why are you
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ducking this one?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I haven't -- because I wasn't involved in that discussion at all, but -- and I'm not actually just ducking that question. But I have had the experience of being President of the Security Council for the last month, I've been in New York virtually the whole time.

I don't regularly attend any of the Economic Cabinet Counsel meetings anyway, because I don't have the time to be away from New York. And I missed all the discussions, in fact. So I could not tell you what the thinking was of the Cabinet Councils and the members of the administration who made that decision when they made it, truly.

Q In early March Mr. Enders was on the McNeill-Lehrer Report, and he said that the US goal in El Salvador was not to win the war, it was not to destroy the guerrillas, it was to give them just enough aid to hold the line. What's wrong with trying to defeat the guerrillas, if as you said earlier, they are the source of all the havoc that's being caused in that country?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Mr. Lofton, I have said -- I noticed reading the speeches of the guerrillas, they always end their speeches saying, "Revolution or death, we will win."

Q They don't say "Hold the line"?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Pardon me?

Q They don't say, "Hold the line"?

(Laughter)

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: They don't say, "Hold the line". They don't say, "Hang on until we get --", you know, "We'll provide the shield until the next season's crops come in." They --

Q What is wrong with victory as a policy?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Well, I think, actually, that there is a distortion of Tom Enders' statement. I think what he says is that we will hold the line until democratic institutions have a chance to work their magic and everybody is brought into the democratic process. That's really what he is saying.

Q Which is victory.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: If I may say so. I mean victory is an El Salvador free of war and making it, you know, decisions democratically and respecting constitutional processes; that is victory.

Q Do you think the President --

MS. SMALL: We do have to wind up here, we will just have maybe one last question.

Q Do you think the President cleared the legal hurdles last night in the matter of aid to the Contras? He said that we are not trying to overthrow any government, but you have

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Boland Amendment, and we know that the Contras are, indeed, fighting with the purpose of overthrowing the Sandinista government, and we are aiding the Contras.

So does he clear the hurdle?

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I don't know. I mean I think he just meant what he said. You know, he meant very clearly that this Administration is not, as some people have suggested, breaking the law in any sense.

Q Are those really just words? Because the Contras are --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: No, those are not words.

Q Well, the Contras are of set purpose to try to overthrow the government, and we are aiding the Contras.

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: Well, actually -- I don't even -- words are what we communicate with, and then they are the only -- I think that the -- I don't know the Contras that well, frankly. The Contras that I know have, as a goal, the establishment of democratic institutions in Nicaragua.

And what they would like to do is, in fact, have a negotiated political settlement in which there was internal reconciliation and then there were elections in which the Nicaraguan people could choose their government. I think that is the goal of the Contras.

The goal of the United States in Nicaragua, the minimum goal of the United States in Nicaragua at this point is, I think, to persuade the government of Nicaragua to stop actively trying to destroy their neighbors. And the maximum goal of the United States in Nicaragua is, I suppose, to encourage the Nicaraguan government to keep the promises it made the OAS in relationship to the establishment of democracy.

I don't think any of that involves any contradiction of any law.

Q If you accept that as the goal of the Contras, that's true, I guess you can. You can ascribe that as --

AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK: I do, I do, I mean it quite seriously, when I say that is my understanding of their goals, truly.

MS. SMALL: Okay, we're going to have to wind up. I want to thank you, Ambassador Kirkpatrick, for coming down here and being with us. Thank you all for coming. We will try to have a transcript, as I say, by noon tomorrow.

END

1:55 P.M. EDT