

Senator Dave Durenberger
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

11/4/84

Dear Senator,

Anyone, more any politician, who says publicly that I did what I thought was right but I was wrong is courageous, honest and principled and I think no higher compliment is possible in today's political climate. I write to convey my respect for and appreciation of your last week's statement in Friday's Post.

I am confident that in the coming months you will continue to learn and that from this learning will come closer to what from my own experiences I suggested is our best Latin American policy: leave them entirely alone and be a good neighbor. (Nothing new about this. It was George Washington's recommendation.)

However any of those countries may turn in the short range, whatever the form of its society at any time, in the long run their greatest need is for friendship with the United States. Absent our intervention, this is inevitable, if only because it is in their interest.

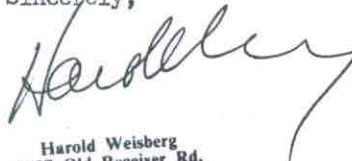
On the other hand, as I believe I've said, if we interfere we drive them to an opposite extreme because we leave them no real alternative.

Your statement that political problems cannot be solved by covert activity is approximately that of the late President Kennedy who, one of his generals told me, called a number of generals in to tell them that political problems cannot be solved by military means.

I do hope that as proposals for covert activity reach you you will ask about each is this really necessary, is this really the best approach to the problem, is this going to do us more harm if it succeeds than if it fails? History shows, I believe, that covert activity is the hasty option of the overly-dedicated and of ideologues who are often dominated by fear and hatred, those who cannot conceive of other means and policies.

I hope your constituents understand and appreciate the honesty, integrity, wisdom and courage in the position you have taken and respect you for it, as I do.

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Rd.
Frederick, MD 21701

DW, JL,

12/4/84

Over a period of time Senator Durenberger and I exchanged views on Latin American policy, particularly about Nicaragua. His were personal letters and I think I sent you copies.

I have no way of knowing what, if any influence what I said had on him but his last weeks statement of position is in accord with the policy I was trying to get him to see is our best policy.

At a time when he may have the intelligence committee chairmanship in the balance he made a clear statement of what his policy is, against covert action in Nicaragua and only "judicious" covert action at any time. At any time this would be courageous, but when it entices powerful forces to keep him out of the chairmanship it is particularly courageous.

He deserves respect and his position is the correct position.

He has made powerful enemies. I hope they are not able to hurt him. I fear they will try.

The ultras will be out to PAC him away when he runs for reelection.

I hope this is a sign of what we may expect from a few other politicians.

It certainly represent a great need at a dangerous time.

The general I refer to is Gavin. I interviewed him, on tape for a book-and-author show in I think 1967, at the American Booksellers Association annual convention, then at the Shoreham, in Washington.

He acknowledged that JFK had ordered the liquidation of the Vietnam adventure. What I say is what JFK told his generals about VN.

HW

Senator Hits 'Contra' Aid

Prospects Seen Further Dimmed

By Joanne Omang
Washington Post Staff Writer

The likely new chairman of the Senate intelligence committee fired a crisp early-warning shot at the White House yesterday, saying he will oppose renewal of covert U.S. aid to rebels or "Contras" fighting the leftist government of Nicaragua.

Such resistance from Sen. David F. Durenberger (R-Minn.) would further dim the already uncertain prospects of the program, which the administration wants to continue but which the Democratic House has rejected three times. Congress has not voted funds for the program since last May.

Durenberger said that judicious use of covert activity is necessary to national security but that Nicaragua is a political problem that cannot be solved through covert activity.

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■ *Miskito leader says U.S. tries to block peace effort.* Page A27

LATIN, From A1

Durenberger's remarks are one of several indications that the new Congress may bring fundamental changes in congressional regulation of the CIA, the National Security Agency and the rest of the U.S. intelligence network.

Durenberger is to replace Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), who generally supported the administration position on intelligence matters despite occasional tough potshots such as his opposition to mining Nicaraguan harbors. Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.), an administration critic, is to replace Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) as ranking minority member.

Reagan generally is losing back-

ers and garnering opponents in other Hill changes affecting foreign operations. Rep. Jack Edwards (R-Ala.), ranking member of the Appropriations defense subcommittee, is retiring. Rep. Lee H. Hamilton (D-Ind.), long a Reagan critic, is to become chairman of the House intelligence committee, and Rep. David R. Obey (D-Wis.), a vocal critic, is to head the Appropriations foreign operations subcommittee.

A special Senate committee on reorganization yesterday recommended that the House and Senate intelligence committees be combined into one joint committee.

It also recommended that the eight-year limit for senators' terms on the intelligence committee be extended to 10 years, a shift that

would allow nine members scheduled to leave to remain. Among those is Sen. John H. Chafee (R-R.I.), who then would become chairman instead of Durenberger.

But Durenberger said he opposes both changes and indicated he will have the support of incoming Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.), when the issues come up in January. "I have talked to Dole. He does respect my judgment," Durenberger said. "The likelihood of [Republicans] trying to reform ourselves is dim to zip."

In an interview, Durenberger said the Nicaraguan covert aid program has "really damaged the oversight process" by forcing the intelligence committees of Congress to become involved in a political issue instead of regulating the process of intelligence-gathering.

Under his leadership, he said, the committee will "choose to play absolutely no role in this [Nicaraguan covert aid], turn it over to the political system and say this is a po-

litical issue . . . Let's chuck this thing overboard and get back to what we're supposed to be doing," Durenberger said.

"If the administration says they don't have any other way to deal with this problem, we're going to say, 'Well, you're not going to do it this way . . . don't use the intelligence process.'"

The covert military aid, which has totaled at least \$73.5 million since the program began in late 1981, according to the Central American Historical Institute, was first justified as necessary to halt Nicaraguan aid to leftist guerrillas in El Salvador. When Congress balked at that reason, the administration shifted and said the program was needed to pressure the leftist Sandinista government to take part in regional peace talks.

But critics have insisted that the administration's secret goal is the same as the rebel groups it backs, to overthrow the Sandinistas. Under U.S. law, it is illegal to conduct

military operations against a government with which the United States maintains relations.

"If that's the problem, then do something about recognizing the government, or change the law to allow attacks on a government you support," Durenberger said. "But don't use the intelligence process. The judicious use of covert action is too important to our national security."

Durenberger initially opposed the program but voted for it last year.

"My instincts said from the beginning this was the wrong thing to do," Durenberger said, "but I became convinced we needed a counterpoint to the Sandinistas . . . We didn't have any other vehicle and I was stuck."

Durenberger reiterated his support for "any effort to undo the Marxist stranglehold [on Nicaragua], but within limits, and those limits are protecting the use of covert action as a national security tool."

U.S. Said to Block Nicaraguan

Miskito Leader Seeks Support From Members of Rival

By Edward Cody
Washington Post Foreign Service 11/30/84

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, Nov. 29—A top leader of Nicaragua's Indian rebels has mounted a campaign to seek separate peace talks with the Sandinista leadership, despite what he describes as opposition from the Reagan administration.

The effort, by Brooklyn Rivera of the Misurasata insurgent group headquartered here, also aims at enlisting broad support from Indian refugees and fighters under the influence of another Indian rebel organization, Misura, headquartered in Honduras under the more conservative leadership of Steadman Fagoth.

Signs of interest in the peace initiative have raised the possibility that Misura might reduce its important military role in fighting alongside the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, the main rebel organization in a U.S.-backed guerrilla war against the Nicaraguan government.

Partly for this reason, Rivera said, the United States has discouraged and sought to block his attempt to unify Indian groups behind the idea of negotiations with Sandinista leaders to seek strictly Indian peace objectives.

More than 20,000 Miskito, Rama and Sumo Indians from Nicaragua's northeastern wilderness have fled to Honduras since the Sandinista government came to power in 1979 and sought to force its own form of revolutionary organization on the Indians' tribal

ways. The Indians have formed a manpower pool for Fagoth's several thousand Misura guerrillas who, along with Rivera's smaller forces in the south, have hit hard against Sandinista Army units along the country's steamy Atlantic coast.

Armed with encouragement from the Indian elders and some Honduran officers, Rivera traveled to Nicaragua last month and met with Daniel Ortega, now president, and other Sandinista leaders. With special permission, he also toured the remote Atlantic region, which used to be home to about 90,000 Indians leading lives largely untouched by Nicaragua's dominant Spanish culture.

Rivera said his 11-day visit left him convinced the Sandinista leadership, although perhaps only to gain tactical advantages in the war and improve its tarnished image, has decided to listen to Indian demands for land rights and increased autonomy. Since Indian goals are different from the FDN's U.S.-backed ideological goals, he added, it is possible to seek separate agreements that would allow Indians to return to their lands in the Atlantic region the guerrilla war in the north.

Rivera's guerrilla forces were part of the Costa Rica-based Revolutionary Democratic Alliance until it split last June over refusal by Rivera and the independent-minded military leader Eden Pastora to join with the FDN as urged by the CIA. Fagoth's forces have been allied with the FDN since the insurgency began on a large scale two years ago in Honduras with CIA funds and advice.

Left without a financial base since indirect CIA funding for the Revolutionary Democrat-

Indian's Peace Effort

Anti-Sandinista Group

ic Alliance ended last summer, Rivera traveled to Honduras in September to launch his peace-making effort. Fagoth, although reluctant, was encouraged by sympathetic Honduran military officers, Rivera said, and key tribal leaders among Indian refugees in Honduras also offered support.

Referring to his interest in peace talks with Nicaragua's leaders, Rivera said: "We are not surrendering to the Sandinistas." . . . What we are doing is trying to take practical steps to reduce the suffering of our people. Why can't we make a political maneuver? Why the others but not us?"

Rivera said he sought advice from the U.S. Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica, before his trip to Nicaragua and was counseled not to go. The embassy refused to comment on any advice to Rivera, saying such contacts are private.

Rivera said he also was discouraged from seeking a separate Indian accommodation with the Sandinistas during a subsequent meeting in Washington with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State L. Craig Johnstone.

But the office of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) acted as intermediary last month in initial contacts with Sandinista leaders and, along with French diplomats, helped arrange a second trip to Honduras last week for a meeting with Fagoth and the Indian council of elders, Rivera said.

On his arrival in Honduras Friday, however, Rivera was detained and held overnight along with a dozen Indian leaders who had preceded him to the Honduran capital. After repeated protests, the group refused to eat

until provided with an explanation from Honduran officers. Instead, Saturday afternoon they were driven to the airport and loaded aboard a Costa Rica-bound airliner by forklift through a back door, he added.

[Johnstone said in Washington, "I didn't discourage him from anything." He added, "We have had no communications with Honduras regarding his comings and goings."

[A high State Department official said Rivera "doesn't speak for the Miskitos; he only speaks for some of them." He added that Rivera is "not a major factor" in the anti-Sandinista insurgency.

[Kennedy wrote a letter to President Roberto Suazo Cordova of Honduras asking him to guarantee Rivera's safety for the meeting, a congressional source said in Washington. In an article Monday in *The New York Times*, Kennedy urged the Reagan administration to back Rivera's effort for humanitarian reasons.]

Rivera attributed the turnabout by Honduran officers to intervention by the CIA, the FDN and Fagoth.

Fagoth has denied he helped arrange Rivera's expulsion. The FDN has made no public comment on the matter.

[Reuter reported from Moscow that the official Soviet news agency Tass said President Reagan had no proof for his assertion that Nicaragua-bound Soviet ships were carrying arms. Tass said Reagan's remarks, made in an interview in *The Washington Times* Wednesday, were part of Washington's attempts to cover up its military presence in Central America.]