

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

April 6, 1983

Mr. Ogden Williams
4621 Q Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Mr. Williams:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me about El Salvador.

As you know, the situation in El Salvador is precarious. Since the October 15, 1979 coup which overthrew President Romero the United States had backed a shifting civilian/military junta, with stated reformist programs, as the best way for El Salvador to institute needed political, social, and economic changes. Increasing terrorism of both the right and the left and the continuing insurgency compounded the already serious economic and social problems facing the government. El Salvador is one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere. Hence, the U.S. has provided economic aid, primarily for agricultural development and in support of the government's agrarian reform program.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the struggle between government forces and the guerrillas will yield no military victor. The Reagan Administration policy of unconditional support for the present regime offers little hope for progress but great possibilities for stalemate or deterioration and continued bloodshed. It also raises the spectre that, absent any indication that this government can, on its own, reestablish order and bring peace to the country, American combat troops will be necessary to fulfill President Reagan's pledge that "we will do whatever is prudent and necessary to ensure the peace and security of the Caribbean area..."

However, I think the President's policy misleads the American people by maintaining that the only alternative to a continuation of their present policy is a Communist victory in El Salvador. Administration policy views the conflict in El Salvador through a narrow prism of anti-communism which distorts the reality and complexity of the problem. It is undeniable that the aid of Cuba and the leftist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua has been and is an important element in the struggle for El Salvador. Yet the roots of the problem extend much deeper to the historical lack of economic and

political opportunities to meet the rising expectations of the majority of the population. Marxist revolution takes advantage of such inequality and deprivation to provide it fertile ground. We must be able to respond with positive and active initiatives born of our pluralistic society and democratic traditions. While I was pleased by the thrust of the Administration's new Caribbean Basin initiative with its recognition that economic development is a key to stability in Central America, unfortunately for El Salvador, this long term solution cannot be expected to yield short run results.

We must pursue a constructive and peaceful alternative; we must press for a negotiated settlement. My support for negotiations is not inconsistent with, nor does it imply a reversal of my previous and continued support for U.S. assistance programs, including military equipment and professional training of Salvadoran troops in this country, and our vitally important economic and development assistance efforts. As I see it, negotiations offer the best way out of the escalating cycle of violence. Our current policy is a dead end and we must open another avenue if we hope to eventually help put an end to the turmoil in El Salvador. Negotiations between the two sides would serve to strengthen the relative positions of moderate elements vis-a-vis their more radicalized military partners and, it is hoped, the struggle for El Salvador would begin to shift from the battlefield to the political arena.

Thus, I have cosponsored a Senate resolution declaring that it should be the policy of the United States government to encourage unconditional negotiations for the purpose of achieving a cease-fire and a political settlement to the conflict in El Salvador and I will do all I can to promote acceptance of this policy.

Undeniably the election turnout in the constituent assembly elections was impressive. However, this first step in the democratic process is not the end of El Salvador's difficulties. The war continues, thus I maintain that negotiations are still the route to peace in a situation where military victory by either side is unlikely.

Last year Congress conditioned the continuation of our military aid relationship on El Salvador's progress in a number of important human rights and reform areas. As the most recent Presidential certification demonstrates, El Salvador has made progress in some areas, i.e. holding reasonably free and fair elections and progress on the reform

Mr. Ogden Williams
Page 3

program, particularly the land reform despite efforts by conservative elements in the Constituent Assembly to dismantle it. In other areas demonstrable progress is totally lacking. These conditions provide a clear picture of the directions the United States believes the government of El Salvador should be going if support for the aid program is to be maintained in this country and in the Congress.

While I continue to support some level of military aid to El Salvador, the Administration's current request for an additional \$110 million in military aid, beyond the \$26 million provided in the current budget, is vastly out of proportion with our interests and objectives in that country. I cannot support this increased level of aid nor a significant addition to the number of U.S. military advisors serving there.

I appreciated hearing from you on this important issue.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Glenn".

John Glenn
United States Senator

JG/pcm