

## LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT AND THE CENTRAL AMERICAN QUESTION\*

General Paul Gorman

**NARRATOR:** It's a great pleasure to welcome all of you here and to welcome one of our neighbors from Afton, Virginia. General Paul Gorman is a cultivator of the soil and of many good things in Afton. We are delighted that he has retired to that location. His retirement, however, has been sporadic because he has been called upon almost constantly to testify before congressional committees and to undertake advisory functions.

He was born in New York, came to Virginia, and is a graduate of West Point. He was commander in chief of our Southern Forces with headquarters in Panama where he became directly involved in the issues and problems of Central America. He was assistant to two chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Generals Vessey and Jones. He is also one of the editors of the Pentagon Papers. He taught at West Point in the field of East Asian government and politics. He has been a member of the intelligence community as a national intelligence officer and has held a number of other positions of great responsibility. His topic is a review of some of the institutional and organizational matters that he discussed before the Senate Armed Services Committee, headed by Senator Nunn, and then he should feel free to move on to the subjects that concern us all involving Central America.

**GENERAL GORMAN:** Thank you very much. I am privileged to be asked down here on Mr. Jefferson's birthday. I will talk briefly about the issues that I discussed with the Senate Armed Services Committee at the end of January, and then speak more specifically about the problems of Central America. They are somewhat related, although I must confess that I was dismayed to be invited to a hearing on national strategy by Senator Nunn, and end up discussing the content of a front page article of *The Washington Post*. But that's typical of appearances before the Congress.

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I was invited to Washington to discuss low intensity conflict, a term of art in Washington these days, which deserves an explanation. At the end of its last session, Congress passed a law which I would characterize as one of its worst pieces of legislation in recent history; it ranked together with tax reform in its ill-conception. This law mandated the creation of an office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, and the creation of a new unified command to deal with Special Operations Forces. I told Senator Nunn and his colleagues that what this country needed least in its present exigency was yet one more assistant secretary of defense and that probably the next lowest in priority was another unified command. That latter entails additional bureaucracy in terms of staff generals, admirals, sergeants major, and drivers. But Congress in its great wisdom decreed this to be the Department of Defense's newest law.

Perhaps more germane to the specific interests of the Miller Center, Congress expressed its sense in the same legislation that the president should be equipped with a new board in the National Security Council, a Board for Low Intensity Conflict composed of representatives from all Cabinet officers who might be concerned. This particular Board is the subject of a draft National Security Decision Directive. It has been in draft for a couple of months waiting signature while the lawyers argue over its constitutional and legislative implications. It is not clear, for example, whether this Board is an operating arm that simply executes policy, or whether it also formulates policy. Since late February, the word has been that the draft will be signed imminently, but it is still under discussion. I will explain some of the reasons that have led to this stalemate.

First, the terminology "low intensity" is unfortunate, but we don't have any better way of talking about terrorism, insurgency, and regional wars. This genre of conflict involves the use of weaponry of destructiveness which falls into a lesser category than that which involves the use of our conventional forces and certainly our nuclear forces. A country that possesses a nuclear arsenal has to be ready to deal with terrorism, insurgency, and regional wars as well as to meet challenges of more intense conflict. The trouble of course, is that "low intensity conflict" is a term of no particular significance to anyone other than the United States. Certainly one cannot talk to a Nicaraguan, a Honduran, or a Salvadoran about "low intensity conflict." Their conflict is, as far as they are concerned, all they can handle. Moreover, a U.S. national who is the object of a terrorist attack obviously does not consider the indignities visited upon him as "low intensity" in any sense. Nonetheless, it is now a term enshrined in law, and about to become an additional subject for institutions such as this, engaged in political studies.

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It is helpful to remember that no president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt has been able to avoid serious domestic political problems arising from involvements with the Third World. In some instances these difficulties may have been aided and abetted by the Soviet Union, but in all cases they had origins in radical political, religious, or racial forces which were entirely beyond the Kremlin's control. I might observe, of course, that our last two presidents have had to cope with some such "non-Soviet crises," if you will, of unprecedented difficulty. It is not exaggerating to say that these sort of Third World developments brought both presidents to their knees. Most of us think very little about these, and our intellectual institutions are not well prepared for them.

This year we celebrate the constitutional bicentennial; the Founding Fathers clearly saw a distinction between the state of peace and the state of war. As I reread the Constitution, the fact that the Founders paid attention to the problems of the transition from peace to war, and were careful of balancing the powers of the executive and the legislative in this respect impresses me deeply. Reference to this understanding complicates our dealing with problems like terrorism. While we may consider ourselves at peace, there are well armed, malevolent groups, and conceivably even nations, which consider themselves at war with us. They are prepared to commit violent acts upon the United States, its property, and its citizens wherever they may find them, for political purposes. While we may be engaged in "the pursuit of happiness" during a trip abroad, these people are conspiring to kill and destroy us.

These groups have access to increasingly sophisticated and dangerous forms of weaponry. The terminology "low intensity" is maladroit for thinking about future situations where these terrorist groups will have access to weapons of mass destruction. It is not at all unlikely that some of the chemical weapons that have been employed in the Iran-Iraq war, for example, might find their way into the hands of one or more of the terrorist groups which both of those countries support. Terrorist groups have announced their intention to visit violence upon the United States. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that nuclear weapons will fall into their hands. The explosion which destroyed the Marine barracks at Beirut was not nuclear, but in the opinion of the investigators, it was perhaps the most intense explosive of a conventional kind that has ever been used, and certainly, the most intense form of explosive that one could package into a pickup truck. So terrorism is a threat today and it will be an increasing threat in the future as the weaponry available to perpetrators becomes more dangerous.

For the purpose of this discussion, insurgency refers to attempts to change the form of foreign governments. Insurgency engages the

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interests of the United States where and when the government under attack is one that we are pledged to support. Our policy-makers consider when or if it's in our direct interest to maintain an endangered regime. Generally imperiled democracies fall in this category. I believe that the United States has a distinct interest in supporting democracies abroad simply because that form of government is more likely than others to be committed to the principles which underwrite this country, such as respect for law, the individual, and the moral order in international affairs.

In the last decade, a form of insurgency which peculiarly engages the interest of the United States has arisen. It involves paramilitary criminality on an international scale, specifically the formation of large cartels of criminals for the purposes of bringing narcotics into the United States to take advantage of the American market. The problem of narcotics affects everybody and is everywhere: not far from here in Orange County, as you may know, a group of Colombians had purchased a horse farm through a third party realtor, and converted the barn into what is referred to as a "cocaine laboratory." That is, they set up a large scale narcotic factory. They brought in coca paste in bulk, and processed it with diethyl ether into crystalline cocaine in Orange, Virginia.

I was in Rhode Island about a year ago just at the time the state legislature passed a resolution condemning the President of the United States and the administration for its Central American policy. It enjoined the administration to eschew further intervention in the affairs of Latin America. As I was speaking to a Rotary Club, I was asked what I thought of the legislation which had just been passed that morning. I remarked that I thought it was passing strange that the people of Rhode Island in particular would enjoin the administration against intervention when it seemed to me that Rhode Islanders were the object of intervention themselves.

I pointed to the problems of a community called Central Falls, Rhode Island. In 1981 the Latin population in Central Falls was less than five percent, but today twenty-five percent of the town is Colombian. Most of them are illegal aliens, and this immigrant population has sheltered a small cell that represents the large narcotic trafficking families of Colombia. According to the chief of police of Metropolitan Boston, a small group of those people moved \$100 million cash out of the United States in 1984. This amount represented the gains from cocaine trafficking and marketing in a region from New Haven northward through metropolitan Boston. Wholesale pirating of the United States, right in the midst of Rhode Island!

Getting back to the issue of insurgency, contrary to what we had been led to believe by a decade of diplomatic reporting, the

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governments of the countries within which these noxious substances are produced have reached the same conclusions our government has, which is that the use of these kinds of narcotics is inconsistent with democracy. In Colombia, Bolivia, and to a lesser extent in Peru, the governments have concluded that, as a matter of policy, they should do all within their power to eliminate and to suppress this form of criminality—despite the fact, of course, that large sums of cash dollars flow back to the narcotic trafficking families in those countries. But these dollars represent wealth which is outside of the planned economy. It is not taxed and only serves to aggrandize the already rich, to pull the *campesinos* away from productive agriculture, and most importantly, to seduce the youth.

What in effect has happened in Colombia and Bolivia and, to a less extent, in Peru is that the narcotic traffickers have fouled their own nest by selling the by-products of the cocaine processing business in their own country. There is a product called *basuco* which is particularly pernicious; it is made by dipping marijuana in the residue of the cocaine processing. It is highly regarded as an aphrodisiac, and the young males will buy it, especially if they are a middle or upper middle class with access to money. It is a very dangerous kind of substance because the by-products of the chemicals used in converting coca leaf into cocaine frequently include such things as gasoline with tetraethyllead. That chemical produces lead poisoning, and brain damage after just a few weeks of use. It is highly addictive, and it is a hallucinogenic. There have been a rash of suicides in Bogota of young men flinging themselves off of apartment buildings in the belief that they could fly. The University of Bogota has been closed twice because of the prevalence of this substance on campus. Political parties are being bought out by the criminal cartels. In 1984 President Betancourt, the previous president, asked for a declaration of a state of emergency and turned the problem of the drug traffickers over to the minister of defense, committed the armed forces to attack the narcotic traffickers; in effect, he put his country at war against them. His successor has continued those policies, and the narcotic traffickers for their part have retaliated and waged war on the government of Colombia.

Carlos Lehder Rivas, a Colombian who was recently extradited to the United States, appeared on Colombian television in the camp of a guerrilla group called M-19 surrounded by men in uniform carrying arms. He called upon all of his countrymen to join in a great patriotic war against the United States which had, as he put it, "showered poisons on the crops of Colombia and threatened all Colombians with incarceration in American jails." By this he was referring to the extradition treaty which has been signed between our governments.

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Carlos Lehder Rivas is the head of one of the large drug rings. Like his other colleagues, he has contested efforts to eliminate narcotic trafficking by joining forces with insurgents. He has tried to generate a commonality of interests between long-standing insurgent forces like M-19—which is the group that Fidel Castro has been supporting since the 1960s in Colombia—and four of the other large armed groups in opposition to the Colombian government. They all have a common cause with the narcotic traffickers and in one sense or another, have joined forces with them. The narcotic traffickers provide money and arms to the guerrillas and the guerrillas provide security to the narcotics traffickers.

In the fall of 1985, these M-19 guerrillas attacked the Colombian Supreme Court, and killed twelve justices and close to seventy other people. The attack was symbolic in a sense; the guerrillas were interested in destroying the records of the Supreme Court which might be used subsequently in extradition proceedings.

The issue in that struggle is the very survival of democracy in Colombia. There are many Americans who profess to believe that the outcome doesn't make any difference to us, but three-fourths of all the illegal drugs sold in the United States come from Colombia. I believe firmly that the survival of democracy in Colombia, and their government's success in its efforts to suppress this kind of traffic, in one way or another, are very much our vital interest. I believe that we ought to give them any and all assistance that is within our laws to provide.

This brings me back to a point that I have already discussed: our laws are not well couched to address low intensity conflict. I mentioned the Constitution and its distinction between peace and war. We have a constitutional difficulty in dealing with the twilight zone of criminal and political violence that cases such as the Colombian present to us.

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which presumably would be the principal instrument of policy to which any president would have recourse for the purposes of coming to the assistance of the government of Colombia, severely constrains our response. Most of the Security Assistance funds appropriated under the Foreign Assistance Act that we provide goes to bribe the Jews and the Arabs so that they don't cut each other's throats. Over half of the Security Assistance budget goes to Israel and Egypt. Most of the remaining aid pays rent to nations that provide military bases for us: the Philippines, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Greece, etc. Over eighty percent of the Security Assistance budget serves purposes very remote from low intensity conflict, if you will. The total for Latin America is something under five percent and it includes very heavily conditioned

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aid. In order to qualify for assistance, a nation in this hemisphere has to deal with issues like debt retirement. If the country has not been prompt in meeting its international debt obligations, it isn't eligible for security assistance in any respect.

In a country like Colombia, still torn with insurgency that goes back to the end of World War II, with a heavy debt (not as large as many countries, but still a heavy debt), and with an increasingly chaotic internal situation, many financial problems arise. Additionally, the prices of the agricultural products that Colombia exports and depends upon for earning foreign exchange are depressed. This outlook makes their ability to meet their debt payments problematic. If anybody remembers the TV commercials that presented Juan Valdez, the fellow up in the highlands picking the coffee beans one by one, well, Juan isn't there any more, because he can make thirteen times as much per day growing marijuana or picking the coca leaves. Colombia's difficulty is, of course, that much of the money that is earned in drugs goes into hands that will not use it to repay the nation's debts to American bankers.

In any event, the Colombians wanted from the United States one radar, *a* radar. When the present administration came to office, President Betancourt made that petition to the Vice President of the United States, Mr. Bush, who said the U. S. would provide it. Now, anybody would think that a nation that spends over \$300 billion a year on defense would have a radar somewhere that could be made available to the Colombians. To this day, despite repeated official visits, and repeated reaffirmations that the radar was on the way, we have yet to deliver the radar. The importance of the radar is simply that every day some tens, and on occasions fifty to one hundred airplanes depart illegally from the soil of Colombia toward the United States, carrying cocaine or marijuana. All the Colombian government was really interested in doing was to establish some air traffic control over its own air space. We have not been able to help them.

They asked for another bit of help to train elements of the armed forces for action against the narcotics traffickers. The idea was to take an elite group of troops, set them aside, and provide them the sort of training that they would need to enter the guerilla-guarded cocaine factories or laboratories used by guerrillas for the purposes of seizing the substance while it was there in large aggregation. One raid of this sort in 1984 captured several hundred tons of this product. It is clear that if law enforcers can address cocaine while it is in the laboratory, they are going to be in far better shape than trying to deal with it after it has gotten into the United States, and broken down into pound sacks for distribution through the marketing system. The problem at hand for the government of Colombia was the fact that their police organs were deeply penetrated by the narcotic

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traffickers. Their request of the United States, though, was to provide training. Unfortunately the Foreign Assistance Act prohibits any person belonging to the Department of Defense from engaging in the training of an individual who would be used for police work.

So here you have one of those anomalies in foreign policy in which a foreign government has charged its Minister of Defense with the enforcement (since martial law has been declared in Colombia). Legally, the problem there is a matter for the Minister of Defense, who wants to train specific groups for the purposes of enforcing law. He came to me and asked for help, but I was unable to provide it. I think it is true that every commander in chief of U.S. forces deployed abroad has testified over the years that Section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act—the pertinent law—should be changed. The law should permit us, under whatever safeguards the Congress wants to stipulate, to provide military training for police organizations that are combatting terrorism or narcotic trafficking. But the law says that shall not be; instead the training has to be performed by the Central Intelligence Agency or one of the other organs of government. I certainly do not want to seem to be deprecatory of those agencies in the work that they do, but this kind of training isn't the same thing in the eyes of the recipient. They want to do business with their colleagues in the military. The problem of Section 660 is a difficulty for us in Pakistan, the Philippines, and in any country where this question of action against terrorists or insurgents is an issue.

Finally, I would like to move to the other topic of my presentation. What is it that we ought to do about the issues that affect us in Central America? I'd make three brief points:

First, we ought to understand that the issue there is regional. It is not a question of Nicaragua nor a question of El Salvador; it is a question of regional peace. That is certainly the way Central Americans see it. The government of the United States, and this administration particularly, has made a serious mistake in my view in presenting the issue in terms of specific countries. Thus in 1983 it was a question of whether we were going to support the Salvadorans or not, and now it is a question of whether we are going to support the Nicaraguan rebels or not. The question really is: What are we going to do about democracies in Central America? During the time I was in Panama, official delegation after official delegation went there asking for briefings before they traveled on to San Salvador. I always began my dialogue with those delegations by saying "You are going to the wrong place. Rather than going to San Salvador where the issues are fairly easy to understand, where the American people have received a great deal of information (and misinformation) and where it is very difficult to shed new light on the situation, you should go to San Jose, Costa Rica. There you can see the real issues. In San

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Jose, Costa Rica you are dealing with a country which is the quintessential democracy; it represents what we would like all our neighbors to be.

They are really committed to the democratic forms of government and the realities of personal freedom and respect of law. Costa Rica is a country which has constitutionally outlawed armies and armed forces. It has no armed forces as such, and is therefore particularly vulnerable to terrorism, insurgency and subversive activities of all sorts. At the moment, it is peculiarly vulnerable to narcotics trafficking. Costa Rica is becoming one of the new narcotics centers. And how shall we respond? Again, Section 660 makes it very difficult for us to get involved.

We are dealing here with the question of whether democracy will survive in Central America at all. There are many prominent Americans who simply believe that it doesn't matter. I maintain that it does. I think that our long history of abuse of that part of the world in and of itself calls for a policy of support for democracy today. More importantly, I believe that democratic neighbors assure our sons and daughters of a better chance of peace in their times than would be the case were those neighbors Marxist-Leninist garrison states of the sort that Fidel Castro's Cuba has become, or of the sort that Nicaragua is en route to becoming.

The last issue refers to the defense of democracy and the Reagan doctrine. I have been very critical of the administration's policy in this respect. I am deeply suspicious of doctrines and formulas that attempt to embrace, on the one hand, the phenomenon of Afghanistan, and the other, the phenomenon in Nicaragua. Each case is very different, and they are certainly neither like the struggles in Kampuchea or Angola. They are very different. So I am suspicious of doctrines in the first instance, and particularly concerned about the way that the administration has undertaken its policy. Guns are far less important in an insurgency than politics, but we have put guns first. The way that the problem has been put to the people of the United States and the Congress makes guns a priority.

It may be strange for a military man to argue in this direction, but I would say that a "guns-first-policy" has very little prospect of succeeding in that kind of a milieu. There has to be some kind of a political front. Ten percent of the Nicaraguan people have left their country and by doing so, have voted with their feet. In Dade County, Florida alone there are ten thousand Nicaraguan children in the school system. Nicaragua is a country prone to revolution if there ever was one. So the question is, if we want to change the government of Managua, should we put together a revolution? Mr. Jefferson would

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know how to do that. He wouldn't begin by worrying about where the muskets were. With that I'll stop talking and open for questions.

**QUESTION:** General Gorman, recently you spoke about the skill with which the Russians have infiltrated the region, and I recall you mentioned specifically the medical area. Would you like to comment further about that?

**GENERAL GORMAN:** If we try to go back to the Monroe Doctrine and attempt to say that this hemisphere is off-limits to all Russian arms, it will not work. The Russians present a problem that is far more subtle than arms. Rest assured that anybody who wants to get into the business of political violence can get arms from non-Soviet sources these days. If the Soviets and the Eastern Bloc won't purvey the arms to them, there are plenty available from the Libyans or the Middle Easterners, and if that doesn't work, Brazil can provide them. Arms are not the issue. The issue is the political organization and thrust. My point is that the Soviets have been very adroit in putting their best foot forward in this hemisphere, even in Nicaragua where the people are peculiarly sensitive to foreign intervention: five armed invasions by the United States. The Russians have appeared to them in other ways, including a Soviet-staffed field hospital.

There are 120 some odd Russians in Nicaragua and 75 of them are in a field hospital in Chinandega in northwestern Nicaragua. So to a people sensitive to foreign intervention, the Russians appear as humanitarians. When a Sandinista soldier falls in battle, he is evacuated to this hospital, and through it he has access to the best care East European and Soviet medicine can provide. The impact of this aid on attitudes among the Nicaraguans can't be disregarded. Just to the north in Honduras, there is an urgent need for modern medicine, and that is true, generally speaking, throughout the region. It is, incidentally, not a function of the availability of modern hospitals and doctors because the U.S. has trained many local doctors. It is more of a function of organization: The modern hospitals and the doctors are all concentrated in the major cities, and the medical problems are out in the countryside. Certainly there is no medical assistance like the Soviets provide to the Sandinistas available for the Nicaraguans whom this administration is supporting. It seems strange to me that the United States has not seen fit to make better use of one of its strong suits. As a society, we have marvelous medicine, and through it we could have an enormous impact in that part of the world.

Recently there was an earthquake in El Salvador. A U.S. Army Mobile Surgical Hospital (M.A.S.H.), fully equipped with plenty of helicopters, lots of doctors, and other facilities was just across the mountains, within thirty minutes by helicopter. We could have been a

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major factor in dealing with the 10,000 casualties in the city of San Salvador alone, but the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 foreclosed such assistance. Those doctors, nurses, and facilities were not brought to bear on the problem, and I think that's deplorable.

There have been similar instances since in Colombia and Ecuador. We ought to have, in my view, a hospital in Pakistan today to deal with the problem of Soviet mine casualties from Afghanistan. In short, you see again that the so-called Reagan Doctrine is all guns, but there are many other dimensions where I think we could readily provide assistance.

**NARRATOR:** One of the deeper tragedies is that there are some models in the area. I don't know if you visited Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia, but people from all around the world come to look at it because it trains doctors and provides medicine for peoples of a developing country. It could be copied and followed elsewhere.

**QUESTION:** How has the defense and the operation of the Panama Canal fared since the signing of the Treaty? Did all the disasters that the proponents of the Treaty said were going to occur actually happen?

**GENERAL GORMAN:** No. There were, however, two "disappointments," if you will. One of them, entirely Panamanian, was the discovery that the Panama Canal was not the goose that could lay the golden egg. The Canal in effect produces very few revenues for the Panamanian government. The second surprise was that the physical condition of the plant was so poor that large outlays will be required to keep it operating. Thus, as poor as the revenues are these years, they are going to be even more slender in ten or fifteen years. Panama has the largest per capita debt in Latin America, and Panamanians understand that that capital investment cannot come out of the proceeds from the canal, or out of their nations' revenues. Given their debt posture, they are unlikely to attract loans. So their present effort is to have the United States and Japan jointly fund a recapitalization of the canal with them. As some of you who are in the engineering business can appreciate, the cement that has been under water since 1915 is deteriorating rather rapidly. There have been actual closures of the canal simply because of engineering problems. Repairs require capital, a scarce resource in Panama.

**COMMENT:** I think the Panamanians are rather clever because the Japanese use the canal as much or more than anybody else. It is even more in their best interest to keep it going. I think they've come up with a very good idea.

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**QUESTION:** I'm delighted to hear what you said about the political options to the problems in Central America. I'm particularly glad that you said that we should put politics ahead of guns. Isn't there an opportunity that we've already been missing in supporting the Contadora group, and the initiative of President Arias of Costa Rica? From a distance it seems to me that we have obstructed the Contadora effort when we could have helped it.

**GENERAL GORMAN:** Yes. The more subtle statements by spokesmen of the administration point out that we wanted the peace initiative to be exclusively Latin. My position has always been that such a hands-off approach is self-defeating. If the Mexicans are allowed to dictate the terms of any settlement down there, the outcome will be inconsistent with the interests of the United States because, to put it bluntly, the Mexicans mean us no good in the region. Yet I think that the U.S. could have co-opted the Contadora process, joined it, maneuvered within it, and turned it into an instrument to further our goals. The acceptance of the regionality of the issues down there was fundamental and that is something this administration has never got around to backing. I've been to countless meetings in Washington where I've heard people say the right words, and where the right kinds of papers were in front of the policy-makers, but they would walk right out the door, get in front of a microphone, and start talking about winning the war in El Salvador as though that were the crux of the issue. They would make appeals for the next forty million dollars worth of guns for the Contras, as though that were the issue. Guns are not the heart of issue. The issue is much larger and more important, and of greater strategic significance: a free, democratic Central America.

**QUESTION:** What type of influence does Elliot Abrams have? Is he a spokesman or a policy-maker?

**GENERAL GORMAN:** As Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, he is responsible for several country teams that operate in the region, and all our ambassadors there report to him. But like his predecessors, he has become a creature of Congress: he lives from one congressional vote to another. Now again, I don't want to appear to be personally critical; I'm trying to describe an institution. I like Elliot, and I consider myself on good terms of friendship and professional respect with him. The fact of the matter is that the activities of the congressional committees drive his time horizons. He has to deal with the Foreign Relations Committees, the Appropriation Committees and currently with the Special Investigating Committees. Everybody is right now caught up in that witch hunt. I have got to testify myself in a few days, as a matter of fact. He therefore has relatively little time to spend on larger issues of

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strategy, long-term planning, or indeed trying to think through where the present course of action is going to take us.

**QUESTION:** In the short run, is it practical for us to try to introduce our form of democracy in Central America, where small and powerful elites control large numbers of very poor peasants? In other words, democracy requires a certain ability of citizens to make decisions and choices which seems to be lacking. Things may change in the long run but what about the short-term perspectives?

**GENERAL GORMAN:** This short-run problem obviously plagued the Founding Fathers; Mr. Jefferson was concerned about the propensity of his countrymen to spend most of their time getting drunk, as I recall. I would respond on Central America with fairly strong optimism. Your characterization of the society down there is no longer true. There is now a great deal of dynamism. To be sure the vestiges of oligarchy remain, and I think it probably would be fair to say that most of the wealth in these countries remains in the hands of a few families. But the governments in the region supported by the United States have undertaken efforts to change that, and I think substantial progress has been made on such issues as land reform. There has also been substantial progress introducing new industries into the region. Foreign investments in Costa Rica are up this year by a factor of two-thirds and much of it is in electronic subassembly. That's a kind of hopeful trend.

Your characterization is certainly not true of Costa Rica. It is more true of Honduras or Salvador, and conceivably of Guatemala, a nation that has another problem of the indigenous ethnic groupings.

**QUESTION:** What about Nicaragua?

**GENERAL GORMAN:** Nicaragua is a very poor and disadvantaged country. Probably of all of the countries in the region, it is the one that has the most serious economic and social difficulties, and therefore was the one that was the most prone for the revolution of 1979. We must remember that regardless of what the United States does, there are going to be people in the hills with guns in Nicaragua for the foreseeable future. So I would urge you to consider prospects for social dynamism and further, I argue that the United States ought to be a force for change in the region. I think we can be as we have been in the past. If our policy-makers in Washington took that as their touchstone, our policies would be different.

**QUESTION:** What should we do in the short term and in concrete terms about the military situation in Nicaragua?

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**GENERAL GORMAN:** We now have a commitment to those people who are fighting on our behalf in Nicaragua. My criticism of the policy is that if they succeed, we're not ready to deal with success. We don't know what would happen if the Sandinista government began to disintegrate all of a sudden. There would be large-scale defections to the Contras. We have no means of feeding additional supporters. Nor have we made plans for dealing with failure. If the Contras are successfully combatted by the fairly formidable Sandinista military and internal security apparatus, with Cuban advice, and Contras come streaming northward into Honduras, I would predict that the Honduran army would fight to keep them in Nicaragua. Then we would have one U. S. supported force fighting another U. S. supported force, with the Sandinistas picking at both. We're not psychologically, militarily, or in any other sense prepared for that calamity.

**QUESTION:** What would be the consequences of the failure of the Contras?

**GENERAL GORMAN:** There would be more conflicts, such as war between the Hondurans and the Contras, or war between the Hondurans and the Sandinistas in hot pursuit of the Contras. More insurgency everywhere. It is a bleak picture overall.

**QUESTION:** I would like to move to another topic. Given the history of this country what possible chance do we have of exerting any influence there?

**GENERAL GORMAN:** I think American influence is a given, in any of those countries, no matter what happens. We are part of their consciousness. Our music, our literature, our schools, and our way of looking at the world are part of the whole *leitmotif* of their societies; these things are inescapable whether they like it or despise it, whether they are for it or against it. In political and economic terms, Nicaragua has almost nothing in common with the Soviet Union; it doesn't even have large agricultural crops of which the Soviets might take advantage as is the case of the Cuban sugar. Both the Nicaraguans who live in their country and those who have left it have a consciousness of the United States which will remain for generations, and very little of what the Cubans or the Soviets are doing is aimed at eliminating that. On the contrary, there seems to be a deliberate effort to educate the Americans on what is going on in Nicaragua. There is openness and Americans are going down to see what is going on.

**NARRATOR:** This session exemplifies Mr. Jefferson's spirit of intellectual openness and Mr. Miller's desire to bring authorities with unique political, military, and economic experience to the University through the activities of the Center to talk about the great issues.

*General Paul Gorman*

The Miller Center is conceived as a meeting place of people who look on things with their own strong feelings and in their own strong ways. Sometimes the Center's friends and visitors are very surprised when they come together with someone who has had a unique personal experience that on some points he actually agrees with their own prejudices and viewpoints and on other points he differs. But that's what Mr. Miller and Mr. Jefferson wanted and General Gorman has helped us realize that goal. Thank you, General.

