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U.S. House Members Postpone Debate On Military Aid To El Salvador Until September

by Deborah Tyroler

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In a June 7 letter to US President George Bush, nine Democrat members of the House of Representatives said that debate on reduction of military aid to El Salvador would be postponed until September to encourage the Salvadoran government and the rebels to reach a peace accord. In the interim, the congresspersons proposed a freeze on \$90 million in non-disbursed military aid to El Salvador. According to the Democrat leaders, non-disbursed funds should be channeled into a demobilization and transition fund to facilitate reintegration of the rebels into civilian life. Releasing the military aid, they argued, would lift pressure on the Salvadoran government to seriously negotiate with the rebels, as well as to prosecute defendants in the Jesuit murder case. The letter was signed by Joseph Moakley (Mass.), chairperson of the House Rules Committee and head of a special committee on El Salvador; Robert Torricelli (NJ), chairperson of the Foreign Affairs subcommittee on hemispheric affairs; David Obey (WI), chairperson of the Appropriations Committee; Dante Fascell (FL), chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee; John P. Murtha (PA); David Bonior (D-MI); Lee Hamilton (IN); Gerry Studds (MA); and, Stephen Solarz (NY). For FY1991, the Congress approved \$294.2 million in aid to El Salvador. Of the total, \$85 million is labeled military aid. The Bush administration is requesting \$308 million in aid to the Central American country for FY1992. Requested military aid is \$85 million. On June 12, in a 10 to 9 vote, the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee rejected a proposal submitted by Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT) which would have further restricted military aid to El Salvador in FY1992. (Basic data from AFP, 06/07/91, 06/12/91)

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