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Summary Of Developments On Future Of Us Military Aid To El Salvador

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Feb. 18: In a letter to US Secretary of State James Baker, Sens. Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT), expressed opposition to further military aid to El Salvador. [Dodd is chair of the Senate subcommittee on western hemispheric affairs and Leahy is chair of a subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee.] The Bush administration has requested approval for US$40 million in military aid to El Salvador for FY1993, which begins next Oct. 1, in addition to another US $35 million for the remainder of FY1992. The senators said that further military aid to El Salvador would have a negative impact on the more urgent task of procuring funds for reconstruction. The legislators noted that Congress approved US$100 million in military aid in 1991, US$30 million of which has yet to be disbursed. Dodd and Leahy suggested that these funds, along with all proposed new military aid, be transferred to a Peace Transition Fund to support implementation of the peace accords. Feb. 25: In statements made before the Senate, Secretary of State Baker urged approval of continued military aid to El Salvador. He warned that ending aid to the Salvadoran armed forces would endanger the peace process. Baker said that all future military aid will be "non-lethal." Next, he warned that the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) was not complying with the timetable for concentration of its combatants into designated demobilization enclaves. A coalition of 67 US-based church, labor, and policy organizations delivered a letter to all members of Congress calling for an end to US military aid to El Salvador. The groups asserted that Congress should instead allocate aid for national reconstruction. The letter said that reconstruction and humanitarian assistance should be channeled through non-governmental and multilateral organizations, especially organizations affiliated with the UN, and priority should be given to projects which strengthen implementation of the peace accords. The letter said, "It is especially important that the US Agency for International Development (AID) avoid the temptation of over-emphasizing the continuation of its own bilateral programs rather than fully supporting multilateral mechanisms." Finally, the groups called on the Bush administration to lend full support to the National Peace Commission (COPAZ), the Truth Commission, and the ad hoc commission charged with reviewing the records of members of the Salvadoran security forces. They asserted that Washington should provide the groups investigating human rights abuses committed by the armed forces with any pertinent "classified information" in its possession. Feb. 28: Reps. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Jim McDermott (D-Wash.), together with 96 other congresspersons, submitted a letter to Secretary of State Baker calling for suspension of US military aid to El Salvador. (Basic data from Agence France Presse, 02/18/92; Inter Press Service, 02/25/92, 02/26/92; Spanish news service EFE, 02/18/92, 02/28/92)