HEARINGS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE
NINETY-SIXTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION
ON
S. 2012
TO AMEND THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961 TO AU-
THORIZE ASSISTANCE IN SUPPORT OF PEACEFUL AND DEMO-
CRATIC PROCESSES OF DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL AMERICA,
WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO REESTABLISHING CONDITIONS
OF STABILITY AND GROWTH IN THE NICARAGUAN ECONOMY,
AND TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR
OTHER COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIB-
BEAN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

DECEMBER 6 AND 7, 1979

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Nevertheless, we still have an opportunity to forge a constructive relationship with the new Nicaraguan government. This foreign aid bill is the first major test of our willingness to do so. It is this country’s first chance to demonstrate that we understand and support the efforts of the Nicaraguan people to reconstruct a society with dignity, equality, and a degree of freedom never before present in their country.

Financial assistance to Nicaragua is a wise investment politically and developmentally. Politically, we have an unusual opportunity to assist a government which represents a clear majority of the citizens, in the belief that persons and governments which receive U.S. foreign aid, the Nicaraguan government will not merely be able to reach, assist, and involve their people in their own development and be committed to doing so. Gone are the days in Nicaragua when our development assistance was used for other than development purposes.

Even the most cynical observer, given a chance to witness the changes taking place today all over Nicaragua, would have to be impressed. In light of the disorder, factionalism, and reprisals usually present in revolutionary environments, no one would have expected that the new Nicaragua, financially bankrupt as it is, would still be so cohesive months after the end of a devastating war. I had also been concerned that after fifty years of oppression by the Somoza regime, Nicaraguans would not have the experience or the institutions at the local level upon which to base rapid reconstruction and development of the country.

But when I visited Nicaragua in September for the United Nations, I found—a remarkable number of people had already been accomplished in the country’s villages and urban communities. Six weeks after the end of the war, which had devastated almost one-third of the country’s cities, community organizations had coordinated and completed a clearing of the rubble of the war destruction. These organizations were also able to supply us, as well as their municipal governments, with information and the means of relief to the majority of the population.Nicaraguans, who have served without pay, that is with the support of local leaders and the international community. In these cities, Nicaragua’s reconstruction efforts, the United States, together with these brave men, can help build a new political stability in Nicaragua—a stability based on democracy and far more deeply rooted than that previously maintained by political and military repression. While there are many philosophical viewpoints represented in the new government, it was the common desire for freedom, dignity, and social justice that moved Nicaragua to peace and that should motivate them today.

I strongly urge the Senate to maintain aid to Nicaragua at the $75 million level proposed by the Administration. The package contains programs designed to benefit the long term interests of Nicaragua and the United States, it is estimated that the new government has already spent over $200 million on reconstruction efforts since December.

I urge the Senate to reject any ideological or political line that might threaten the independence that they fought so hard to win.

The desire for self-determination is strong throughout the region. It is a state of mind, not a state of force. Peace is based on the recognition of the interests of all, no less that of the United States. Nicaragua is not a threat to the United States. The new government is committed to peace and cooperation with other nations, it is ready to work with the United States to achieve common goals.

We hope that Nicaragua will join the other nations of the region in the processes of peace and reconstruction, and we believe that the United States can play a significant role in helping to achieve this goal. The United States is committed to a dialogue with Nicaragua, and we believe that this dialogue can lead to a peaceful resolution of their differences and to a lasting peace in the region.