

Reagan's tactic; gunboat diplomacy

If you're confused about the Reagan administration's actions in Central America, you're not alone. If you're experiencing a sense of dread, a feeling of *deja vu* and keep thinking of Vietnam, you're also not alone. The events of the past few weeks seem more like a prelude to war in Central America than efforts to stabilize the political situation.

Twenty American warships are converging off the western coast of Central America. The ships, including the battleship New Jersey (the aircraft carrier Coral Sea has been dispatched from Naples, Italy to operate along Central America's eastern coast), are under direct orders from Pres. Ronald Reagan.

The Pentagon announced Tuesday that up to 4,000 U.S. troops will be involved in ground exercises in Honduras later this year. The ground exercises will include an amphibious landing by Marines. U.S. Air Force units will be used to lift troops and supplies into Honduras.

The Reagan administration is preparing an significant expansion of covert intelligence operations in Central America by the CIA. The paramilitary activities include stepped-up support for the Contras (anti-government insurgents) in Nicaragua and a campaign to sabotage Cuban installations in the area. Operations of this scale have not been mounted by the CIA since the Vietnam War.

Meanwhile, 10,000 Contras are actively combating Nicaragua's Sandinista government. These troops, who are supplied arms, ammunition, clothing and draw a monthly salary from the American government, are destroying power stations, crops and warehouses inside Nicaragua. The Reagan administration's purpose in forming this insurgent group is to interdict the alleged flow of Soviet and Cuban arms from Nicaragua to rebels in El Salvador.

The cost of supporting the Contras has risen from the allotted \$19 million. There is a plan afoot to legislate \$80 million in overt assistance to Central American nations for the next 14 months.

The Pentagon is considering doubling the number of military advisers in El Salvador. Presently, the Reagan administration has allowed only 55 advisers to be in El Salvador.

Rep. Les AuCoin, D-Ore., recently returned from a trip to Central America authorized by Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill. AuCoin spent three days in Nicaragua talking to Sandinista representatives about the not-so-secret-war. His observations point "to the fact the U.S. is moving toward a war-footing and a heightened risk" that U.S. troops will be sent there to fight.

We don't wish to contradict AuCoin, but the troops, naval support and air support are already on their way. Under the guise of conducting maneuvers in Honduras the Reagan administration will deploy a military force capable of crushing Nicaragua. This is "gunboat diplomacy" at its most insidious.

The Reagan administration's stated aim to peacefully secure the governments of El Salvador and Honduras by ending Sandinista support for revolutionaries seems a lie in view of the military tactics being employed as the first-line of diplomacy. The administration claims to have no intention of overthrowing the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Yet, the fleet off the Central American coasts, the troops in Honduras, illustrate a policy too quickly militaristic to accept a swift negotiated settlement and leave Nicaragua to its own destiny.

Oddly enough, the Nicaraguan government has told the Organization of American States that it is willing to negotiate "an absolute end to the arms supply by any country to the forces in conflict in El Salvador." The Nicaraguans also said they were willing to sign a non-aggression pact with Honduras. The Reagan administration has won a major concession from the Nicaraguans without flexing its military muscle. So recall the fleet, postpone the troop maneuvers and put the CIA anti-insurgents back on a leash before it's too late. Otherwise, Henry Kissinger, the veteran U.S. statesman with experience in Chile, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam will go to Central America to *correct* the situation.



TELL SEYMOUR HERSH DER LONE RANGER'S BACK IN TOWN!

debbie janes

reporter's notebook

In the chaos of Dead Week, I burst into my house and exclaimed: "I got a job." I jubilantly explained to my housemates that it was a job that would provide a challenge and also allow me to retain my sense of pride and integrity.

Or so I thought. In this optimistic spirit I hit the streets as an OSPIRG canvasser. By gathering background information on OSPIRG, an environmental and consumer protection state lobby group, I learned they had pushed many positive bills through the Legislature in their 12 years of existence.

But my zeal towards OSPIRG and their worthy social issues quickly diminished when I called on my first house. As I walked through the weed-infested yard, gingerly hop-scotched over a two-wheeled skateboard, and stepped over a tired old mangy sheep dog, I almost expected a member of the Joad Family, from John Steinbeck's novel, "Grapes of Wrath", to answer my feeble knock.

As an unkempt woman opened the door, a flood of shame washed over us both. She, for exposing a stranger to her condition, and me, for having the audacity to ask for a contribution.

Although the night before I had memorized my dispassionate and aggressive "speech" it now suddenly lost its pizzazz, like this family's cherished week-old bottle of Pepsi.

"We ain't got no money to give you," she coldly replied. The obvious had been plainly stated.

As I headed down the street,

I realized the entire neighborhood suffered the same plight as my Joad family.

To boost my spirits, I reminded myself that OSPIRG's current project — to initiate legislation for a citizen's utility board, which would intervene when utility companies requested rate hikes — would significantly help these people.

During my travels through this village of poverty, I met malnourished infants, guilt-ridden unemployed parents and sick seniors, all of whom were caught in a desperate struggle for survival.

These people, like so many other million Americans, were tangled in the bottom lines of Pres. Ronald Reagan's graphs illustrating the success of his economic recovery. They served as his scapegoat as he claimed their idle and selfish nature contributed to the out-of-control national debt and thwarted his sure-fire economic plan. They were also the victims as Reagan promised aid would "trickle-down" to them, as long as everyone else "stayed the course." They had no other course and could only stay.

As we work in our daily nine-to-five job or craftily take lecture notes, it becomes convenient for our conscience to

forget the plight of these silent people and adopt Reagan's reassuring notions.

But, as our OSPIRG crew moved to an affluent neighborhood, I gained new hope that I would finally collect some money.

Being careful not to step on their richly green, manicured lawn, I rang the chimes of the first house.

A nervous woman dressed in the latest fashion quickly informed me, after hearing my plea for financial support, that they "really couldn't afford it right now."

I chewed on her comment as I walked past their 1983 Cadillac and 29-foot pleasure boat. I finally understood that obscure lecture on "relative deprivation" in my Intro to Sociology class.

After talking with almost 3,600 citizens in a week's time, I could no longer withstand the strains of rejection, the repetition of my "rap" and mainly, the sight of poverty.

I quit. But on that last night, I wielded my rap to a petite wrinkled woman and when I finally finished she exclaimed, "Honey, I haven't heard a word you've said. I'm deaf."

She had probably understood more than anyone else I had talked to.

letters

Africa

As it stands with Africa at this moment: An estimated population of between that of one Oregon and two Oregons

will die in the next 12 months above the normal five to six million Africans that die of poverty due to recession and drought.

Mot

letters policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, style or content.

"Your Turn" is an Emerald opinion feature submitted by members of the University community. "Your Turn" columns must be limited to 500 words and typed.

Letters to the editor and "Your Turn" columns should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300 EMU.

Oregon daily

emerald

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