



The shape of things to come

John Moseley, vice president of research, speaks Thursday at the dedication ceremony for the completed remodeling of the Science Library.

Photo by John Stoops

House Republicans want phone transcripts released

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of 109 House Republicans on Thursday appealed to President Bush to declassify transcripts of conversations between members of Congress and officials of the former Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

The conversations were picked up by U.S. counter-intelligence efforts in the mid-1980s, during a time when American policy toward Nicaragua was among the most hotly contested of political issues in Congress.

Led by Rep. Mickey Edwards, R-Okla., the group asked Bush in a letter, to make records of the conversations public because they are "potentially so damaging to national security and to the reputation of the House of Representatives that we believe the American people have the right to a full public review."

The intercepted conversations were confirmed last week in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee by Alan D. Fiers, a former CIA official who pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor counts in the Iran-Contra affair.

Fiers said he was outraged after he learned of contacts between Democratic House members and their staff with the Sandinista government, and prompted then-CIA Director

William Casey to confront one lawmaker, Democrat Michael Barnes of Maryland, who no longer is a member of the House.

But Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman David Boren, D-Okla., said preliminary reports from the CIA have turned up no evidence that anything improper was conveyed in the conversations.

One House member involved, Democratic Whip David Bonior of Michigan, said the private conversations were to relay what members also were saying publicly: that the Sandinistas should free political prisoners, allow freedom of the press and make other reforms.

Bonior, Barnes and other Democrats have sought to turn the issue around, saying the use of anything in an intercepted conversation for political purposes is improper.

Asked on Wednesday whether Bush would release the intercepted conversations, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said, "We don't have a position on that issue."

But he added, "We have always expressed our disappointment in situations where Democratic members of Congress chose to become directly involved in foreign policy matters. And that, of course, is a matter of great concern to us."

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