

Statement by:

Sen. Christopher J. Dodd
Sen. Paul E. Tsongas

Rep. Michael D. Barnes
Rep. Stephen J. Solarz

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Today, we will introduce a Joint Resolution calling upon this Administration to pursue a negotiated political solution to the conflict in El Salvador.

The situation in El Salvador continues to go from bad to worse. Despite the substantial escalation of U.S. involvement during the past year, the war is at best at a stalemate. The political and military situation of the Government of El Salvador is not getting better. It may be getting worse. In response to this situation, the Administration offers only more of the same -- increased escalation and increased involvement.

It is a tragic fact that the Administration does not have a policy for resolving the Salvadoran conflict in a manner compatible with United States interests. The policy of escalation and the pursuit of military victory can only strengthen the extremes at the expense of the center and continue the process of radicalization and polarization of political forces.

The Administration has presented Congress and the American people with the false alternatives of either supporting endless escalation of the conflict or acquiescing in a victory by the extreme left. Neither alternative serves our interests. However, there is a third course -- the only one that serves to protect U.S. interests -- and that is the path of a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

Sooner or later there will have to be a political solution to the conflict in El Salvador. The time to seek it is now, while both the Christian Democrats and the Democratic Revolutionary Front are prepared to sit down at the negotiating table, and before the Salvadoran polity, economy, and society are further ripped apart by violence.

But the Salvadoran military, backed by the Reagan Administration, opposes such a settlement. This is a serious mistake that can only lead to the further deterioration of our position not only in El Salvador but in the larger context of Central America as a whole.

We believe our colleagues in the Senate and House will adopt this resolution as a statement of United States policy. And we urge the President to accept it as the wisest course for the United States. There is still time to salvage the situation in El Salvador. The only way to make failure inevitable is to continue on the present course.