When President Clinton nominated Jim as his ambassador he had every confidence in Jim’s ability to fulfill his diplomatic duties, and that confidence was not misplaced. Even before Jim took on this assignment he understood that the state of U.S.-China relations could have profound implications for peace and prosperity not only in the Asia/Pacific region but globally as well.

Once confirmed, Ambassador Sasser became an articulate and effective spokesman for the administration’s policy of engagement with China. He rightfully stressed that the United States does not have the luxury of not dealing with China. He would remind his audiences that China’s sheer size, its permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council, its nuclear weapons capability, its economic and military potential, all demand that the United States engage the Chinese Government and the Chinese people.

Soon after his arrival, Jim established excellent working relationships with the Chinese leadership. Both formally and informally he encouraged Beijing to view itself as a responsible member of the international community and act accordingly. I credit Jim’s efforts along with others in successfully persuading China to commit itself to respect a number of non-proliferation regimes and to take under serious review the possibility of formally acceding to others.

Perhaps Jim’s most significant achievement during his tenure was to oversee preparations for two high level bilateral summits between the United States and China. President Jiang’s 1997 visit to Washington and President Clinton’s return visit to Beijing in 1998—the first such meetings between the United States and China in nearly a decade. I cannot imagine even the most seasoned of career diplomats performing more ably as United States Ambassador than Jim Sasser has over the last three and one half years.

I kept in touch with Jim during his tenure as ambassador. He was always enthusiastic and fully engaged in working to ensure that United States policies with respect to China served our national security, foreign policy and economic interests.

I have already mentioned to some of my colleagues, that I was actually talking to Jim one evening at the very moment that the U.S. Embassy was under siege by crowds of Chinese students pelting the building with rocks in retaliation for the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. It showed great courage for him to remain in the embassy with his staff rather than be evacuated as some had recommended. And through it all Jim never lost his sense of humor.

Although relations between Washington and Beijing have deteriorated in recent months, Jim was able to maintain open lines of communication with the Chinese government at the highest levels. He accomplished this difficult task by the strength of his intellect and personality.

Having had the pleasure of serving with Jim Sasser in the United States Senate it came as no surprise to me that Jim has been an outstanding diplomat. Jim brought to the job of U.S. Ambassador the same vision that he brought to the U.S. Senate while he served in this Chamber.

I remember vividly serving with Jim on the Budget Committee—at the time I was a very junior member of that committee. From 1989 onward, I was able to observe Jim’s remarkable, remarkable performance as Chairman of that committee as he built support for sound budget resolutions. Time after time, he marshaled the votes and brought together people of totally different persuasions and opinions—one of the most difficult jobs that any Member of this body has. And he did it successfully. When different budget resolu-

An excellent series of articles, written by Glenn Carvin and published in the Miami Herald earlier this month, at long last makes the record clear on that score. I ask unanimous consent that Glenn Carvin’s articles be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, Mr. Garvin conducted a series of interviews with current and former Sandinista officials who are now celebrating the 20th anniversary of their rise to power on July 19, 1979. What they celebrate is a revolution that brought nothing but poverty and heartache to millions of people.

But in the midst of reciting war stories, they let the truth slip out: these Sandinista officials confirmed that
they provided weapons to the Marxist Salvadoran guerrillas. They also acknowledged that the Soviet government agreed to supply Nicaragua with high-performance MiG fighters, along with other military assistance.

This is not news, but what is, indeed, news is that, for once, two Sandinistas told the truth, back in the 1980s, when President Ronald Reagan and many Senators accused the Sandinistas of fomenting revolution in neighboring countries, they and their left-wing media apologists in the United States questioned our facts. When the Reagan Administration warned the Soviets not to provide MiGs to Nicaragua, the other side falsely accused President Reagan of hysteria.

Now come Sandinista leaders—co-founder Tomas Borge and former president Daniel Ortega—admitting their role in a plot to escalate the crisis in Central America. Mr. President, neither of the two is famous for telling the truth, but in this case, I think they stumbled upon it, letting the cat out of the bag.

EXHIBIT 1
[From the Miami Herald]

WE SHIPPED WEAPONS, SANDINISTAS SAY
(By Glenn Garvin)

MANAGUA—When Ronald Reagan and Sandinista leaders slugged it out during the 1980s over events in Nicaragua, Reagan was right and the Sandinistas were wrong, they now admit, according to the Sandinistas now say.

In a series of interviews with The Herald, several past and present Sandinista officials confirmed that they shipped weapons to Marxist guerrillas in neighboring El Salvador, a statement they once hotly denied.

The Sandinistas also said that the Soviet government agreed to supply them with MiG jet fighters and even arranged for Nicaraguan pilots to be trained on the planes in Bulgaria, a statement they once hotly denied.

``We wanted to broaden the territory of the revolution, to make it wider, so it would be harder for the Americans to attack us,'' said Borge. Ortega added that it was a matter of ethics to arm the Salvadorans.

Neither man offered details on how many weapons were supplied. But Hassan, a former Sandinista official who was a member of the revolutionary junta that governed Nicaragua in the early 1980s, said he believed about 50,000 weapons and a corresponding amount of ammunition were sent to El Salvador just in the first 16 months of the Sandinista government.

``Ortega and Borge didn’t tell me about it, because they thought I was unreliable, but other people who just assumed I knew would casually bring it up,'' Hassan said. Hassan revealed that a Sandinista party in June 1985 but continued to work closely with his old colleagues as mayor of Managua until late 1988.

He also confirmed that the Sandinistas had a commitment for MiGs from the Soviet Union. He said he learned of the plan for the MiGs during 1982, when he was minister of construction and Sandinistas began building a base for the jet fighters at Punta Hueite, a remote site on the east side of Lake Managua.

The site was 600 miles by road—the longest in Central America—capable of handling any military aircraft in the Soviet fleet.

CODE NAME: PANCHITO

``It was top secret—we even had a code name, Panchito, so we could talk about it without the CIA hearing,'' Hassan said. ``But somehow the Americans found out.''

Alejandro Bendana, who was secretary general of foreign affairs during the Sandinista government, said Nicaraguan pilots trained to fly the MiGs in Bulgaria. But in 1987, soon after the Panchito project was finished, the Soviets backed out, he said.

The news that they weren’t getting a weapon they had already requested by the Soviet government, coupled with Soviet advice that it was “time to achieve a regional settlement of security problems,” made the Sandinistas realize that they could not longer depend on the USSR for help, Bendaña said.

Quickly, the Sandinistas signed onto a regional peace plan sponsored by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, which required peace talks with the U.S.-backed contra army, Bendaña said. Those talks led eventually to an agreement for internationally supervised elections that resulted in a Sandinista defeat in 1990.

``It wasn’t the intellectual brilliance of Oscar Arias that did it,” Bendaña said. “It was us grabbing trantically on any framework that was there, trying to cut our losses.”

HOSTILITY TO THE U.S. A COSTLY MISTAKE

20 YEARS AFTER THE RE VOLUTION, NICARAGUANS WONDER HOW IT ALL COULD HAVE GONE SO WRONG

(By Glenn Garvin)

MANAGUA—It was hard to say which was shining more brightly, Moises Hassan, who gave our best years to Nicaragua, or the faces of the people crowded along the road, shrieking “Viva!” to his troops.

It was the morning of July 19th, 1979, and Nicaragua had just awakened to find itself abruptly, stunningly free of a dictatorship that was more than 40 years old. The country around from generation to generation like a family cow.

Hassan, as a senior official in the Sandinista National Liberation Front, the guerrilla movement that had spearheaded the rebellion against the dictatorship, had played a central role in countless battles. But now, as he waived to the crowds lining the highway, he realized that it was what came next that would really count.

``It was the happiness in the people’s faces,’’ he recalled. “And you could see the hope, too. And I told myself, damn, we’ve taken a lot of responsibility on ourselves internationally. We cannot let these people down.‘’

Twenty years later, neither Hassan nor any other Sandinista leader denies that the revolution they did let Nicaraguans down. It would lead to the death of a million people.

``We believed—it was one of our many errors—that we were going to hold power until the end of the century. We were just as naive as the Americans were. It would have been a disaster. We really thought it was what came next that would really count.‘’

Leftist theoreticians who could no longer defend the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union or Fidel Castro’s erratic military adventures about 1980 abandoned their Marxist ‘Boomer regime in Nicaragua. They were devastated when it fared no better than the other socialist revolutions in Cuba and the USSR.

``I am saying we really thought we would make the world over the greater justice and greater fairness and, we failed,’’ said Margaret Randall, an American academic who lived in Nicaragua during the first four years of the Sandinista government and wrote four adulatory books about them.

“Of it’s been very, very hard for those of us who gave our best years to Nicaragua, our greatest energies to Nicaragua, who had friends who died there . . . It’s one thing to say the people are gone, but the project is still there. But now there’s nothing. We’re still picking up the pieces.”

ALL WAS CONFUSION—CHAOS LEFT SANDINISTAS

A BLANK SLATE FOR COUNTRY

On that day 20 years ago, it was a little hard to imagine that any government would emerge from the debris left behind when Anastasio Somoza—the last of three family members to rule Nicaragua—slipped away in the middle of the night.

Within hours of Somoza’s departure, the entire senior officer corps of the National Guard, the army on which the dictatorship was built, bolted for the border. On the morning of July 19, Managua’s streets were littered with cast-off uniforms of panicked officers and men who were making their own getaways in civilian clothes.
Chaos was everywhere. Children lurching about outside the Sandinista National Hotel, spraying the air with bullets from automatic rifles left behind by the soldiers. Inside the hotel, the last of the foreign mercenaries Somoza employed as bodyguards could be found in the traffic control room, robbers and porters (including one from The Miami Herald) at gunpoint.

At the airport, clogged with government officials and Somoza cronies trying to catch the last plane out, an armed band of teenage Sandinista sympathizers climbed into the tower to try to arrest the air traffic controllers, who were still wearing their National Guard uniforms. Only the intervention of a Red Cross official prevented a complete disaster.

Elsewhere in the city, those who couldn’t or wouldn’t leave were nervelessly preparing peace offerings to the revolutionary army that was headed for Managua. One elderly couple spray-painted FSLN—the Spanish initials by which the Sandinistas were known—across the sides of their new Mercedes Benz. But a few hours later, the police poured an economy over the next few days, the situation quickly stabilized. And as FSLN leaders admitted, they had found that they could offer a man a marvelous opportunity to start a country from scratch.

“The state dissolved completely,” said novelist Gianconda Belli, who delivered the first newscast over Sandinista television. “No army, no judges, no congress, no nothing... it was like a clean slate for us.”

What had promised—the Organization of American States and the U.S. Government, as they tried to mediate the war against Somoza—was a non-aligned democracy with a mixed economy. Many Sandinistas still say that was what they tried to build.

“Hassan was part of the five-member junta—which included the non-Sandinista members—that was theoretically governing Nicaragua until free elections could be held,” Sandinista leaders agree that the contras would never have grown into such a huge and destructive force—some 22,000 by the war’s end—if the U.S. administration was funneling money to the Sandinistas rejected the deal, the Reagan administration was forced to release the contras. Four months after that, in March 1982, the contras blew up two major bridges in northern Nicaragua, and the war was on in earnest.

“The war led directly to some of the Sandinistas’ most unpopular policies, like the military draft, and broadened others, like providing peasants off their land into cooperatives. Censorship expanded until the daily paper La Presena, the last voice of the opposition, was shut down completely.”

Meanwhile, the failure to condemn the Soviet invasion was symptomatic of the revolution’s internal conflict. The government quickly moved to seize anything that was “mismanged” or “underexploited.” Farmers were ordered to sell grain only to a state purchasing agency and cattle only to state slaughterhouses.

Newmen who criticized government policies lost their papers or radio programs, and sometimes were jailed. Kids learned math from schoolbooks that taught two grenades plus two grenades equals six. Six Sandinista committee leaders were killed in an explosion like this one that illustrated the use of the letter Q: “Sandino fought the yanquis. The yanquis will always be defeated in our fatherland.”

It was the profound Sandinista hostility to the United States—the party anthem even referred to the U.S. as “the enemy of humanit—”that led to what some party leaders now consider its most ruinous mistake: supporting Marxist guerrillas in nearby El Salvador against the American-backed government.

First Jimmy Carter and then Ronald Reagan warned the Sandinistas to stay out of the Salvadoran conflict. When they didn’t, the United States used aid to Nicaragua, and later began supporting the counterrevolutionary forces that came to be known as the contras in a civil war that ultimately cost the Sandinistas power.

“It was just political machismo,” Belli said. “Everybody was young, wearing uniforms, and they thought they were cut. They wanted to be heroic, and going up against the United States was heroic... But it was the wrong thing to do, and the Nicaraguan people paid a high price.”

Several Sandinista leaders say the party missed a golden opportunity when Thomas Enders, an assistant U.S. secretary of state, came to Managua in 1981 with a final carrot-and-stick offer from the Reagan administration: quit fooling around in El Salvador, and we’ll leave you alone, no matter what you do inside Nicaragua. Keep it up, and we’ll swat you like a fly.

“It was a great opportunity for a deal,” said Arturo Cruz Jr., who was a key official in Nicaragua’s foreign ministry at the time, “with this guy Ronald the徘徊ur. Reagan considered Nicaragua a lost cause. Their concern was El Salvador.” Sergio Ramirez, a member of the junta and later vice president, agreed: “I thought it was an opportunity, and I said so, but no one agreed with me.”

Even with the benefit of hindsight, some Sandinistas say it was unthinknable to back away from the Salvadoran guerrillas.

“That was a matter of ethics on our part,” said former President Daniel Ortega. “The Sandinistas had helped in [against Somoza]. And thanks to the armed struggle, El Salvador has changed. It’s a much different place than it was... The war in El Salvador has led to a political advance, and we are part of that achievement.”

The United States wouldn’t have kept its promise anyway, said Borge. “Look, I don’t want to paint a picture of the United States, but let’s say it was at one time.”

He explained. “Well, with the fall of the Soviet Union, it obviously isn’t a threat anymore. But the situation was that we were going to take away his children, interrogate his family, butt into his religion, make him work in a collective. That was the mistake the revolution was supposed to be for! You know, the revolution was headed by intellectuals. We did it

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No hay, there isn’t any, because about the one thing we didn’t know how to handle there was a need. The vast shelves of the supermarkets filled with the days of Somoza were empty except for Bulgarian-made dishwasher soap, something the peasants had never seen. The operative word, as FSLN militants shouted down Pope John Paul II as he tried to say Mass in Managua, was 33,000 percent annually, and it took a shopping bag full of cordobas just to buy lunch—that is if you could find lunch.

“Practically everything was in short supply: No hay, there isn’t any, because about the one thing we didn’t know how to handle there was a need. The vast shelves of the supermarkets filled with the days of Somoza were empty except for Bulgarian-made dishwasher soap, something the peasants had never seen. The operative word, as FSLN militants shouted down Pope John Paul II as he tried to say Mass in Managua, was 33,000 percent annually, and it took a shopping bag full of cordobas just to buy lunch—that is if you could find lunch. The vast shelves of the supermarkets filled with the days of Somoza were empty except for Bulgarian-made dishwasher soap, something the peasants had never seen. The operative word, as FSLN militants shouted down Pope John Paul II as he tried to say Mass in Managua, was 33,000 percent annually, and it took a shopping bag full of cordobas just to buy lunch—that is if you could find lunch. The vast shelves of the supermarkets filled with the days of Somoza were empty except for Bulgarian-made dishwasher soap, something the peasants had never seen. The operative word, as FSLN militants shouted down Pope John Paul II as he tried to say Mass in Managua, was 33,000 percent annually, and it took a shopping bag full of cordobas just to buy lunch—that is if you could find lunch. The vast shelves of the supermarkets filled with the days of Somoza were empty except for Bulgarian-made dishwasher soap, something the peasants had never seen. The operative word, as FSLN militants shouted down Pope John Paul II as he tried to say Mass in Managua, was 33,000 percent annually, and it took a shopping bag full of cordobas just to buy lunch—that is if you could find lunch.

The conflict with the church was strong, and it cost us, but I don’t think it was our fault. Rougeta said. “There was so many people being wounded every day, so many people dying, and it was hard for us to understand the position of the church hierarchy” in refusing to condemn the contras.

Others, they acknowledged, were in large part their responsibility. “When we arrived, we had almost total power,” Borge said. “And this was the man that the revolution created to rule a country, and the party. Hassan was part of the five-member junta—which included two non-Sandinista members—that was theoretically governing Nicaragua until free elections could be held. But, he soon realized, all the important decisions were being made by the party leaders. The junta was little more than a rubber stamp.”

“Once they left the airfield, they went to vote. The Sandinista directorate told him what to do, and he obeyed them, not us.”

In fact, there was an increasing confusion between the party’s role as government and the party. The police became the Sandinista National Police, the army the Sandinista People’s Army. Schoolchildren pledged allegiance to the country but to the Sandinista party, and promised it their “love, loyalty and sacrifice.”

“Before that, my understanding of the counterrevolution had been intellectual. But here, right before me, was the face of the counterrevolution. It was a rift poor—this guy standing across the road holding a rifle to me,” Ramirez recalled. “We always talked about the contras as American mercenaries, but this guy standing across from me was not some big gringo Ranger. He was a poor—this guy standing across the road holding a rifle to me.”
in the name of the workers and peasants, but were still intolerant to the end, most of the others were against us.

END OF GAME—SANDINISTAS STUNNED BY SCOPE OF ELECTION LOSS

The war eventually forced the Sandinistas to agree to internationally supervised elections. Ortega, President of the Sandinista Revolutionary Union and leader of the Sandinista guerrilla movement, agreed to let Daniel Ortega oversee a new election even though he had been one of the main leaders of the Sandinistas' war against Somoza.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, July 26, 1999, the Federal debt stood at $5,656,525,745,471.93 (Five trillion, six hundred thirty-six billion, five hundred twenty-five million, seven hundred forty-five thousand, four hundred seventy-one dollars and ninety-three cents).

Five years ago, July 26, 1994, the Federal debt stood at $4,632,297,000,000 (Four trillion, six hundred thirty-two billion, two hundred ninety-seven million)."