NOMINATION OF OTTO REICH

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, on April 29, the Los Angeles Times printed a thoughtful op-ed article by former Costa Rican President Oscar Arias that raises troubling questions about President Bush's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Otto Reich.

President Arias discusses the important role played by the Assistant Secretary, and questions Otto Reich's suitability for this position, in light of his record as head of the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy, his support of President Reagan's policies toward Central America, his involvement in lifting the ban on the sale of advanced weapons to Latin America, and his views on U.S. policy toward Cuba.

I urge my colleagues to read the article. The significant concerns raised by this distinguished Nobel Peace Prize recipient must be carefully considered. I ask unanimous consent that the article by President Arias be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES, APRIL 29, 2001]

A NOMINEE WHO STANDS FOR WAR

(By Oscar Arias)

Given the importance of the role of the U.S. assistant secretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs, many of us in Latin America are surprised and disappointed by George W. Bush's nomination of Otto J. Reich for this post. Reich headed the Office of Public Diplomacy, which was closed down by Congress in the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal because it had, to quote official investigations, ''engaged in prohibited covert propaganda activities designed to influence the media and the public.''

More than almost any other U.S. diplomat, the person in this post will have the power to shape the relationship between the United States and Latin America for better or worse. Virtually everything that the U.S. needs to do with Latin America, from establishing a free-trade area to dealing with drug policy and immigration, will require a bipartisan approach. Appointing someone of Reich's ideological stripe and experience would be a real setback in hemispheric cooperation.

I offer my experience as president of Costa Rica as testament to the importance of compromise on hard-line policies. With my region torn by civil wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, I proposed a peace plan whose essence was democracy as a precondition for lasting peace. The plan was signed by five Central American presidents in August 1987, but President Ronald Reagan refused to support it. He would settle for nothing less than military victory over the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. It was not until George Bush became president in 1988 that the United States backed off its dogged support for war and let the Central American leaders give diplomacy a chance. It was Bush the elder and his foreign-policy staff, including Secretary of State James A. Baker and Bernie Aronson, then-assistant secretary of State for inter-American affairs, who changed U.S. policy from one of undermining our efforts to strongly supporting them, and thus contributed greatly to a peaceful solution to the Central American conflicts.

I am afraid that Reich will cling more closely to the Reagan model than that of the former Bush administration. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that this will be so. His involvement in the Office of Public Diplomacy until 1986 demonstrated his allegiance to the Reagan administration's hawkish policies toward Central America. The purpose of his office was none other than to get the American people to side with war over peace, using propaganda methods determined to be ''improper.''

Reich's support of militarism did not end with the wars in Central America. According to news reports, he has made his living in recent years as a lobbyist and consultant representing corporate interests in Washington, among which is the arms manufacturer Lockheed Martin. Reich apparently helped Lockheed overcome the executive ban on the sale of advanced weaponry to Latin America. As a result, the company is poised to sell a dozen of its F–16 fighter jets with advanced missile technology to Chile.

Ever since the ban was lifted in 1997, I have been active, along with former President Jimmy Carter, in trying to convince Latin American leaders to submit to a voluntary moratorium on buying such weapons. If a Latin American country goes shopping for sophisticated weaponry, it will touch off the last thing this hemisphere needs—an arms race. In the face of continued poverty, illiteracy, hunger and disease in so much of our region, investing in unnecessary military technology is an act of grave irresponsibility. That Reich has been an accomplice to this deal makes me feel very uneasy about what ends will be served by his potential leadership in our hemisphere.

One last example will illustrate the poor fit that Reich would be for the interests of hemispheric cooperation: his unwavering support for the long-running and unproductive embargo against Cuba. I believe many American farmers and businessmen are aware that U.S. economic warfare against Cuba harms broader U.S. interests, while at the same time injuring the people, but not the government, of Cuba.

To those who think it unbecoming for a foreigner to comment on the appointment of a U.S. official, I would say that although the assistant secretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs will make little difference in the lives of ordinary people in the United States, he could have a profound effect on the lives of Latin Americans.

There is so much work to be done in our part of the world over the next four years, and enough inherent problems and strains in the relationship between the United States and Latin America, that we will be assuring ourselves of getting nowhere if we give in to hard-line ideology over flexibility and bipartisanship. On behalf of Latin Americans, I hope that the administration of George W. Bush can find another candidate for this job—one capable of building trust and earning respect from all the leaders of this hemisphere.

(Oscar Arias Was President of Costa Rica From 1986–1990 and Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987.)

TRANSIT ZONE STRATEGY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as Chairman of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, I want to draw attention to our interdiction efforts throughout the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific, commonly referred to as the ''transit zone.''

Although Plan Colombia is our primary counterdrug operation in Colombia and the emphasis in the Andean region, commonly called the ''source zone'', continued interdiction efforts in the transit zone are an important part of our overall ''defense-in- depth'' plan. I have noted for some time, however, that our defense in depth seems more like a defense in doubt. I want to be confident that the United States has a well-thought out, overarching national drug control strategy, involving all components of both supply and demand reduction, including eradication and fumigation, alternate development, trade incentives, interdiction, prevention, treatment, and education. I am very pleased the President is ready to appoint the new Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, ONDCP, to assist with reviewing our plans, programs, and strategy. But I am concerned that we lack coherent thinking on our interdiction efforts. I am concerned about rumblings from the Department of Defense, DOD, that it is going to duck and weave on supporting such a plan.

I desire our interdiction efforts to be integrated and balanced, both interagency and internationally, as well as between the source zone, transit zone, and arrival zones. We need balance, within the transit zone, between the Caribbean and the Eastern Pacific, as well as balance with in the eastern, central, and western portions of the Caribbean itself. We need to have adequate intelligence community and DOD support for both the source zone and the transit zone. We need to be balanced between our air and maritime interdiction efforts. We need to be equally dynamic and risk adverse as the smuggling organizations are, when route and conveyance shifts are detected. Our counterdrug forces on patrol should also be aware of the terrorism threats that are increasing focused against our country. It is not clear to me that we currently have these things I have outlined.

The Senate Drug Caucus is planning an upcoming hearing on the Transit zone on May 15, 2001 to discuss the broader questions of ''What is our transit zone strategy?'' and ''Do we have a balanced approach in the transit zone?'' I hope for a discussion on the current threat, agency capabilities, current shortcomings, the relationship with the source zone and Plan Colombia, the projected future threat, any needed improvements, interagency and international relationships, and DOD and intelligence community support to our transit zone operations. I am especially concerned about reports of aging aircraft and vessels in the both the Customs Service and Coast Guard fleet inventories. I am also particular interested in the countries of Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico, and the Bahamas, as well as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Success in the transit zone is so critical for both the United States as well as the many countries throughout the Caribbean, who are so dependent on trade and