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RAHALL SUPPORTS CENTRAL AMERICAN ASSISTANCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) today expressed his support for sending humanitarian assistance to the victims of war-torn Nicaragua. Rahall will support the \$30.8 million humanitarian aid package which includes food, clothing and medical supplies for the U.S.-backed Nicaraguan resistance forces.

"I supported the package which provided \$14.56 million in much-needed medical assistance to the children in Nicaragua -- the innocent victims of that nation's ongoing civil war," Rahall said. "We cannot turn our backs on those who are suffering, just as it is immoral for us to ignore the suffering of the children of Lebanon, the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Afghanistan, South Africa, or anywhere else in the world." Half of the medical assistance money in the bill would go to the child victims of the war, as well as \$1.44 million in humanitarian aid to Miskito and other Nicaraguan Indian groups. The bill also appropriates humanitarian assistance, medical supplies and clothing for the Nicaraguan contras.

"I was glad to see that this legislation gets the Central Intelligence Agency out of the humanitarian assistance business," Rahall observed. "The bill authorizes the aid to be administered by the Defense Department, providing for on-site inspection and monitoring by the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, as well as the General Accounting Office. As the lessons of the Iran/Contra affair bear out, there is a great need for accountability in foreign operations such as this, particularly concerning the use of American tax dollars."

Rahall also voiced his hope that the ongoing peace process will continue to progress. "The Arias peace plan remains our best hope for peace in Nicaragua, and I remain hopeful that both sides will negotiate in good faith, thereby negating the need for military intervention," Rahall pointed out. "There must be no reneging on reforms made thus far."

The bill will be considered by the House on Thursday, March 3.