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The host, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, did not invite Chile, Cuba, Panama or Haiti to the summit, which was to be restricted to democracies.

However, Mr. Ortega was included.

Formally upgrading the Sandinistas to a democratic status was an initiative harshly criticized in the Costa Rican press.

Nevertheless, the Bush administration agreed to the dubious arrangement in July, a few weeks before the Central American presidents met in Tela, Honduras, to discuss a timetable for disbanding the anti-Sandinista rebels.

However, relying on an ardent critic of the Reagan administration and the Contra movement for help in delaying the disarming of the Contras was risky business.

Prior to this episode, Sen. Christopher Dodd (D., Conn.), sensing an open field, undertook a personal diplomatic mission through Central America to promote an early disbanding of the rebels.

Visiting Nicaragua, he praised the Sandinistas for their electoral system and chided the Bush administration for not rewarding the Sandinistas.

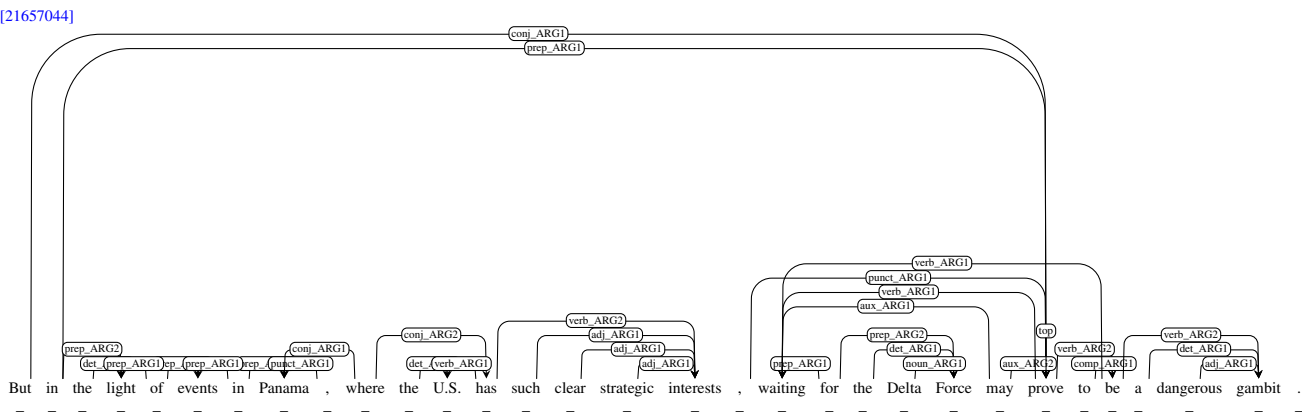
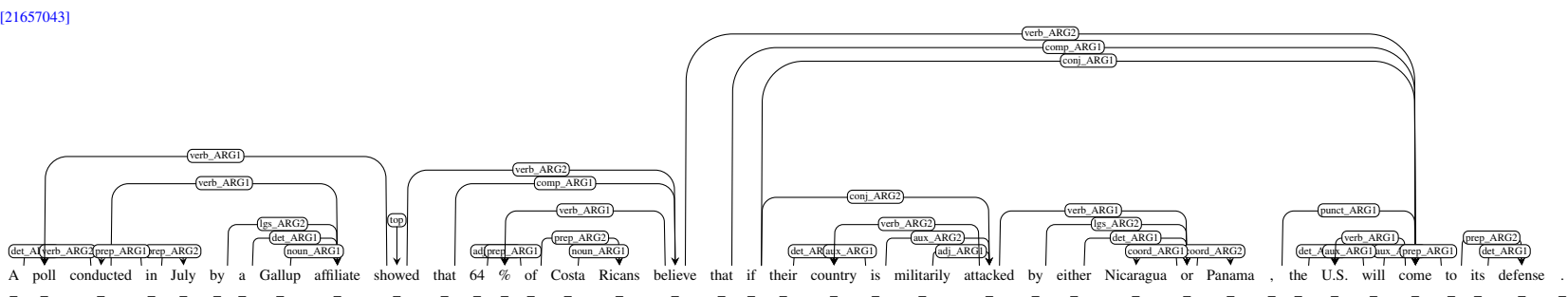
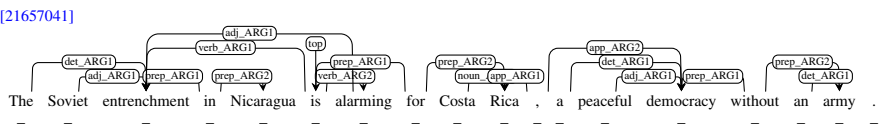
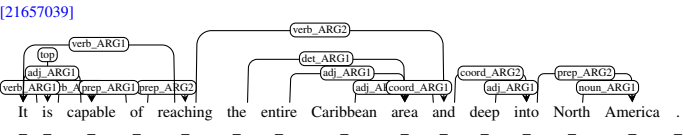
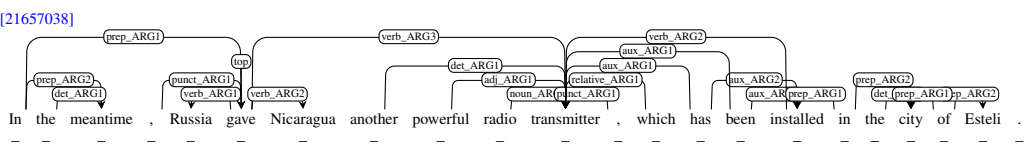
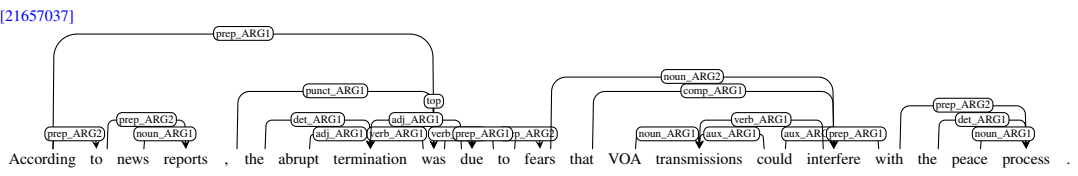
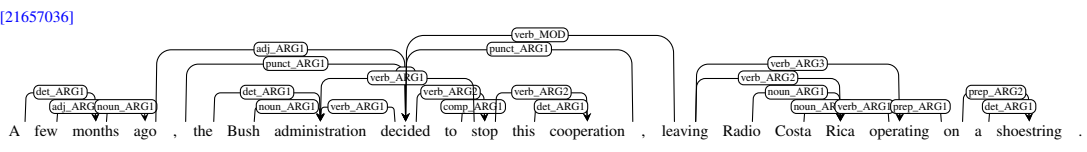
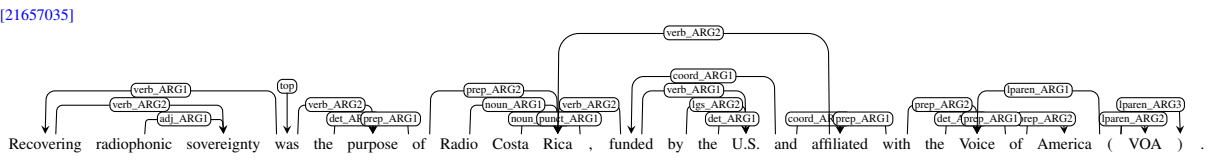
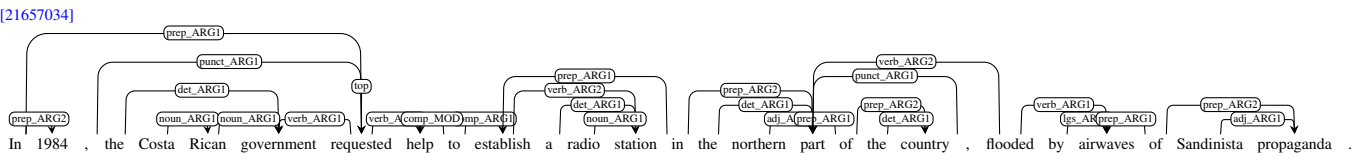
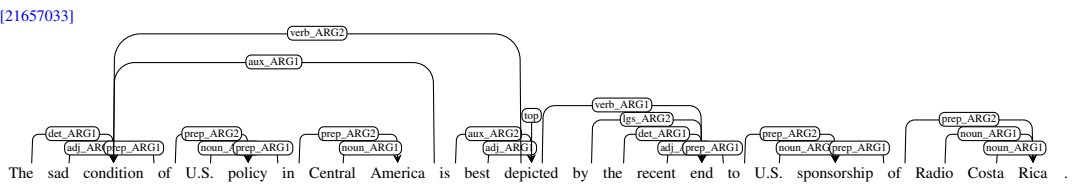
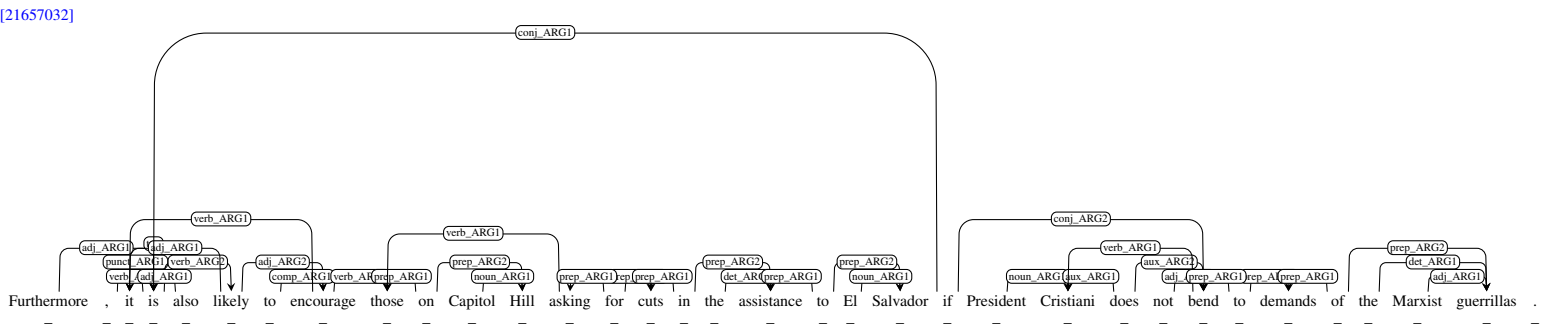
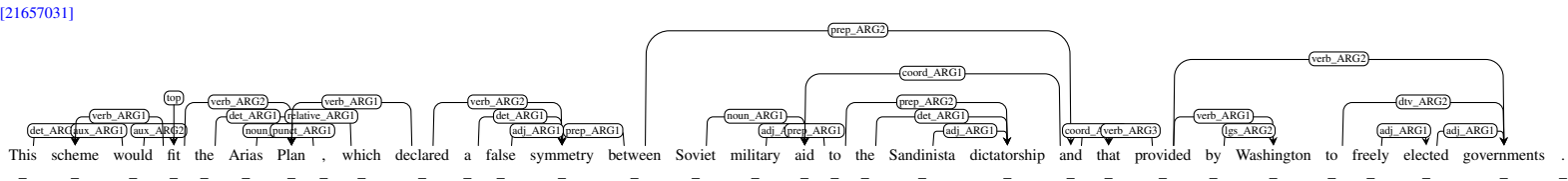
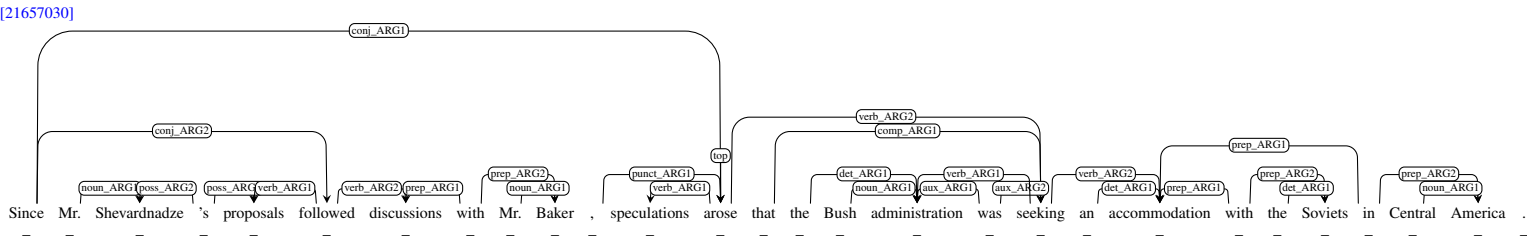
In Honduras, where the Contras are a hot political issue, he promised to help unblock some \$ 70 million in assistance withheld due to the failure of local agencies to comply with conditions agreed upon with Washington.

Fittingly, the Tela Accords were nicknamed by Hondurans "the Dodd plan."

There, Mr. Shevardnadze felt legitimized to unveil his own peace plan: The U.S.S.R. would prolong a suspension of arms shipments to Nicaragua after the February election if the U.S. did likewise with its allies in Central America.

He also called on Nicaragua's neighbors to accept a "military equilibrium" guaranteed by both superpowers.

The Pentagon claims that in spite of Moscow's words, East bloc weapons continue to flow into Nicaragua through Cuba at near-record levels.



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