

'90S ARE ERA OF HOPE, CLINTON TELLS SALVADOR

Daily News (New York)

March 11, 1999, Thursday

Copyright 1999 Daily News, L.P.

Section: News; Pg. 8

Length: 402 words

Byline: By KENNETH R. BAZINET Daily News Washington Bureau

Body

SAN SALVADOR President Clinton yesterday said peace and partnership have replaced Cold War-era meddling in Central America but he couldn't snuff out a new flareup over illegal immigration.

In the keynote speech of his four-nation trip, Clinton told Salvadoran legislators that the 1990s have become a decade of "reconciliation and hope," on the heels of years of bloody civil war that rippled through the region and now in the wake of Hurricane Mitch.

"There was a time not long ago when people in this region believed they could only defend their point of view at the point of a gun . . . a time which provoked in the United States bitter divisions about our role in your region," Clinton said.

In a reminder of past U.S. involvement in the affairs of Guatemala, 100 or so demonstrators protested Clinton's arrival here.

But the death squads and illegal funneling of money to pro-U.S. rebels in the Iran-Contra scandal during the Reagan administration have given way to an immigration dispute that threatens today's regional summit in Guatemala.

Hurricane Mitch triggered waves of illegal aliens who sought refuge in the U.S. In the last three months of 1998, border guards caught about 6,000 Central Americans about 39% more than the same period last year. In January, the number of detainees at the Mexican border climbed a whopping 153%.

Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner Doris Meissner said the U.S. could begin deporting illegal immigrants from El Salvador and Guatemala as early as next week.

But those governments are concerned that those deportations will mean a loss of much-needed hard currency because the illegals send hundreds of thousands of dollars to family and friends still digging out from the deadly hurricane.

"We must continue to discourage illegal immigration, for it undermines control of our borders . . . and even more, punishes hardworking people who play by the rules and who wait for their turn to come to the United States," Clinton said.

But Juan Duch Martinez, president of Salvador's legislature, appealed to the U.S. Congress to show understanding while the region recovers from Mitch.

"We trust in your work, Mr. President, so that the members of your Congress will hear the request of their [Central American] brothers and sisters . . . so that they will consider the reasons that they left our country," Martinez said.

'90S ARE ERA OF HOPE, CLINTON TELLS SALVADOR

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: IMMIGRATION (91%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); DEPORTATION (89%); BORDER CONTROL (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (89%); US PRESIDENTS (89%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); WAR & CONFLICT (78%); CIVIL WAR (78%); US CONGRESS (78%); COLD WAR (78%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (77%); HURRICANES (75%); TROPICAL STORMS (75%); TALKS & MEETINGS (73%); POLITICAL SCANDALS (72%); CURRENCIES (63%); PROTESTS & DEMONSTRATIONS (53%); EDITORIALS & OPINIONS (52%)

Company: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (54%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (54%)

Organization: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (54%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (54%)

Industry: CURRENCIES (63%)

Person: BILL CLINTON (79%)

Geographic: SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR (79%); UNITED STATES (94%); GUATEMALA (93%); CENTRAL AMERICA (93%); EL SALVADOR (79%); MEXICO (79%)

Load-Date: March 16, 1999