

MacNEIL-LEHRER NEWSHOUR

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LEHRER: As predicted by the Democrats in charge, the House voted this afternoon to cut off covert CIA aid to the contras, the anti-Sandinista groups fighting a guerrilla war against the government of Nicaragua. The vote was a close 227-to-194, in favor of the Boland-Zablocki amendment to an intelligence funding bill. The legislation authorizes \$50 million in overt assistance to stop the arms flow from Nicaragua to leftist guerrilla forces in El Salvador but none on the covert side of Honduras and Costa Rica-based rebels seeking to bring direct military and economic trouble to the leftist Nicaraguan government. And today the contras hit another Nicaraguan economic target. They raided an agricultural center 100 miles north of the capital, leaving grain silos and tractors destroyed, the local bank \$80,000 poorer and 32 Nicaraguan soldiers and civilians dead. On the U.S. aid question it is considered unlikely the Republican-controlled Senate will go along with the House action. So, today's vote may be more symbolic than real in its impact. That impact was the focus of the sometimes hot debate on the House floor which preceded the vote. REP. WILLIAM GOODLING (R-Pa.): The real danger, Mr. Chairman, is if we send publicly a signal that as a matter of fact we are going to cut the operation off, why should Nicaragua participate in anything? Why not just wait and wait us out? REP. MICHAEL BARNES (D-Md.): We are heading, I would say to you, ladies and gentlemen, straight for war. Mr. Chairman, I, I wanna deal just very quickly with some of the myths that sustain this drive toward war. For example, it's a myth that these covert operations are working. They're not working. The myth would have it that the covert operations are designed to force the Sandinistas to open up their political system. And I don't think any of us would argue that the covert operations have been successful in that respect. Nicaragua's political system is indisputably more closed now than it was when those operations were begun. You don't democratize a government by attacking it. Myth would have it that the covert operations are designed to interdict arms that are flowing from Nicaragua to Salvador. I don't think there's anybody in this room that would argue that the covert operations have been successful at doing that, since, to my knowledge as chairman of the subcommittee that oversees these, these issues, not one rifle has been interdicted during the entire period that these operations have been under way. REP. JOHN MCCAIN (R-Ariz.): I believe there are two likely consequences from the implementation of the Boland interdiction concept. The first is conflict among Central American nations. And second and most importantly is increased involvement of U.S. military personnel. JIM LEACH (R-Iowa): Above anything else, the United States of America has always stood for the rule of law. Within that context, we have taken the lead in attempting to place legal and moral constraints upon terrorism. It's been said here today that our current policy is cheap, that no American lives are jeopardized. That may be true in the short-run. But I wonder in the long-run whether United States government complicity in acts of acts of sabotage, in efforts to overthrow a duly recognized government with this hemisphere, won't be very costly to our principles and eventually our lives.