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House Committee To Probe Covert Aid In Nicaragua Fight

By *WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter*

WASHINGTON—The Reagan administration's policy in Central America ran into more serious trouble last night when the House Intelligence Committee announced it would begin looking into covert activities in Nicaragua.

The committee's chairman, Rep. Edward Boland (D., Mass.) emerged last night from a lengthy closed session to announce the panel will call Secretary of State George Shultz and National Security Adviser William Clark to testify next week.

The panel met to begin discussing whether the administration is violating a congressional ban on covert aid to military groups for the purpose of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government. Armed bands claiming they have received U.S. help have infiltrated Nicaragua in recent weeks and have been waging sporadic battles with troops from the leftist government.

Rep. Boland sponsored an amendment that Congress passed late last year banning aid that would be used to topple Nicaragua's leftist government. But there is growing concern in Congress that the administration is circumventing the law.

Rep. Boland issued a statement last night saying the committee didn't attempt to decide whether the law is being followed. But he said its discussion showed "deep concerns" about administration activities.

Staff members said the committee called Mr. Shultz and Mr. Clark rather than Central Intelligence Agency officials to show its concern about the overall administration policy in Nicaragua. Committee members "feel very strongly it's wrong to pick on the CIA," one aide said. "The question is what the policy is."

The House panel's meeting was the sec-

ond closed session on Nicaragua in as many days. On Tuesday, the Senate Intelligence Committee questioned the CIA director, William Casey.

After that session, chairman Barry Goldwater (R., Ariz.) asserted that the testimony showed the administration wasn't violating the law. But other panel members aren't convinced.

On Tuesday, a House subcommittee on interamerican affairs voted to prohibit any covert support for guerrillas in Nicaragua unless authorized by a joint resolution in Congress.

Privately, administration officials acknowledged that the U.S. has aided groups opposed to Nicaragua's government. But administration officials insist the support is intended only to enable the groups to help stop shipments of arms from Nicaragua to leftists in El Salvador.

Recent news reports from Nicaragua, however, indicate that armed groups that have infiltrated the country intend to try to overthrow the government there.