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Military Aid, Buildings

Hill Units Cut Reagan's Latin Budget

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A House Armed Services subcommittee yesterday cut from the 1985 budget three major military construction projects in Honduras that the Reagan administration has sought as part of the growing U.S. presence in Central America, according to sources involved in the decision made in closed session.

At the same time, the House Appropriations Committee, in another blow to administration policy in Central America, stripped an otherwise popular spending measure of increased military aid for the government of El Salvador, guaranteeing a floor fight next week.

The Armed Services subcommittee on military construction, chaired by Rep. Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.), cut the military construction projects in Honduras, the sources said, because the administration has yet to provide a long-requested detailed outline of all its military building plans in Central America. The sources said the items-eliminated by the subcommittee include:

- A \$4.3 million Army compound that an Army data sheet described as "suitable for extended deployments" of "a company-sized unit with aircraft" at Honduras' Palmerola Air Base, from which U.S. aircraft are conducting military reconnaissance flights in the region. The fact sheet said the Palmerola facility is needed because "temporary field living conditions, acceptable for short stays, are unacceptable for indefinite deployments" of U.S. troops engaged in exercises in Honduras.

- A \$1.5 million munitions storage area at Palmerola designed to handle "iron bombs and rockets" for use in "tactical air contingency operations in support of allies in the region," according to an Air Force data sheet.

- A \$2.9 million Army warehouse, 100,000-gallon fuel storage tank and munitions storage area at San Lorenzo Air Force Base.

An administration official said the subcommittee action, if not reversed, would have little impact on the extensive U.S. military maneuvers in Central America. "Whatever exercises are planned will continue with or without this," he said. "But we'll try very hard to get it back."

Rep. William V. Alexander Jr. (D-Ark.), chief deputy majority whip, told a news conference that, during a six-day visit to Central America, he found U.S. forces in the region "poised for war, and we have allowed no equal force for peace . . . I am not convinced that the millions of dollars we have poured into these construction sites are purely in support of military exercises."

But Rep. Ralph Regula (R-Ohio), who also went on the trip, said it would take "a very substantial amount of both money and effort" to make the installations combat-ready. "I have seen much better facilities at Scout camps," Regula said.

In related action, the House Appropriations Committee, unable to agree on a military aid package for El Salvador, decided instead to strip all Central America provisions from a grab-bag measure of other funding actions. It will bring up the Central America issue on the floor of the House next week.

The measure, sponsored by committee Chairman Jamie L. Whitten (D-Miss.), would have allowed unspecified aid to El Salvador to continue "at present expenditure levels and under existing restrictions for 30 days." But Democrats, who control the committee, argued that President Reagan already had assumed that power in using his emergency funding authority last month to send at least \$32 million in aid to El Salvador.

The committee then approved the remaining bill, which provides \$410 million for child nutrition, \$100 million for summer youth employment, \$66 million for the Women, Infants and Children food aid program and \$60 million for food aid to drought-stricken African nations.

Those provisions were the most broadly supported parts of a vehicle that the Reagan administration once had hoped would carry its proposed \$62 million in emergency aid to the government of El Salvador, which is fighting a leftist insurgency, and \$21 million for aid to rebels backed by the Reagan administration against the leftist government of nearby Nicaragua.

That vehicle, which passed the Senate

last month, lies dormant in the House, burdened with a score of other less popular Senate amendments.

In an unusual parliamentary maneuver, Rep. Silvio O. Conte (R-Mass.) tried to pass an instruction to the House to set up a conference committee meeting with the Senate on the measure, but was defeated, 245 to 159.

Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.), said he will offer an amendment adding aid to El Salvador to the grab-bag aid measure when it comes to the House floor, probably next week. "I think there's a bipartisan consensus of Democrats and Republicans who think something should be done" in El Salvador, he said in an interview.

The action leaves undecided the fate of the administration's request for its support of anti-government rebels in Nicaragua. Kemp said he had no plans to propose attaching that to the Whitten bill but would keep his options open.

Meanwhile, former secretary of state Alexander M. Haig Jr. told the National Press Club that he had advised Reagan against the use of covert action teams financed and directed by the CIA in Nicaragua because "in modern day America and especially in this administration, there ain't nothing secret."

In addition, Haig said, "you can't conduct covert activities which are so substantial in character that they cannot be covert."