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White House Says Insurgents Need Stingers

The Stinger is a shoulder-fired guided missile system about 5 feet long and weighing 34.5 pounds that uses an infrared system to home in on low-flying planes and helicopters. One man can operate the \$75,000 weapon, sighting the target and firing the high-explosive missile through a disposable launch tube. Stingers are among the weapons included in military and other aid the Reagan Administration wants to supply the anti-Government rebels in Nicaragua for use against Soviet-made MI-24 helicopter gunships of the Sandinista air force.

Last week, Stingers became the center of another dispute between the White House and Capitol Hill — a debate over how much military mischief the Administration should sponsor without a Congressional vote. The Reagan Administration plans to supply hundreds of Stingers to rebels in Angola led by Jonas Savimbi, who has been fighting for 10 years to overthrow the avowedly Marxist Government in Luanda, and to the insurgents who have been fighting since 1979 against a pro-Soviet Government in Afghanistan and the Russian troops supporting it.

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The Congressional opposition to supplying the rebel groups was led by Representative Lee Hamilton, the Indiana Democrat who is chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. He called for an end to the so-called covert aid programs under which Washington supports the rebel groups, saying, "I don't think it is wise to proceed on these highly controversial foreign policy decisions without the support of the Congress." "This is not a covert action in the ordinary understanding of the term," he said of the hostilities in Angola; "this is a war."

The President may initiate covert programs without Congressional approval, but he is required to notify the intelligence committees of both houses. At week's end, Mr. Hamilton said that if the Administration did not rescind its decision he would press for legislation to end or restrict covert aid or to require Congressional approval for such programs.