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# House sets closed session on secret-aid cutoff

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WASHINGTON — The House yesterday scheduled a closed session during its debate on cutting off covert aid to Nicaraguan rebels amid reports that the Reagan administration plans to expand it.

By unanimous voice vote after brief debate, the congressmen approved a resolution calling for a four-hour closed session Tuesday on a bill to halt the aid.

The bill, already approved by the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the House Select Committee on Intelligence, would replace the undercover aid to the anti-Sandinista forces with \$80 million in open assistance to friendly Central American nations to combat leftist gun-running.

A House vote on the measure is expected in the week beginning July

25. The vote will follow a debate in open session.

Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (D., Mass.), talking to reporters after a closed Democratic caucus on the issue, predicted "a very close vote."

House Majority Leader Jim Wright (D., Texas) said talks with administration officials were continuing in an effort "to seek some common ground and to narrow our differences."

In related developments, intelligence sources said the CIA, already overspending its \$19 million budget for assistance to Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries, was planning to back an even larger army.

The sources, who spoke on condition that they not be identified, said the CIA had exceeded its budget because the rebel force had grown to about 10,000 men, twice the anticipated number.

One source said the CIA was now preparing a plan for between 12,000 and 15,000 men — as much as twice the size of the leftist guerrilla army fighting in nearby El Salvador.

Asked about the reports, CIA spokeswoman Kathryn Riedel said, "We do not comment on allegations of covert activities."

Rep. Bill Alexander (D., Ark.), chief deputy majority whip of the House, said he believed the figures were "fairly accurate."

"I fear we are seeing ominous signs of a sleazy policy of simple-minded deception," Alexander told the House. "The administration is poised to escalate a dangerous course of intervention in Central America."

"This policy will result in widespread bloodshed in the region," he said.

Sen. Richard Lugar (R., Ind.), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said in an interview on the CBS radio program "Capitol Cloakroom" that he was "not in a position to confirm or deny" the reports.

He added, however, "The general assertion by the White House that we are not attempting to overthrow the government of Nicaragua is correct."

He supported the administration's contention that it was trying to halt the flow of weapons and supplies from Cuba and the Soviet Union through Marxist-controlled Nicaragua to the rebels in El Salvador.

An aide in the House parliamentarian's office said that the last closed session of the House was held on Feb. 25, 1980, and that the one before that was in July 1979. Records did not show the subject of these meetings, other than saying they dealt with classified foreign affairs and intelligence matters.