

WASHINGTON TIMES
15 July 1983

4A

CIA Latin plans come under fire

By Thomas D. Brandt
WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

Capitol Hill Republicans yesterday challenged reports the CIA has plans to support twice the number of anti-Sandinista insurgents in Nicaragua. Democrats accused the administration of "simple-minded deception."

Democrats claimed deception included concealing the real level of U.S. spending in Central America, which, according to Rep. William Alexander, D-Ark., could be a billion dollars a year, and fighting an undeclared war against Nicaragua.

Published reports stated the CIA plans to back twice as many anti-Sandinista insurgents in Nicaragua — as high as 15,000 men. House Minority Leader Bob Michel, R-Ill., sharply challenged the reports. "I was very shocked to read some of that material. That's not the way I read the tea leaves."

Asked why he thought the 15,000 figure was too high, he replied: "I know better."

Michel said the American people "need to be educated" on the necessity of covert operations. "Our enemies are doing that on a broad scale," he said, adding that the current U.S. involvement in Nicaragua should be kept off the "front page."

Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., a member of the Senate Intelligence and Foreign Rela-

tions committees, said that he was "not in a position to confirm or deny" the reports.

At the White House, Deputy Press Secretary Larry Speakes refused to comment on other reports that the CIA was overspending its covert military aid budget to the guerrillas opposing the Nicaraguan Sandinista government, or was trying to overthrow the government.

But he added President Reagan's assertion of several months ago that the United States was not doing anything to overthrow the government in Nicaragua "still stands."

Alexander said, "Such a covert operation is unbecoming to this great nation . . . and unsupported by our allies abroad." He is prominent in a group of House Democrats, including Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill, D-Mass., which is supporting a bill to end covert aid in exchange for an \$80 million, two-year overt program to block the flow of weapons to leftist insurgents.

Meanwhile House Majority Leader James Wright, D-Tex., was working on a compromise position between the White House and its Democratic opponents on conditions for shutting off covert aid.

The plan, in broad outline, would cut off U.S. covert aid into Nicaragua in exchange for a commitment from the Sandinistas not to aid leftist insurgents opposing the government of El Salvador.

Published reports stated the CIA plans to back twice as many anti-Sandinista insurgents in Nicaragua — as high as 15,000 men.
