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Moynihan calls Managua arms role unproven

From Wire Services

WASHINGTON — The Senate Intelligence Committee never has been given "conclusive information" to back up administration's charge that Nicaragua is sending arms to El Salvador, committee vice chairman Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D, N.Y.) said yesterday.

Mr. Moynihan also disclosed that the committee had reached written, formal agreement with the Central Intelligence Agency about when and how the CIA is to notify Congress about cover operations. He said the agency has asked that the agreement be kept secret, but he spoke about its major points.

The existence of an ongoing cross-border flow of arms has been the major justification for the administration's highly controversial three-year-old "secret war" against the Nicaraguan government.

The issue was raised again this week when a former CIA analyst, David MacMichael, said such claims are based on outdated information, and that administration officials are misleading Congress.

Mr. MacMichael, 56, worked on intelligence estimates on Central America for the CIA's National Intelligence Council under a two-year contract through March, 1983.

State Department and CIA officials have rejected Mr. MacMichael's claims but have not released evidence that arms flows are continuing.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz angrily said, "It is inconceivable that an informed, honest person" could deny the arms supply from Nicaragua to the Salvadoran guerrillas.

"The evidence is everywhere. I've looked at a lot of it and I think it is totally and absolutely convincing that the direction and the supply of the guerrillas in El Salvador comes from Nicaragua."

CIA Director William J. Casey said Mr. MacMichael's charges were "just one man's opinion."

Mr. Moynihan said his committee, which oversees intelligence operations, "has not been presented with any conclusive information" to document the arms flow.

Mr. Moynihan, a consistent supporter of aid to the anti-Sandinista rebels, predicted that disclosures challenging the administration's

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GEORGE P. SHULTZ

repeated assertions that Nicaragua is "exporting revolution" will prompt Congress to halt aid to the "contra" guerrillas.

Senate and House leaders have been trying to work out a compromise on funding that will at least give \$6 million to \$8 million more to the contras to help them wind down their operations. But House leaders have said that recent disclosures about the lack of proof about Nicaraguan involvement in the Salvadoran civil war mean no new aid will be voted by the Democratic-controlled chamber.

The Senate and House intelligence committees monitor the activities of the country's intelligence agencies. Moynihan almost resigned his vice chairmanship over a flap with the CIA last April, when he accused agency officials of withholding information about their role in the mining of Nicaragua's harbors.

That incident led to a new oversight agreement that he said was signed last Thursday by Mr. Casey, committee Chairman Barry Goldwater (R, Ariz.) and Mr. Moynihan.

The new secrecy agreement requires that Congress be informed of "significant anticipated activity" in spy operations, Mr. Moynihan said.