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# Nicaragua rebs get more CIA aid

By BARBARA REHM

Washington (News Bureau)—The CIA is expanding its support for the covert war against the Marxist Sandinista government in Nicaragua, U.S. officials disclosed yesterday.

The CIA has told Congress that the armed forces of the rebels, called "contras," had increased from a few hundred men in 1982 to 9,000 in early 1983—and are currently up to 15,000. One official, during a discussion of the administration's request for an additional \$21 million to fund the covert war, predicted a further increase in the guerrilla force.

Since 1982, the United States has sent a reported \$62 million in military aid to the rebels. Originally, the administration said the aid was for efforts to block arms shipments from Nicaragua to rebels fighting the U.S.-backed government in El Salvador.

In the last three months, the CIA has funneled its support to Eden Pastora, known as "Commander Zero," a one-time Sandinista war hero who accused the Managua government of betraying the revolution, the official said.

Pastora's Democratic Revolutionary

Alliance, which U.S. officials say has picked up the most recruits lately, is responsible for the mining of Nicaragua's Pacific Ocean port of Corinto and of El Bluff on the Caribbean.

Much of the sophisticated equipment, including mines and powerboats used to block oil and weapons shipments into the port, is believed to come from the CIA.

Some officials in the administration and on Capitol Hill believe Pastora has a better chance of winning the popular support in Nicaragua than the other rebel army, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, which is led by a number of Anastasio Somoza's former national guardsmen.

The Reagan administration is becoming increasingly public in its support for the Nicaraguan rebels, although it has refused to acknowledge any U.S. role in the guerrilla war.

President Reagan in an interview last week said he saw "no dichotomy in our supporting the government, the democratic government of El Salvador and the contras here—and we made it very plain to Nicaragua—made it very plain that this would stop when they keep their promise to restore democratic rule and have elections" in Nicaragua.