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U.S. Says Port Mining Has Ceased

Hill Votes Oppose Covert Support of Nicaragua Rebels

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The Reagan administration sought to save its covert operations against the Nicaraguan government by telling members of Congress yesterday that mines are no longer being laid in Nicaraguan harbors. But there were increasing signs that Congress will refuse to provide more money for CIA anti-Sandinista operations.

If additional funds are not approved quickly, according to administration sources, the CIA will have to cease its support of "contra" guerrillas fighting the Nicaraguan government. Laws tightly drafted by Congress to control CIA covert operations there rule out use of the usual contingency accounts set up to deal with emergencies.

"If there is no money soon, we've got to get out of there, and that is going to be very, very difficult," said an administration source familiar with the thinking of CIA officials.

Another source said that more than 9,000 U.S.-supported guerrillas are reported inside Nicaragua and will have to begin making their way out around the end of this month if financial support ends.

Despite administration explanations, dissatisfied lawmakers took new votes yesterday opposing the minelaying and the administration's broader program of secretly financing and directing the "contras."

Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth W. Dam, briefing the House Foreign Affairs Committee in a closed session, is reported to have

said that the administration is not directly or indirectly sowing new explosive devices in Nicaraguan waters.

Committee members said Dam did not say the mining would not be resumed. And an administration official said the executive branch has not decided that question.

Administration and congressional sources said that the sowing of several hundred advanced acoustical mines with CIA assistance and direction had been completed several weeks ago and that these mines will remain active in Nicaraguan harbors until they decay in several months.

Several well-informed members of Congress predicted that it is highly unlikely that laying of mines will be resumed because of strongly adverse congressional reaction and that the House is unlikely to approve administration requests for more money for CIA support of the guerrillas.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Dante B. Fascell (D-Fla.), expressing a widespread sentiment on Capitol Hill about the adminis-

tration's performance, said, "They've got both feet in their mouth, and they're biting down very hard."

In a flurry of developments, Congress dealt blow after blow to the administration's Central America policies:

- After hearing Dam's explanation, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted 31 to 3 for a non-binding sense-of-Congress resolution forbidding the use of U.S. funds to "plan, direct, execute or support the mining of the territorial waters of Nicaragua."

An identical resolution was adopted by an 84-to-12 vote in the Senate Tuesday. The full House is expected to pass the anti-mining resolution today.

- The House intelligence committee voted to delete all funds for supporting rebel forces around Nicaragua from the fiscal year 1985 Intelligence Authorization Bill. A Republican effort to include the reportedly more than \$40 million was defeated, 7 to 4.

- The Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported out an \$11.1 billion foreign aid bill for fiscal year 1985 without providing for aid to El Salvador in its war against insur-

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Capitol Hill storm over the mining of Nicaraguan harbors "has given Congress a smoke screen behind which to hide and a perfect excuse for not coming to the aid of El Salvador."

Administration officials said President Reagan is likely to decide before the end of this week whether to bypass Congress and continue military aid to El Salvador through a special emergency funding mechanism. Another option would be to seek congressional permission to transfer money scheduled to go to another country.

The problem of congressional support for the government of El Salvador and the anti-Sandinista rebels had been compounded, officials said, by a series of events in which Reagan tried to blame Congress for undercutting U.S. foreign policy in Lebanon and Central America. This accusation was one of the president's themes last week at a news conference, a foreign policy speech and his weekly radio broadcast.

"How the hell do you ask the Democratic leadership to come to your aid on matters where you need their support after you kick them like this?" one administration strategist asked.

For the moment, the battle centered on covert operations against Nicaragua and on CIA Director William J. Casey, who was reportedly determined "to fight like hell in every conceivable, legitimate way" to win congressional support for continuing the U.S.-backed guerrilla effort.

Senate Minority Leader Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) charged that Casey had violated the law because "we were not told" about the mining operations in Nicaraguan waters. Byrd said he will introduce legislation to require that Casey and 19 other top administration officials be confirmed by the Senate a second time if Reagan is reelected.

In an unusual action, the CIA issued a public statement several hours after Byrd spoke, saying that it "strictly adheres" to requirements "to keep appropriate congressional committees fully and currently informed." It is "untrue" that the CIA has violated these directives, the agency said. A CIA source said, "The only thing more we could have done is install a teletype down there [in the Senate] and let them see the daily cables."