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FILE ONLY

WHITE HOUSE STANDS BY GATES NOMINATION
BY TIM AHERN
WASHINGTON

The White House said Saturday that President Reagan stands by his nomination of Robert M. Gates to head the CIA, even though Senate Republican leaders suggest the nomination may be in trouble.

Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole of Kansas was canvassing other senators over the weekend, trying to determine if there was enough support for Gates or whether the nomination should be pulled back from the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Dole said Friday he plans to talk next week with Howard Baker, the newly appointed White House chief of staff and former Senate majority leader, about the Gates nomination.

"If there's not enough support for Gates, it's likely they'll withdraw and put in somebody who can win," said one congressional source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Gates, currently the CIA's deputy director, was nominated to replace William Casey, who resigned following surgery for brain cancer.

At the White House on Saturday, presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said, "the president stands behind the nomination." During two days of public hearings by the Intelligence Committee, Gates was questioned sharply about his role in the Iran-Contra affair, particularly his knowledge about the sale of U.S. weapons to Iran.

No vote on Gates has been set by the panel, which would have to approve him before the full Senate votes on the issue.

The committee will meet Wednesday to discuss the Tower commission report, the 300-page review that was sharply critical of Reagan and his White House for the entire Iran-Contra affair.

The Gates nomination, and the timing of a likely vote, will probably be discussed Wednesday, although no formal agenda has been set.

One Republican member of the panel, Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, has already said he would vote against Gates.

Specter is the only senator thus far to publicly announce that he would vote against Gates. However, Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., said Friday that "20 or 30" of his colleagues were troubled by questions about Gates but he would not reveal their names.