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Six lawmakers go to Central America

From wire dispatches

Six House members flew to Central America yesterday as the administration tried to head off more congressional opposition to its anti-Marxist campaign in the region.

U.N. Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick expressed confidence that Congress would not rebuff President Reagan's request for an added \$60 million in military aid for El Salvador or curtail reported CIA activities against the government of Nicaragua.

"What we hope is that Congress will share the responsibility for finding a constructive solution," Mrs. Kirkpatrick said on ABC News' "This Week With David Brinkley," adding, "I think Congress will, frankly."

In a separate interview on the program, Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., presented an opposed view of the wisdom of efforts to back the Salvadoran government. He said the administration's actions in Central America are seeking a military solution of social problems.

While agreeing that Communist influence is a hostile one in the region, he said the Salvadorans' main problems are economic.

He and Rep. Wyche Fowler Jr., D-Ga., who appeared with him, said the administration is violating a law that forbids spending to try to overthrow the government in Nicaragua.

Reagan is to address Congress on Wednesday night to repeat his warning that Nicaragua and Cuba, along with the leftists they support in El Salvador, threaten the stability of the region.

The House appropriations subcommittee on foreign affairs is scheduled

to vote tomorrow on the request for additional military aid for El Salvador. The chairman, Rep. Clarence Long, D-Md., flew there for a two-day visit before the vote. The Foreign Affairs Committee voted 19-6 last week against the request.

Also yesterday, five members of the House intelligence committee left for a CIA-guided tour of El Salvador and Honduras, where the agency is reported to be supplying and training guerrillas opposed to Nicaragua's government.

Making that trip are Reps. G. William Whitehurst, R-Va.; Norman V. Mineta, D-Calif.; C.W. "Bill" Young, R-Fla.; Bob Stump, R-Ariz.; and Dave McCurdy, D-Okla.

Mineta said the tour was arranged by CIA Director William Casey in an effort to show the committee that the agency is not violating the law in Nicaragua.

Stansfield Turner, who was director during the Carter administration, said in an article he wrote for the Washington Post that the agency made a major mistake if it is as deeply involved in providing aid to guerrillas in Nicaragua as some allege.

"Just the cost of our appearing to destabilize a government of Nicaragua is high because we are widely seen as sponsoring the return to Nicaragua of the supporters of the dictator Anastasio Somoza," Turner said in the article published yesterday.

Sen. Ernest F. Hollings, D-S.C., called the aid to the Nicaraguan guerrillas a step of last resort and said El Salvador should be denied added military aid unless it moved toward negotiations with the rebels.

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From an Ex-CIA Chief: Stop the 'Covert' Operation in Nicaragua

By Stansfield Turner

IF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE Agency is as deeply involved in providing "covert" aid to guerrilla bands in Nicaragua as reports suggest, it has made a bad mistake. It would be wise to extricate itself from the operation before it gets into a head-on conflict with Congress.

This would, of course, be painful for the CIA to do. It would have to walk away from people to whom it has made commitments, and it would endanger its reputation for reliability. In the long run, however, it would be in the best interests of the agency and of the nation.

As a former CIA director, I do not say this because of the common contention that it is not our province to decide what is best for other nations. That is as superficial an argument as the one that we have the right to do whatever is seen as advancing our national interest. What is required is a careful judgment, in each case, of potential benefits and costs.

There are circumstances, I think, in which covert operations are justified and in which — if they became public knowledge — they would cause little, if any, controversy. The Nicaragua operation, however, is not one of them. It risks substantial damage both to our

national interests and to the CIA, especially in light of the growing dispute over whether the agency has violated the law, passed last December, forbidding it to supply military training, advice or support "for the purpose" of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government.

President Reagan, who has acknowledged U.S. support (but not specifically CIA aid) for the guerrillas moving into Nicaragua from Honduras, has said that our "purpose" is otherwise — to impede the flow of arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador — and that the law, therefore, is not being broken. But one of the risks of any covert action is that it may get out of control.

One reason is that the people the CIA enlists to do the covert work will not always have the same purpose as the United States. Generally, their aim is to obtain political power for themselves as soon as possible. As the price for getting the support that we offer them, they may well accept the somewhat different purposes and timetables that we establish. But as a covert action progresses, they may well start working for their own objective, not ours.

The issue, then, is whether the CIA can control their activities by withholding arms, money or whatever. Such controls will work primarily in situations where large amounts of money or military supplies are essential to success. But in most cases, the people working for us gain sufficient momentum of their own at some point to go on without us if necessary.

Another reason covert actions can get out of control is that our own purposes change from those originally set. That could well be what has happened in this instance.

The CIA may have started out deliberately

to undermine the government of Nicaragua, only to have the Congress prohibit that purpose. We should not forget that the Congress is notified of all covert actions and, hence, knew of this commit-

ment probably a year to a year and a half before it adopted the restrictive amendment, sponsored by Rep. Edward Boland (D-Mass.), last December. One way or another, that amendment placed the CIA in the difficult position of having to renege on commitments already made, or of trying to change the direction of covert action. Reneging is difficult because the people we have enlisted are already deeply committed. Changing direction is difficult because the people with whom we are working may not be willing.

A third reason covert actions get out of control is that the CIA people operating them can get carried away with their dedication to getting the job done. It was only in 1974 that Congress passed the Hughes-Ryan amendment requiring that Congress be notified of ongoing actions. And, it was only in 1976 that President Ford issued the first executive order controlling intelligence, including covert actions. Before these controls, the CIA operated covertly with much greater freedom.

There is no question that, as in the case of Nicaragua, the existence of these controls makes the task of covert action more difficult.

It was my observation, as head of the CIA, that quite a few of the "old hands" in the agency found it very difficult to accept the impediments that such controls imposed. I forced several dozens of them into retirement because the controls were the law of the land, or the orders of the president, and I needed to feel comfortable that the people doing covert action would obey them.

A large number of CIA retirees have apparently been called back into service to direct the Nicaraguan action. This raises the risk that the CIA's tradition of dedication to getting the job done may override strict compliance with the Boland amendment. Only the

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congressional committees on intelligence will be able to judge that when they hear in secret session the CIA's explanation of how it is controlling the Nicaraguan operation so as not to violate the Boland amendment.

I was frankly disappointed to observe how quickly the CIA professionals acceded to the desire of the new administration. They knew better than to undertake this covert action. They should have appreciated that it has virtually been ruled out by the new era of oversight and controls introduced into American intelligence since 1974. Whether these new controls are a good thing or not can be debated, but it is not difficult to understand why they limit the type of covert actions our country can undertake.

Essentially, we pay a price for notifying the Congress about covert actions under the Hughes-Ryan amendment. That price is the high probability that if the action is highly controversial it will leak and it will no longer be possible to undertake it covertly. Witness the fact that the public has long been aware that the CIA is involved in Nicaragua.

This is not to impugn the integrity of Congress. It is an inevitable result of our democratic process. The fact that the Congress had to pass the Boland amendment to curb the

CIA's role in Nicaragua is indicative of the problem. That amendment is an open document, yet it gives away the fact that the CIA is doing something covert down in Nicaragua.

When the dust settles on this particular incident, we should decide ourselves whether the price of limiting covert action to noncontroversial objectives is worth it. I believe that it is.

Our country is still suffering from the divisiveness that developed over Vietnam, when national consensus crumbled. Covert action, by its very nature, can be very controversial. We would do well to proceed only where there is a good chance that there would be a national consensus behind that covert action if it became known to the public. After all, the innate wisdom of the American public's outlook is one of the cornerstones of our democratic system.

At the same time we need to avoid letting vocal minorities prevent our undertaking covert actions that the majority would approve. That could happen, I am afraid, if the notification to the Congress were too widespread. An amendment in 1980 to the Hughes-Ryan amendment narrowed the number of committees that are to be informed about the covert action from eight to the two intelligence committees. The record of those two committees, so far, is that noncontroversial covert actions are generally not leaked.

What kinds of covert actions might pass the test of national consensus?

One is covert propaganda, like radio broadcasts, which essentially tell the facts to countries that do not have anything like a free press. Such broadcasts can be much more effective if the hand of the United States behind them is concealed.

Another form of covert action that the majority would find acceptable is paramilitary support to groups struggling to avoid extinction at the hands of invading Russian or Cuban troops. Finally, there would be, I suspect, a consensus on attempting to unseat Khomeini or Qaddafi by covert means were that feasible.

This, the political action side of covert action, will always be the most controversial. What is required here is a careful judgment as to when our national interests are so likely to be damaged that we should consider destabilizing a foreign government.

In making such a judgment we should take into account whether a successor government would likely be better from our point of view. We also need to take into account that destabilizing governments is far more difficult today than in 1953, when we did that in Iran, or in 1954, when we did it in Guatemala. The revolution in communication since then has made it much more difficult to pull the wool over a populace's eyes, as we did in those cases.

That is why the congressional and public instinct on Nicaragua is correct today. We are not likely to get away with toppling the Nicaraguan government by covert means. Even if we do, though, it will likely be a pyrrhic victory. The other costs to us will be high.

Just the cost of our appearing to attempt to destabilize a government of Nicaragua are high because we are widely seen as sponsoring the return to Nicaragua of the supporters of the dictator Anastasio Somoza. This can only reduce our standing in the countries in this region where we have truly important interests: Mexico, Panama, Venezuela and Brazil.

If we are worried about a domino effect engulfing these nations, we should be doing all we can to bolster the internal strengths of those countries. Being seen as supporting *Somocistas*, whether true or not, is a sure way to undermine our ability to play a supporting role.

Another cost that is very apparent in this case is that, when the operations verge on violating the law, the CIA is publicly accused of improper performance. Just the fact that several members of Congress have strongly suggested that the CIA is not complying with the law is very injurious to that agency.

Whether the charges are proven right or wrong is not the issue. The CIA has only recently recovered most of its deserved prestige and standing after the public disillusionment

that arose following the various investigations of 1975-76. It is, then, damaging to have the public hear members of Congress suggest that the CIA may again not be complying with the law.

The agency's future is totally dependent on being able to recruit and retain a few of the very brightest of our young people. It cannot do that if it is periodically buffeted by public doubt as to the legality and validity of its activities.

If this administration truly believes that it needs the authority to conduct the type of activity underway in Nicaragua, even if most of the Congress and the public would be opposed to it if they knew, it must reopen the whole question of oversight and controls over the U.S. intelligence community.

There is a perfectly legitimate argument that the controls have gone too far. There are many of us who are staunch supporters of the CIA, though, who will argue that there are far greater risks to the future of that vital organization from any substantial relaxation of control than from continuation of the ones that we have.

Stansfield Turner was director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1977 to 1981. This article was reviewed by the CIA.