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GATES: U.S. AMBASSADOR LIKELY TO BE INVESTIGATED
BY GREGORY GORDON

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The CIA inspector general's office is investigating whether the agency's Costa Rica station chief worked with a U.S. ambassador to assist in the delivery of arms to Nicaraguan rebels, CIA director-designate Robert Gates said Tuesday.<

At his Senate confirmation hearings, Gates also suggested that Lewis Tambs, ambassador to Costa Rica, may be facing other investigations as a result of his role in the scandal surrounding the funneling of arms to the Contra rebels.<

Gates acknowledged that he recently ordered an internal inquiry reopened after learning that the former CIA station chief had lied to investigators about his efforts to share intelligence with a private network ferrying weapons to the Contras.<

Sources have said the station chief, who recently was placed on administrative leave, may have violated the Boland Amendment barring U.S. military aid to the Contras between October 1984 and October 1986.<

The CIA operative uses the pseudonym Tomas Castillo, the sources said.< A

Gates said that a few days after the inspector general's office submitted its initial report last month, Inspector General Carroll Hauver advised him that, when "confronted with some documentary evidence, our officer had changed aspects of his testimony."<

Gates said he instructed the inspector general to re-investigate the entire matter, repeating all interviews and informing agency officials "that I wanted them to give us the straight story."<

"I didn't want them to be concerned about loyalties to their friends or loyalties to anybody else; we wanted the facts and we wanted the truth," he said.<

Sources have said Tambs revealed to congressional investigators in the spring of 1986 that he had detailed knowledge of the operation. As part of the operation, Castillo allegedly identified positions of Nicaraguan Sandinista troops to ensure the success of military airdrops to the Contras.<

A former administration official said Tuesday that while Tambs was ambassador, a company linked to the private Contra aid network built an airstrip in an isolated part of Costa Rica beginning in late 1985.<

Asked whether Tambs' role was under investigation, Gates said, "I assume that it is not by us, but by others."<

He said he assumed the State Department's inspector general's office and other investigative bodies were examining Tambs' activities.<

The CIA inquiry, he said, would cover "the role that our officer played with respect to Ambassador Tambs."<

Tambs did not return several telephone calls.<