

Eye on Democrats by Anita Gallagher

'Tougher than thou' on Central America

While mouthing the slogan "no more Vietnams," Harrimanite Democrats in Congress are working with Henry Kissinger to force broader U.S. military involvement in Central America.

Led by House Intelligence Committee chairman Edward Boland (D-Mass.), the Harrimanites on July 27 pushed through an amendment to the 1983 Intelligence Authorization Act that was billed as a ban on U.S. covert operations in Nicaragua. But the Boland-Zablocki amendment calls for an \$80 million program of "overt" U.S. military operations, to interdict arms flows from Nicaragua and Cuba! That would expand the direct U.S. military role in Central America and set the stage for crisis-management by Henry Kissinger's Bipartisan Central American commission.

The Boland-Zablocki amendment is strongly opposed by the Reagan administration, and is generally given no chance to pass the Senate. But the Harrimanites do not expect it to pass; it is guerrilla warfare to set the President up.

Harrimanite patronage of the measure, whose sponsors admit would escalate the danger of war, was made public July 26, the day before the House vote, when Vietnam War architects Robert McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, joined by former Secretaries of State Cyrus Vance, Dean Rusk, and Edmund Muskie, released statements calling for an end to covert operations in Nicaragua.

Ted Kennedy has announced his intention to fight for Senate passage of

the measure, and Boland made an unsuccessful attempt Aug. 1 to apply it to the 1984 Intelligence Authorization Act as well. That would extend its provisions another year past the Sept. 30 expiration of the current fiscal year legislation. After his appointment to head the Bipartisan Commission on Central America, Kissinger wangled from President Reagan an extension of the commission's mandate from December 1983 to February 1984.

Republican supporters of the President condemned Boland-Zablocki as an approach paralleling the United States' fiasco in Vietnam. They noted that it would leave Nicaragua an untouched sanctuary for arms supplies while requiring a U.S.-directed military operation to try to cut off arms flows to other countries—a policy which they charged failed totally in Vietnam.

The Pentagon has estimated that the overt interdiction program would cost not \$80 million but \$400 million, and Defense Secretary Weinberger has written the Congress that "an interdiction program of this magnitude would certainly require extensive deployment of U.S. personnel. . . ."

Quicker road to 'Vietnam' trap

The fraud involved in Harrimanite professions of seeking to limit U.S. military involvement became blatant during floor debate in the House on the Boland-Zablocki amendment. Boland himself argued for overt operations on the grounds that Reagan administration policy was heading for U.S. military intervention anyway!

"There will be those here today," Boland declared, "who will say that we vastly underpriced what it will cost to effectively interdict arms. To those who say this, I say we should spend what will be necessary and useful to do the job. To those who say that this overt security assistance could cost American lives or will mean a signif-

icant number of American advisers, I ask—where do they think our present policy is taking us? If as the President says, we cannot allow communism to gain a foothold in Central America, how do you suppose we are going to prevent that from happening?"

Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), a backer of Boland-Zablocki, emphasized in debate that the program "could also require the use of U.S. military trainers or advisers." Similarly pointing to military escalation, fellow advocate Rep. Wyche Fowler (D-Ga.) argued against the administration's covert operations program by charging they "run the risk of curbing the options of the United States, if during an escalation of hostilities in Central America from Cuba or the Soviet Union, the United States and its allies determined that swift concerted action was required to meet it."

Such plans to escalate the Central American war were not lost on supporters of the President. Rep. Kenneth Robinson of Virginia, the ranking Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, charged that the overt interdiction plan "raises the stakes and increases the risks of interstate war in Central America." Robinson noted that the Democrats' "majority report—not the administration—proposes and even encourages escalating use of U.S. military personnel in Central America," and that it was the Democratic majority on the committee that "first advocated increasing U.S. troop commitment" in the region.

Rep. William Whitehurst of Virginia, a senior Republican on both the House Armed Services and Intelligence Committees, added that Boland-Zablocki "does not take into account the hundreds and hundreds of American military personnel who will be required; they will be placed in a perilous situation. . . . The framers tell you that it is a shelter from further involvement in Central America. I submit to you that the effect of it is going to be just the opposite."