

Panel Votes to Probe 'October Surprise'

Senate Investigation Approved 9 to 8 Over Strong Opposition

By Guy Gugliotta
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After 80 minutes of rancorous debate, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday approved a resolution calling for investigation of the "October surprise."

But Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) threatened a filibuster if the measure reaches the Senate floor and Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.) voted against the resolution because it included an amendment allowing investigation of Carter administration officials.

The committee approved the resolution 9 to 8 with Republican cosponsor Sen. James M. Jeffords (Vt.) voting "present." The measure goes to the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration for further evaluation.

The congressional leadership last summer ordered separate Senate and House investigations into allegations the Reagan campaign in 1980 conspired with Iranian officials to delay release of 52 U.S. hostages until after the November presidential election. The delay, it is alleged, prevented a preelection "October surprise" hostage release that could have lifted President Jimmy Carter to victory.

Republicans have expressed dismay at what they have described as a deliberate attempt by Democrats to smear Ronald Reagan and George Bush, who shared the 1980 ticket as Reagan's vice presidential candidate.

"This investigation is simple, blatant and tasteless partisanship," said Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), the Foreign Relations Committee's ranking minority member, calling it "nothing more than a witch hunt."

Helms made a bitter, point-by-point attack on the "totally unacceptable" resolution drafted by his

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North Carolina colleague, Sen. Terry Sanford (D), named to head the investigation.

Sanford, unfazed, noted that "this was initiated by the leadership," and "I think it merits an investigation. I have no apologies for my part in this. It fell to me to conduct the investigation, and I'm going to do it in an honorable manner."

Besides the Carolina fireworks, the debate was marked by strong language on both sides, most nota-

bly from Lugar, known among colleagues as a conciliator.

Lugar called the investigation "a monstrosity" that "ought not to take place." After the vote he told reporters that "it is unacceptable for the majority to run roughshod in such a manner." If the resolution reaches the floor, he said, "we will discuss it at some length," a euphemism that warns of a filibuster.

Dodd voted against the resolution after the committee added a Republican amendment allowing investigation of Carter administration efforts to negotiate the hostages' freedom. House Democrats blocked similar language from their resolution, which may reach the House floor later this week.

"There's a clear distinction between what a sitting president and secretary of state do, and what private citizens do," Dodd said. "I guess if you mention some Democrats and some Republicans that shows you're trying to be nonpartisan."