

# Rebel VFW post wins one skirmish

By DAVE HIRSCHMAN

McClatchy News Service

SACRAMENTO — Santa Cruz' rebel VFW post has won its battle to get delegates to a statewide VFW convention to adopt a resolution calling for peaceful settlement of hostilities in Nicaragua.

In a departure from the Veterans of Foreign Wars' usual support for President Reagan on foreign policy issues, delegates representing 98,000 VFW members in California adopted the resolution Wednesday. The VFW vote came even as the U.S. House of Representatives was voting to approve military aid to the contras.

"This is a very significant development," said Richard Anderson, 38, a Vietnam veteran and commander of the Santa Cruz post which drafted the resolution. "The VFW is one of the most conservative organizations in the country, and for them to endorse ... a peaceful settlement directly contradicts the warlike policy of the president."

The resolution did not pass unamended, however.

A sentence stating that "the lessons of Vietnam are clear in that we cannot force our will on sovereign nations" was stricken by members of the group's "Americanism Committee."

Cmdr. Jim Manley of VFW Post 4147 said support for the "peaceful settlement" resolution was not shared by all.

"The resolution passed all the districts ... but that's not the way I feel, or other members of my post feel."

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— Rick Moran

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Manley, himself a Vietnam veteran, said his post "stands tall, and is ready to go (to war) again if needed."

The 155-member Santa Cruz post that introduced the "peaceful settlement" resolution has been a thorn in the side of the national VFW since its inception in 1983. The Santa Cruz post broke with the national organization over the 2.2 million-member group's stand in favor of "American primacy" in Central America, and several post members have traveled to Nicaragua and spoken out against U.S. involvement there.

"We are the beginning of a changing of the guard of the VFW," said Rick Moran, 35, a former submarine navigator who will run the controversial Santa Cruz post next year. "The (older members) are not going to have their way all the time — that's why our post continues."

But the Santa Cruz post's positions are in sharp contrast to conservative VFW members, mostly World War II and Korean veterans.

"Whenever we speak, there are murmurs and catcalls in the audience," said Anderson. "Today someone yelled out that I was a Communist, and ... some older VFW members were saying they were going to 'get those (Santa Cruz) SOB's,' whatever that means."

Also passed was a resolution calling for a shift in U.S. policy from military support in Central American countries to one of working toward balanced economies.

But the post did not go undefeated. Resolutions turned down by the membership called for:

- Immediate divestment of funds and stiff economic sanctions against South Africa.
- Sanctuary for refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala in the United States.

But the post has most rankled the state VFW by its refusal to join with state Republicans in condemning Democratic state Assemblyman Tom Hayden of Santa Monica as "a traitor" for his activities during the Vietnam War.

"All that war-whooping about Hayden is pointless," said Anderson. "You can't get rid of him now for things he might have thought or said 20 years ago."

Members of the Santa Cruz post say the ultimate goal is for the VFW to die out for lack of war veterans.

Said Anderson: "If there are no more wars, there won't be any more veterans and that is perfectly OK with us."