

Canal

Continued from Page B 1

world.

"What I'm telling you is fact," said Gritz, a retired U.S. lieutenant colonel with the Army's Special Forces, as he addressed a crowd of about 200 people at Santa Barbara City College Saturday night.

"When I was commander of Special Forces for Latin America these plans were already laid out," he added. "We were going to do it. The only thing that stopped us was the liberal Congress."

He was invited to Santa Barbara by a political club at City College to deliver a talk on drugs and U.S. foreign policy.

Gritz, who has more than 70 decorations for valor based on his tours of duty in Vietnam, says it is the desire for the new canal that has been behind the Contra war in Central America, the drug war in Latin America, and the destabilization of the former Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua, since last century, has been the focus of United States attention in the building of a canal to connect the two oceans, but the engineering problems of such a project have stopped it from happening, Gritz said.

Instead, a canal was built by the



James "Bo" Gritz: Some 200 nuclear bombs will be detonated to create a canal in Nicaragua between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

United States along a part of what was then Colombia, and which then became Panama, near the turn of the century.

But the Panama Canal has outlived its usefulness, and nuclear bomb technology makes it possible to build a new canal across Nicaragua, Gritz said.

That explains, he said, why for-

mer President Jimmy Carter was willing to sign treaties turning over the waterway to the Panamanians by the end of the century.

Carter, and, subsequently, former President Ronald Reagan, realized that eventually the new canal had to be built across Nicaragua, he said, but situations needed to be created to allow the United States to build its canal.

To do so, however, the United States had to destabilize and replace the revolutionary Sandinistas and get a more cooperative government in place, according to Gritz.

"We have been planning a canal and that canal is (to be) in Nicaragua," he said. "We tried to do it in the 1980s. Putting in a new canal, that was one of (Reagan's) main missions."

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency was called upon and the Contras were equipped and financed for this purpose, Gritz said. Congress refused to supply all the money needed to accomplish the task, so the CIA and the U.S. government went into the drug-running business to help finance the operations, Gritz said.

The running of drugs was something the government had been doing for decades, mainly in Southeast Asia, said Gritz, who in 1979 was sent by the United States to search for prisoners of war in that area of the world.