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ARMY WILL CLOSE CHILD-CARE CENTER

AP

SAN FRANCISCO, Nov. 15— The Army announced it is closing and demolishing a child-care center at its base at the Presidio after allegations that as many as 60 youngsters were sexually abused there.

Maj. Greg Rixon, an Army spokesman at the Pentagon, said the Presidio Child Development Center would be closed Friday and a new center would be opened by April.

A Presidio spokesman, Bob Mahoney, said the closing, which was disclosed Saturday, was for "health, safety and sanitation reasons, and not as a result of allegations of child abuse."

But Representative Barbara Boxer, Democrat of California, said Army officials had told her earlier that some children were afraid to return to the center. **Dwindling Attendance**

Attendance at the center reportedly has declined recently from a maximum of about 250 children to 180.

Gary Willard Hambright, 34 years old, a former worker at the center and a former Southern Baptist minister, has been charged with abusing 10 boys and girls there. He worked at the center as a civilian employee for 18 months.

He was indicted Sept. 30 on 10 counts of lewd and lascivious conduct with children and two counts involving sexual acts with children. His trial has been set for April 4.

A Federal grand jury in San Francisco spent 10 months investigating abuse allegations surrounding the Presidio center, and almost 100 children were examined for physical or psychological signs of sexual abuse. At least four children were discovered to have chlamydia, a sexually transmitted disease.

An assistant United States attorney, Peter Robinson, said Mr. Hambright was charged with molesting only 10 children because other victims were so young they would not be allowed to testify in court. **Army Panel Investigated**

Mr. Mahoney said earlier this year that more than 70 children had been interviewed by Army

therapists as potential abuse victims. Parents have said as many as 60 children were molested at the center.

A 16-member Army review team recently inspected the Presidio center as part of an investigation of the almost 300 child-care centers run by the Army, which care for an estimated 94,000 youngsters daily.

Allegations of sexual abuse have surfaced at more than 10 percent of those centers since 1984. Among them are the centers at Fort Dix in New Jersey and the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Major Rixon, the Army spokesman, said the inspection team looked at several aspects of the Presidio center, including hiring practices.

The decision to close the center was made by Army Secretary John O. March, the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Carl Vouon,o and Gen. Allen K. Ono, the deputy chief of staff for Army personnel, Major Rixon said.

Several parents of were pleased with news of the closing.

"This is a statement that the Army is going to roll up its sleeves and sort through this," said Capt. Mike Tobin.

"I hope the Navy, the Air Force and the Coast Guard pay attention too," he said at a Saturday news conference with other parents.