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CIA Ex-Official Testifies He Told George of Aid

Fiers Details Contra Resupply Program

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A former senior CIA official, in testimony that was almost stultifying in detail, began telling a federal court jury yesterday how much he, and the agency, knew about the secret arming of Nicaraguan contra rebels while Congress was being kept in the dark.

Alan D. Fiers, former chief of the CIA's Central American Task Force, said he shared many of the secrets with his boss, former CIA spymaster Clair E. George, now on trial on charges of lying and obstructing congressional and grand jury inquiries into the Iran-contra scandal.

At the same time, Fiers acknowledged that he often kept from George and other CIA colleagues details of the covert contra resupply operation that was run out of the Reagan White House despite a congressional ban on military aid to the Nicaraguan rebels.

"There were things going on that shouldn't be going on," Fiers said. He said he decided "not to pass the information down or up" to protect others from getting into trouble.

George, once the third-ranking official at the CIA, listened without a show of emotion, but appeared to jot down a note or two every time Fiers talked about meetings or discussions the two had.

Fiers's testimony was drawn out by special prosecutor Craig E. Gilen, who used dozens of once highly classified CIA cables to guide Fiers through a chronological account of the resupply effort. The cables had circulated widely through the agency, showing that many had access to information that George is accused of lying about.

Tapped by the late CIA Director William J. Casey to take over the

Central American Task Force in October 1984, Fiers, 53, said he quickly learned that then-White House aide Oliver L. North had "a special responsibility in Central America."

"By January 1985, I knew he was a force to be reckoned with within the government," Fiers said, adding "there was just so much you could do to resist him."

He said he learned that in several ways. He recalled one occasion in late 1984 or early 1985 when North asked him for explicit information on the air defenses maintained by Nicaragua's Sandinista government. Fiers said he refused out of fear that North would pass the details to the contras in violation of the rules Congress had laid down for the agency.

Within hours, he said, George called him and asked for the same information. Fiers said he asked George if he was going to give it to North. Fiers said George told him not to ask.

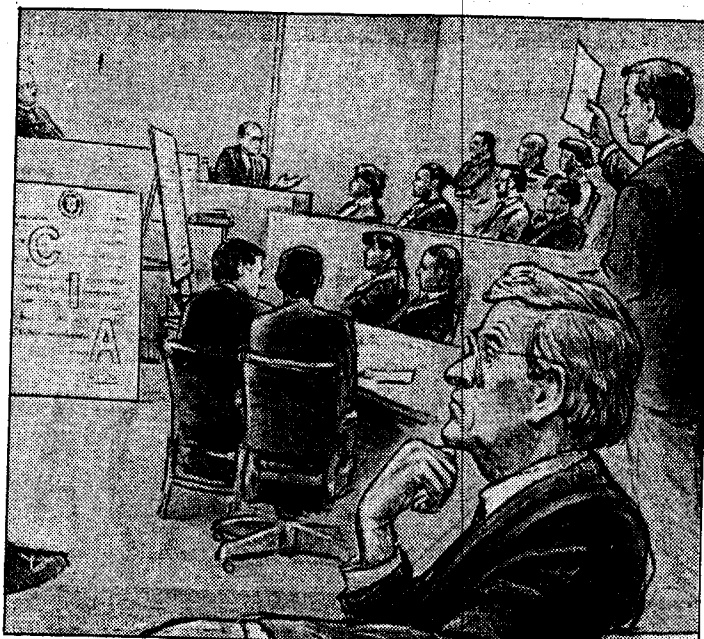
On another occasion, Fiers said North asked him for a copy of a policy paper on Nicaragua that he was writing at Casey's direction.

On the day he delivered it to Casey, Fiers said, Casey told him, "Go take a copy and give it to Ollie."

The main purpose of yesterday's often-droning recital of meetings and conferences and memos appeared to be to demonstrate the accumulated knowledge that Fiers said he passed on to George.

One stretch of testimony, for instance, dealt with the activities of Felix Rodriguez, a former CIA officer who was operating in El Salvador. George is charged with lying at a Senate hearing on Oct. 10, 1986, by testifying that the CIA did not know "the individuals involved" in a contra resupply flight that had been shot down over Nicaragua five days earlier.

George said the CIA was still



BY WILLIAM HENNESSEY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Clair E. George listens to special prosecutor Craig E. Gillen describe cables.

checking the identity of a mysterious "Max Gomez" who had been named by the sole survivor of the downed cargo plane as one of the CIA operatives running the operation.

Fiers said yesterday he had long known Gomez was an alias for Rodriguez, who, CIA cables show, had been regarded by the agency as a troublemaker because of his work for North at an air base in El Salvador in support of the contras.

In February 1986, Fiers said he took up the problems Rodriguez was creating at a meeting with George. The CIA station chief in El Salvador had been demanding a decision from headquarters over who would run so-called "humanitarian" aid flights out of El Salvador.

Fiers said George told him that "this was a State [Department]-White House operation" and that the CIA man in El Salvador should "stay away from it or I'll yank him out of there." Fiers said George ordered him to fly to El Salvador and deliver the message.

Rodriguez remained enough of a problem that Fiers told the El Salvador CIA official to stop using Rodriguez's name in cables. The official began alluding to Rodriguez in mes-

sages as the "infamous private American citizen working at Ilopango [the air base in El Salvador]."

A prosecution exhibit that was put into evidence but not yet discussed by Fiers shows that on the day George testified before the Senate committee, he had information on Rodriguez and his activities in El Salvador. The exhibit, a CIA briefing book prepared for George's appearance, contains two pages on Rodriguez's background and incorporates material from a CIA cable received the night before. The cable identified "Max Gomez" as Rodriguez and said he told a CIA officer earlier that year that he was participating in the resupply effort.

Through cables and memos, Fiers identified two other individuals who were associated with North's resupply network: former CIA official Thomas Clines and retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard V. Secord.

One cable, which Fiers said he discussed with George, identified Clines as a prospective purchaser in Europe of arms apparently destined for the contras. Another cable described by Fiers identified Secord as a buyer of arms from China that he said were also destined for the rebels.