

Bush Stance, Iran-Contra Note at Odds

Weinberger Memo Puts President at Meeting On Arms for Hostages

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A 1986 note written by then-Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, released yesterday by a federal grand jury, contradicts statements by President Bush that he had not known U.S. arms sales to Iran in 1986 were intended to free U.S. hostages and was unaware of strong opposition to the plan from two Cabinet members.

In the note, Weinberger described a Jan. 7, 1986, White House meeting attended by then-President Reagan, then-Vice President Bush and senior aides at which the group discussed a plan to sell TOW antitank missiles to Iran in return for release of five U.S. hostages then held in Lebanon by pro-Iranian terrorists.

"President [Reagan] decided to go with Israeli-Iranian offer to release our 5 hostages in return for sale of 4000 TOWs to Iran by Israel," Weinberger wrote.

He went on to say that "George Shultz [secretary of state] + I opposed" the deal while "Bill Casey [CIA director], Ed Meese [attorney general] + VP [Bush] favored—as did [national security adviser John M.] Poindexter."

Release of Weinberger's handwritten note touched off a political thunderstorm yesterday with Democratic presidential nominee Bill Clinton and running mate Sen. Albert Gore Jr. (Tenn.) charging that it impeached Bush's past statements about his knowledge of the arms-for-hostages initiative. The president's aides countered that the

note was nothing new and said the timing of its release, four days before Tuesday's election, was politically motivated.

Bush has said he did not realize the Iran initiative amounted to a swap of arms for hostages until December 1986 when he heard the findings of a Senate intelligence committee inquiry into the affair from its chairman, Sen. Dave Durenberger (R-Minn.).

Earlier this month, however, Bush momentarily gave a different story when he was asked on NBC's "Today" show whether he had known about the "arms for hostages" dealings with Iran. He replied: "Yes. And I've said so all along, given speeches on it."

Yesterday, White House counsel C. Boyden Gray returned to the

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IRAN-CONTRA, From A1

original version about what Bush knew, saying Bush came out of the Jan. 7, 1986, meeting believing the TOW sales to be a plan for "creating an opening to Iran," not arms for hostages.

Bush also has repeatedly maintained he was unaware, until November 1986 when the Iran-contra affair surfaced publicly, that Weinberger and Shultz had strenuously opposed the arms sales.

Gray yesterday claimed Bush had "never said he didn't know there was opposition," but rather "he didn't know how strongly it was expressed and didn't know there was a raging fight."

The Weinberger note was included in a new indictment of the 74-year-old former Reagan cabinet member obtained yesterday by independent counsel Lawrence E. Walsh, who has been investigating the Iran-contra scandal for nearly six years. The indictment contained a new count alleging false statements by Weinberger to the House select committee that probed the Iran-contra affair in 1987. The count replaced an earlier obstruction charge dismissed last month by U.S. District Judge Thomas F. Hogan.

The indictment says Weinberger made nearly 1,700 pages of notes in 1985 and 1986. He is accused of making false statements to the House committee on June 17, 1987, when he denied at a deposition hearing that he regularly took notes or made a record of meetings.

Asked then if there was "any way that you have of making a record of the highlights of meetings," He replied: "No. There wasn't."

Weinberger is scheduled to go to trial Jan. 5 on this charge, two other counts of false statements and two counts of perjury.

Weinberger's attorney, Robert S. Bennett, accused Walsh yesterday of using the case "as a vehicle for some other political purpose." Bennett charged that Iran-contra prosecutors "went out of their way" to disclose a document that involved Bush "just days before the election."

Walsh said through a spokesman that "Bennett has consistently made false public statements regarding the activities of this office. He apparently is continuing to do so."

Clinton, at an impromptu news conference in Pittsburgh, said the disclosure that Bush "knew and ap-



CASPAR W. WEINBERGER
... "VP favored" missile sale to Iran

proved of the arms for hostages deal with Iran not only directly contradicts the president's claims, but also diminishes the credibility of the presidency. . . . This is now the first clear evidence, somebody taking notes who was there. This is a very, very serious piece of evidence."

Gore, campaigning in Bangor, Maine, called the Weinberger note "a true smoking gun" and called on Bush to release the notes of the still-secret testimony about the Iran-contra affair Bush gave before a presidentially appointed review board in December 1986.

The indictment also contained other previously unpublished Weinberger notes about an arms-for-hostages shipment in November 1985. The notes raise questions about statements by Reagan and other figures involved in the scandal, including Gen. Colin L. Powell, the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and formerly an aide to Weinberger.

The notes described discussions between Weinberger and then-national security adviser Robert C. (Bud) McFarlane about a proposed sale by Israel to Iran of U.S.-made Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to get American hostages released in 1985. The notes reflected Weinberger's repeated opposition to such a deal.

On Nov. 20, 1985, Weinberger wrote that McFarlane called him about preparations for the deal and told him: "President has decided to do it thru Israelis." In the next week, a shipment of 18 Hawk anti-aircraft missiles went to Iran. When the Iranians rejected the missiles, no hostages were released.

A year later, after the scandal had started to unfold in public, Reagan set up a review board chaired by the late-Sen. John Tower (R-Tex.). When Reagan appeared in January and February 1987 before the panel, he said that he did not know how the November Hawk shipments came about, but when he learned of them "he objected," according to the board's report.

Another Weinberger note described how Powell, then Weinberger's military assistant, discussed with him on Nov. 19, 1985, problems involving notification of Congress that would arise from the planned sale of Hawk missiles to Iran, whether the missiles went directly or through Israel.

"Colin Powell in office re data on Hawks—can't be given to Israel or Iran [without] Cong[ressional] notification. . . ." Weinberger wrote.

In a deposition before the House select committee two days after Weinberger's appearance, Powell was asked if he recalled having "any discussions" with Weinberger about handling of the Hawk sale and Congress. "We may have talked about it briefly, but I have no specific recollection if we did, or if we did, what we said about it," Powell said.

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Mystery Witness Says He Told CIA Officials About Contra Aid

'No. 7' Testifies From Behind Screen at George Retrial

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An undercover CIA officer said yesterday that he told higher-ranking agency officials in early October 1986 about his earlier work as chief pilot for a secret contra resupply operation while CIA officials were denying such knowledge to Congress.

He said he first spoke up the day after a contra resupply plane loaded with weapons was shot down over Nicaragua on Oct. 5, 1986, a crash that led to the unraveling of the Iran-contra scandal.

Testifying behind a seven-foot-high screen at the retrial in federal court here of former CIA spy chief Clair E. George, the witness said he worked as "chief pilot and manager of the operation in central America" before joining the CIA in September, 1986. He said there were "nine to 10 Americans" working on the project out of El Salvador when he left it that summer.

George denied knowing who was involved in the flights for the Nicaraguan contra rebels when he testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Oct. 10, 1986, and the House intelligence committee on Oct. 14, 1986. Four of the seven felony counts against him challenge the truthfulness of his statements at those two hearings.

Identified only as "CIA Officer No. 7," the witness did not testify at George's first trial, which ended in a mistrial in August. Chief Iran-contra prosecutor Craig A. Gillen indicated yesterday that classification problems were the reason he was not called the first time.

CIA No. 7, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, said he sought a job at the CIA in October 1985, and was told it would take six to nine months to process his application. In the meantime, he met Richard Gadd, a former Air Force officer who was hiring pilots and cargo handlers for the secret, White House-run resupply operation.

Hired to run the air operations, fly mis-

sions and train other pilots, the witness said he flew to El Salvador's Ilopango air base in early February 1986 and "met an individual I knew as Max Gomez," who was in charge of the supply warehouse and dealings with Salvadorans.

CIA No. 7 said he left the job on June 22 and by chance flew back to the United States with Gomez, whose real name was Felix Rodriguez. A former CIA operative,

Gomez "revealed to me his true name at that time," the witness said.

On Oct. 6, the witness said, he told his superiors in the CIA's Air Branch "everything" he knew about the resupply operation and subsequently repeated his story to others, including Norman H. Gardner Jr., special assistant to George who was then deputy director for operations. CIA No. 7 said he spoke with Gardner by phone the night of Oct. 10 and met with him for 90 minutes on the morning of Oct. 14.

Accompanied by Gardner and another CIA colleague, George was asked at the House hearing the afternoon of Oct. 14 if he knew at that point "who was flying the flights and who was behind them," and he replied, "No sir." Asked if he knew whether "Gomez or Rodriguez was involved in providing supplies to the contras," he said, "I do not know that per se. I do not. Or any record I have ever read."