

Ex-CIA Officer, Duane Clarridge, Cited on 7 Counts

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WASHINGTON — Duane Clarridge, a former top Central Intelligence Agency officer for Europe and Central America, was charged with lying to Congress and a presidential commission regarding his knowledge of the Iran-Contra affair.

The seven-count indictment, which carries charges of perjury and making false statements, alleges that Mr. Clarridge sought to conceal the Reagan administration's role in a secret arms shipment to Iran in November 1985 and repeatedly lied as to when he learned of the nature of the cargo.

The shipment, carrying U.S. Hawk anti-aircraft missiles, relied on Israeli middlemen. But a CIA proprietary airline was tapped to carry the weapons, and officers in Europe helped expedite the flight. Mr. Clarridge was a close ally to then-National Security Council aide, Lt. Col. Oliver North, and as chief of the CIA's European division, he played a direct role in carrying out these arrangements on behalf of his friend and the White House.

The shipment laid the groundwork for much of what followed in the Iran-Contra affair as the Reagan administration soon directly involved itself in the sale of arms to Iran and the diversion of profits to fund anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua. When the scandal broke in late 1986, the November 1985 shipment came back to haunt high government officials. And the charges now reflect a continued effort by independent counsel Lawrence Walsh to show that CIA officers were used in an attempted cover-up.

William McDaniel, Mr. Clarridge's attorney, said his client would be proven in-

nocent. But court papers filed by the prosecution reflect grand jury testimony contradicting the former officer and giving new details as to his contacts with Col. North leading up to the shipment. Chief among these is a Nov. 19, 1985, meeting between Col. North, Mr. Clarridge and Vincent Cannistraro, a second CIA officer, at a Virginia restaurant and lounge that became a favorite watering hole for Col. North's network of operatives.

"During this meeting, Lt. Col. North discussed with the defendant... and Mr. Cannistraro the trouble that Lt. Col. North was having obtaining flight clearances in Europe for an aircraft that would be traveling to Iran," according to the indictment. "Lt. Col. North stated at the time that the cargo would be military equipment."

Both Col. North and Mr. Cannistraro have appeared before the grand jury that brought yesterday's indictment, and the papers contradict Mr. Clarridge's claim that he didn't know weapons were involved before the flight was under way five to six days later. When he testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee, for example, Mr. Clarridge said he believed at the time that the cargo was oil-drilling equipment—a cover story used in the operation—and he portrayed the transaction as a "straight commercial deal" with no major government involvement.

Though the charges focus on his involvement with arms sales to Iran, Mr. Clarridge's relationship with Col. North was far broader and included a shared commitment to the Contras, or Nicaraguan insurgents who ultimately benefited from the profits generated by the shipments. Mr. Clarridge headed the CIA's Latin America division in the early 1980s and, on occasion, traveled in the region under the code name "Mr. Maroni." While other CIA officers have been described as disdainful of Congress, his temperament was outwardly defiant, and his aggressive tenure is best remembered for the secret mining of Nicaraguan harbors in 1984.

Wall Street Journal
P.A. 10 11/27/91
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