

Post 7/27/92

THE WASHINGTON

Report on Reagan Laid to 'Speculation'

Walsh's Office Points at Defense Lawyers; Assurances to Ex-President Cited

Associated Press

A spokeswoman for Iran-contra prosecutor Lawrence E. Walsh said yesterday that a report in The Washington Post that Walsh will decide within 10 days whether to initiate legal moves that could lead to the indictment of former president Ronald Reagan for his alleged coverup of one part of the scandal "sounds like speculation by defense lawyers."

Mary Belcher, of Walsh's office, said: "No one knows the true status of this investigation except people who work in this office. None of us is commenting on such matters."

In response to the Post report, Reagan spokeswoman Catherine Goldberg issued a statement saying any suggestion that the former president is a target of the investigation is "false and unfounded."

"We have been assured by the independent counsel [Walsh] that President Reagan is not a target of

that investigation," said Goldberg. "There is no evidence that President Reagan has violated any law or has been anything less than completely forthcoming. He has cooperated fully, voluntarily and honestly with all aspects of the Iran-contra investigations and any suggestion to the contrary is false."

The word "target" is a legal term used by U.S. attorneys and refers to someone facing probable indictment. The Post report did not say that Reagan had been named a target.

A source close to Reagan said Goldberg's statement was using the word "target" in a more general sense—in an attempt to convey that Walsh's office was not contemplating an indictment of the former president.

But the sources say that Walsh's office is focusing nonetheless on whether Reagan and his former aides tried to conceal the White

House's role in the deliveries of 508 TOW anti-tank missiles and 18 Hawk antiaircraft missiles from Israel to Iran in 1985.

The pace of Walsh's investigation picked up after last month's indictment of former defense secretary Caspar W. Weinberger on charges of concealing contemporaneous notes that referenced the 1985 arms sales—a subject Weinberger has maintained he knew nothing about at the time the weapons were delivered.

The Post report said Walsh also is weighing whether to seek indictments of three other top Reagan aides—former attorney general Edwin Meese III, former secretary of state George P. Shultz and former chief of staff Donald T. Regan. He will first try to persuade them to testify to a conspiracy before seeking indictments, as he tried unsuccessfully with Weinberger, the report said.