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# Weinberger Pleads

# Not Guilty

*Iran-Contra Trial  
Is Set For Nov. 2*

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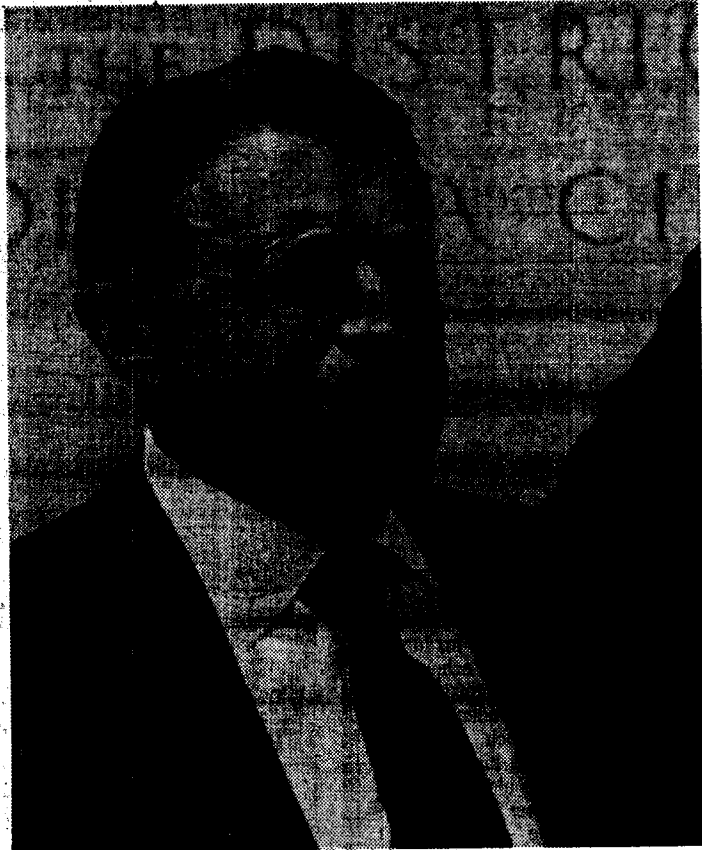
Former defense secretary Caspar W. Weinberger pleaded not guilty yesterday to five felony charges arising from the Iran-contra affair, and a U.S. district judge scheduled trial for Nov. 2, the day before the presidential election.

Judge Thomas F. Hogan picked the early date after Weinberger's lawyer asked for "a speedy trial" because "a tremendous cloud" is hanging over his client, who has been charged with obstruction, perjury and making false statements.

If the trial date holds, it all but guarantees a spate of Iran-contra publicity in the weeks preceding Election Day. Some of those reports may include mention of President Bush, because the prosecution's case is designed to try to show that a White House coverup was discussed during two November 1986 meetings attended by Bush, who was then vice president.

At yesterday's arraignment, Iran-contra prosecutor Craig A. Gillen told the judge he would try to get classified documents needed in the trial cleared rapidly for public use, but added it was up to the Justice Department to run the declassification process. Gillen said in court he thought the early November date was "a bit optimistic."

The Weinberger trial is expected to avoid many of the legal pitfalls that delayed earlier Iran-contra prosecutions because the defense has said it plans to file only a hand-



Former defense secretary Weinberger leaves federal courthouse here after plea.

ful of motions and the complex issue of immunized testimony before Congress—which tied up earlier Iran-contra prosecutions—is not involved.

But Weinberger's attorney, Robert S. Bennett, warned the court that he will seek to disqualify Gillen from prosecuting the case because he said Gillen "will be an essential witness in the case."

In one of the counts in the indictment, Weinberger is accused of making a false statement to Gillen on Oct. 10, 1990. At that time, Gillen, accompanied by an FBI agent, interviewed Weinberger, 74, about whether the former Cabinet member had notes that had not yet been delivered to prosecutors.

According to the FBI agent's report of the interview, Gillen told Weinberger he had a document

from a "credible" individual that alleged Weinberger "has withheld some of his notes concerning the Iran-contra matter."

"Weinberger responded that the allegation is not true, and he is distrustful of the document's author and his motivations," the FBI reports said. That answer is identified as one of the alleged false statements involved in the count.

Bennett told the judge yesterday that because Gillen "was a player in the case," he would ask to have him replaced.

Gillen, in turn, told the judge he would oppose such a motion and contend he was not necessary as a witness, implying the FBI agent who was present at the interview would be sufficient to testify about what occurred.