

Was Vice President Bush in the

Shortly before leaving office, President Bush released portions of a diary he kept in late 1986 and early 1987 as the Iran-contra scandal engulfed the Reagan White House. Press accounts of the diary's release diverged dramatically. While *The Washington Post* reported that the diary showed Bush "was more active than previously known in trying to contain" the scandal, the *New York Times* concluded that Bush "was indeed unaware of crucial aspects of the episode." These accounts, while not necessarily contradictory, prompted *The Post* ombudsman, Joann Byrd, to recommend that newspapers run the full text of such documents so that readers can judge for themselves. What follows, then, is a lengthy selection from Bush's diary entries related to Iran-contra events for November and December 1986, closing with Jan. 1, 1987.

Bush, according to his attorney, Griffin B. Bell, sporadically dictated his thoughts on special events since the early 1970s. In November 1986, Bush "decided to chronicle his probable run for the presidency in 1988 with regular but not daily dictation of his personal thoughts," Bell says. The dictations began Nov. 4, 1986, (the day after a Lebanese magazine reported that the United States had shipped arms to Iran) and continued through Bush's election to the presidency two years later.

In February 1987, independent counsel Lawrence E. Walsh requested that the vice president supply any documents in his possession relevant to Iran-contra. Bush did not provide the diary, according to Bell, because the tapes had not been transcribed and because the aides who responded to Walsh were unaware of their existence.

Bush's tapes accumulated for months at a time, according to Bell. On various occasions they were sent to Bush's vice presidential office in Houston where they were transcribed. The tapes were erased and the typed transcripts returned to Washington and stored at the vice president's residence. When Bush became president, the hundreds of pages of typed diary were moved to a third floor safe in the White House living quarters, where they were discovered by a secretary last September. In mid-December the diary transcript was delivered to Walsh. On Jan. 15, the Bush White House released portions to the public.

Diary entries relevant to Iran-contra that Bush made after Jan. 2, 1987, were not released on grounds that they were not included in Walsh's February 1987 request. Bell also deleted material from the November and December 1986 entries that he deemed irrelevant to Iran-contra.

The White House deletions are marked in the text with three asterisks: * * *. Ellipsis points (. . .) were inserted by the secretary who transcribed the diary apparently to denote areas where Bush's comments were inaudible or unclear. Spelling, punctuation, and identifications have been corrected by *The Washington Post*. Where additional deletions were made by *The Post* for reasons of space, the substance of the deleted material is noted between brackets.

Extracts From
Vice President Bush Diary Transcripts
November 4, 1986—January 2, 1987

Loop? You Make

the Call

[Nov. 4]

This is November 4, 1986, the beginning of what I hope will be an accurate diary, with at least five and maybe 15 minutes a day on observations about my run for the presidency in 1988.

We had a problem on that Fred Khedouri thing [Khedouri was Bush' deputy chief of staff]. * * * I know he talked to the papers. I know he's been down on Don Gregg. [A career CIA officer, Gregg was Bush's national security adviser. News reports had linked Gregg to the contra resupply operation in Central America.] * * *

November 5th

On the news at this time is the question of the hos-

tages. There is some discussion of [former national security adviser] Bud McFarlane having been held prisoner in Iran for 4 days. I'm one of the few people that know fully the details, and there is a lot of flak and misinformation out there. It is not a subject we can talk about. * * *

I am hopeful that Terry Anderson [AP reporter being held hostage], will be freed very soon, but it is at a very dicey moment and the media are pressing for full disclosure from [Secretary of State] George Shultz or from others. This is one operation that has been held very, very tight, and I hope it will not leak.

November 7th

* * * [Bush discusses a meeting with Saudi ambassador Prince Bandar Bin Sultan.] * * *

Griffin Bell going down to see about freeing Hasenfus, [Eugene Hasenfus was the sole survivor of a plane shot down in Nicaragua while on a contra resupply mission in October 1986] representing him, seeing that Hasenfus was denied any reasonable coverage at all . . . reasonable treatment at all. Then, Griffin jumped on the Los Angeles Times woman as really taking up the side of the Sandinistas. I wrote Griffin Bell a letter on this.

[Bush reports on a meeting with former hostage David Jacobson and President Reagan.] * * *

November 8

Then I had an intriguing call from [investment banker and personal friend] Nick Brady, who weighed in with George Shultz. George telling him, 'oh, there's a lot in this,' talking now about Iran and the prisoner thing, 'release saying they could hurt your friend,' meaning me, so Brady will fly down tomorrow and then we will see what happens.

November 9, 1986

Sunday the papers are full of Iran. A lot of crazy information . . . some of it that the arms dealers that were arrested felt I was involved. These are the ones that were arrested, these Israelis. Danish shippers talking about enormous shipments of arms to Iran, which of course is not true. A lot of misinformation: Rumors that Shultz is down and discouraged and that the White House won't talk to him. [National security adviser John] Poindexter refusing to return his call, or something of that nature. I called Poindexter today and told him that I am concerned, concerned that Shultz might get so down that he would leave. Poindexter telling me that he did it once, back in the Nixon/Watergate days. My view is that it will hurt the President and that they need to have some communication. His people are not dealing from a full deck there in the State Department. They see a lot of stories and they probably think they are true. They think that the whole terrorism policy will fall apart and that our basic relationships in the Middle East will fall apart but they don't understand fully that, exactly what we are doing and what we aren't doing. There are too many people talking about this that don't know anything about Iran and the freeing of the hostages deal. Even Benjamin Weir, the hostage that was freed, thinks we should not be negotiating with terrorists. Don Regan used the word 'negotiate' which was too bad. There is also a story that Regan was talking about being on the team, and the implication is that Shultz is not. All of this hurts badly. We are trying to follow up. Nick Brady is going out to see Shultz and we'll see what happens.

November 9th

George Shultz came over to discuss all the goings on.

Brady had been out to see him. I was concerned about talks that he might resign. I was concerned about other reports that he felt 'cut out.' Indeed, he had felt cut out. And, he was dealing from less than a full deck on the Iran situation. He distrusts not only [National Security Council

staff member Oliver] North, but he feels that I'm (incoherent) in jeopardy . . . myself. He thought he had heard me say something that later proved to be a lie, and his advice to me as a person interested in my future, 'don't get all involved in this.' I tried to point out that once the President made his decision that we can help, we have a lot of uninformed speculation. He'd been told that the Iranian deal had been turned off last year and I did not discuss the facts with him. But the question is, we just need to get full information. I got a call Sunday night saying there would be a meeting with the President at 11:30 and then it turns out that Shultz will be off in Guatemala. Great speculation in the press about what did or didn't happen. Enormous national interest out there, and in Congress, [West Virginia Sen.] Bob Byrd flexing his muscles, talking about getting to the bottom of it, which I expect will happen. But, all in all, a troubling weekend. People running for cover, blaming . . . The right wing, who is normally on Shultz's case, rallying behind him because of the trading arms for hostages policy. At least the policy they see as trading arms for hostages . . .

November 10

The intrigue on the Iran deal continues to build. My meeting with Shultz was very helpful, at the house. I reported yesterday . . . I reported on Monday to the President. Walked down into his office and he was sitting there all alone at his desk and I said, 'let me talk to you about a meeting I had at my house with George Shultz, and I filled him in on Shultz' concern. I said I don't think that Shultz is going to resign. I said he feels he's been cut out. He was . . . called over to see Poindexter on Saturday and he was told that Poindexter is too busy. The President was alarmed by this. I told him that Shultz is mainly on the 'cut out' side and that he thought that a lot of things were happening that in my view, were not happening . . . on this Iran deal. The President is very suspicious of the State Department bureaucracy . . . wondered if perhaps the State Department people were perhaps playing games and trying to undermine the policy. * * *

The policy of trying to get in touch with modern Arabs . . . moderate people in Iran is going to be supportive. The idea that the NSC is a loose cannon is being debated out there now, and of course, as we know it isn't a loose cannon.

Others, the CIA is particular, was involved. The report into the Congress with the new Senate may make it tougher in the future. But, though I don't like the concept of arms for hostages, there is enough removal on this and enough good things, such as the release of the hostages and contact with moderates, will in the long run—in my view—off-set this. Shultz worries about a Watergate syndrome. * * *

George does not want this to rub off on me for the . . . run for the Presidency. He was very thoughtful about that and very considerate of me. I told him that I didn't see anything in this that would do that.

[Bush goes on to discuss views of former hostages on



ROB SHEPPERSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

... static ... decision to go public on Iran. That's all very well documented ... the President showing great tension for the first time. His credibility is ... The NSC seems to be wanting to hold the line, trying to get the hostages back. There's tension between the various players ... a tendency to say everybody knew it when Shultz himself has felt clued out. I am urging being very careful of what is said ... not trying to say the whole Cabinet was involved, when they weren't. Not trying to put the facts beyond where they are. I remember Watergate. I remember the way things oozed out. It is important to level, to be honest, to be direct. We are not to say anything. The dam gates are open. Everybody is making judgments based on erroneous information and it is a flood of wrong facts coming out. It really is hemorrhaging and the President now is going with his speech.

Little implications—wire stories in here about Israelis under trial in New York for shipping arms, now calling me to testify claiming that they have tape recordings showing

that—though indirect—I somehow was involved in this.

the dealings with Iran.]

November 12

Iran still dominating—George Shultz very frustrated ... very carefully and properly not wanting to be dragged into something where we've got corners. I am now a little concerned about the finding ... who knew what when. Apparently there was some meeting over in the residence that I did not go to where the plan was devised. But then the 'finding' thing is strange. My own view on 'finding' is they ought to be discussed ... at a table of all the NSC principals, and then, the President decides and everybody knows that he has made a finding. It should not be done on the phone. It should not be done leaving some in and some out.

There is unease. You can sense the tensions of Poindexter and Shultz. I saw one statement that all of the principals are 'informed and advised' and I made a note of that statement in the Oval office and showed my note to Poindexter. My reservations said 'Let's be sure now that the Secretary of State will agree to this.' He flared up and was a little upset with Shultz. But, I gave him four points that I think Congress would be upset about and two that they would like. ???ing the hostages were out and the forward looking trying to establish contact with the moderate Iran leadership. The whole thing is ... in the NSC meeting [discusses session with Hill leaders, Sen. Robert J. Dole being "somewhat noncommittal," Rep. Dick Cheney being "very supportive in a lot of ways but not in every way."]

[Nov. 13]

Two big events on the 13th.

November 14

* * * It may be turning the corner maybe on Iran. John Poindexter went over to The Washington Post and faced what he felt was an arrogant and hostile meeting for the most part—Perceptions—quote—Linkage—quote—they gave some lip-service to the long range goals, but the irony of it all was after the press were yelling and yelling about disclosure, in one of the press meetings here they said, 'aren't you afraid disclosure is going to hurt the other hostages?' The point we were making for several days, until the decibel count got so high that the President felt he had to speak out.

I keep urging total disclosure, and not making statements that are not accurate. I know George Shultz feels this way. Also, being sure that our mechanical procedures inside the White House are proper. It leads me to feel, again, certainly for the future, that we should not have CIA Director as part of the Cabinet; that all findings should be properly found.

There's friction—a little between [White House Chief of Staff] Don [Regan] and Poindexter now. But, the President bears up beautifully. He smiles when the press fire these tough questions. That is something that I have got to learn and learn better. I will keep trying. * * *

[Nov. 15]

[Bush discusses breakfast with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.] * * *

November 16

On this November 16, I don't like the way this Iran thing is coming out. The President's credibility is really eroding. They are all over him and he's getting blamed for a lot of things that haven't happened: spare parts to airplanes, for example—F14's is a big one. This all proves the danger of covert action when it becomes public. The worthy purpose of contact with moderates in Iran, which is a long-range strategic purpose—is obscured by the perception of parts for hostages . . . like the Daniloff and Zacharov swap—there is no way to escape the parallel. Jacobson is free. Others hostages are free, but that is obscured by the hostage thing. I very much hate the Israeli connection on all this. I worry about it enormously, but it is there and the more of that that comes out, the worse it will be, it seems to me.

November 16, 1986

. . . as Margaret Thatcher climbed into the helicopter with Shultz, Poindexter, Regan, Regan leaned over and said Shultz isn't on board on this Iran. I called him today to see what he meant and he said that Shultz wanted to come out and say, "well, from now on, it would all be done in the State Department and no more arms of any kind to Iran." Regan's point is that this makes the President look like he was 'wrong' . . . I'm not sure that we've heard the end of all of this. * * *

November 17

[Bush reports on his hectic schedule with "Iran dominating everything."] * * *

November 18, 1992 [sic]

Iran thing goes on and on. I went for a two-hour briefing with the President where he was grilled by the White House staff. I just have a feeling that there is a groping-ness and an unwillingness to give him as direct ad-

vice as possible . . . He's awful good in his reactions, but on the facts of when the findings were found and the NSDD [National Security Decision Directive] signed and here's no reason that he should know this, and he doesn't know it. I just worry that he gets caught up in something that is less than the full truth if he doesn't know, and yet get jumped on by the jackals . . . and, they are ready. * * *

November 19th

Interesting meetings with the President this morning—all alone, encouraging him to iron out the difficulties with Shultz and the White House, I mentioned that earlier on the tape. I'm worried about it before this press conference. People are down on the President on this one. Wrong, wrong piling on. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but there are good lessons in it too, I guess. Very good lessons. I talked to the defense minister and vice premier of Egypt, having seen cables from [President Hosni] Mubarak and tried to give him a real emphasis on exactly what had happened and some of what had not happened. He was discreet. He hadn't asked about it. I told him that we had not shipped arms for hostages, in spite of the perception. I mentioned that it was defense . . . the problem being however, that Iraq is now waiting and saying antitank defense is the major thrust weapon for Iran in their 'final offensive.' Air defense is a way of overcoming Iraq's biggest advantage in the war, namely air power. Iraq is upset, but Iraq is getting certain things from us too. Bahrain is weighed in very concerned, but again, I think we can explain all of this. * * *

[Bush reports on Reagan's news conference and Bush's "gut instinct" to defend the president.]

November 20th

The President tells me that at lunch, 'I really had a shocker.' Don Regan has just told me that George Shultz has told him Poindexter has to go or he goes." It doesn't sound like George, this kind of ultimatum. We talked at length and I suggested to the President that the only thing he could do was call a Monday meeting which he decided to do to get the key NSC players together and to

get them all to lay it on the table and to just simply say, 'we're going to hammer this thing out and what are you upset about, George? What are you upset about, Poindexter?' * * *

Poindexter says people are informed and Shultz points out that he hadn't been on a certain point, and then they all get furious. So it's going around and around interne-cine warfare.

[Bush tells of being informed of concerns in Congress and the negative reaction to Reagan's speech.] * * *

November 21st, Friday

* * * On Poindexter, I'm concerned because today—on Friday—some new revelation that there were arms shipped in September of '85. The President having said that none were and I don't know what that's all about, but I walked into Don Regan's at lunch today and he said, 'Well, there's a new bomb shell.' [Attorney General] Ed Meese, Poindexter, and Regan, excluding me, had a meeting in the White House about it. I am a statutory member. I am the one guy that can give the President objective advice and I have felt a twinge as to why the hell they didn't include me, but, on the other hand, you wind up not dragged into the mess. The other hand to that is you can't give the President proper advice. * * *

I told [Treasury Secretary James] Baker today that I

would like to find a way to help the President. Perhaps by saying, 'Yes, I can understand it when McFarlane, the architect of this, now says it was a mistake in retrospect and I think all of the President's advisers, whether they were for it or against it will admit, in retrospect, it's a mistake and I expect the President would admit this, and then have the President confirm. And a lot of people like Will Ball? [Bush's liaison to Congress] and tonight Janet Steiger [a personal friend] seemed to think that this would calm some of the storms. I told Jimmy Baker this and he is strongly opposed to my doing that. He thinks it will drag me into something that I have not been dragged into. * * *

But, whatever happens, the President has to get a hold of this thing. It is hard to do when stuff is oozing and leaking out. The press is having a field day. [Georgia Sen.] Sam Nunn, with his six points of contradiction, are having a field day. Indeed the President was told by Shultz that he had made six factual errors and he wanted to talk to him about it. The Monday meeting is set to iron all of this out and I urge the President to get them all in there and say 'now I know there cross-department bickering. I know that one department doesn't like what another is saying, but I want to know all of the facts and I want to get this behind us. I want this team to stay together.' It is not good. There is a lot of covering * * * and it is unseemly and the press scent it. It is like blood in the water and the sharks are homing in. There was a first-linkage to me to all this today when a [Ralph Z. Hallow], a horrible fellow, a right-wing guy from the Washington Times wrote a piece that wasn't bad at all, but just talked about what the Vice President knew and when he knew it. In my view, the right-wingers are going to try to see if I'm going to try to separate from the President. Yet, a lot of them, including the paper, have been against the President on this. * * *

In fact, frankly, I just don't think you can go out and separate from Reagan on this thing, although some would like to see you do it. And although there would be some short-run affirmation of character, if I would go out and say well, I've thought of this and I can no longer remain silent. I must go out and say 'I think what's happened is despicable and never should have happened in the first place.' I'm not about to start that. I don't believe it. I think that the President must know that he can have the Vice President for him and he must not think that he has to look over his shoulder.

[Bush says that Reagan's 'basic integrity and honor' will enable him to overcome his difficulties.]

Saturday, the 22nd of November

[Bush tells of his refusal to distance himself from Reagan and discusses arranging a meeting with former president Nixon.] * * *

There was a suggestion made yesterday—Poindexter calling me about it—and then it showing up in the President's briefing paper that I take [Assistant Secretary of Defense] Mike Armacost and go to a bunch of the Arab countries and Moslem countries—including Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, etc.—to explain the policy. I'm perfectly willing to do it—indeed, it would be a challenging mission, and I think an important one. But, I'd have to get all of the facts. I'm simply not clear on some of the things I'm reading. The Israeli matter is still bubbling along there. I think there will be more recrimination on all of that once the full story gets out.

November 24

* * * Got back to the office and Ed Meese came to

see me, having stuck his head in ahead of the lunch talking about we need to double check dates and be sure that everybody knew who attended what meetings . . . Then, he laid a real bomb shell on me that Ollie North had taken the money and put it in a Swiss bank account . . . from Iran . . . the Israelis doing that with him . . . to be used for the contras. They are going to blow into a major thing . . . threatening to get in front of it. And I told him that in my view, the President should ask me if I knew anything about it. I told him absolutely not. I asked him who did . . . [former Air Force Major Gen. Richard] Secord, McFarlane . . . I think McFarlane and Poindexter, although McFarlane had left. It's going to be a major flap. The President has got to move fast.

We got some 12 press calls today . . . all on a new theme: The Vice President—what's his advice? What does he think? Thank God, I've consistently said that I don't discuss what I tell the President or if I support the President. * * *

Monday, the 24th continued

Dick Allen and Ed Rollins were both on one of the talk shows this morning. The question is 'Is the Vice President hiding? Why doesn't he get out there?' All instructions is to shut out, not pass along things. And yet, when you don't play their game, this inside game of what you think and what your comments are or who do you think is wrong/who do you think is right? Then they call you hiding and if you do say something, then they say 'you're breaking from the President or psychopathically [sic] loyal. I've decided to take a 'no comment' posture. The President has asked us to shut up and that is exactly what is happening. If I could think of a positive thing to say, I'd like to do it. But, so far, public comments have been fine, and now there's a lot of press speculation . . . this is really hurting me and will hurt me. In 1988, I expect my political opponents are going to start putting this out, but there really isn't very much I can do about that. I've made my decision. It may get so bad—this, or the economy or something—that I will cease to be credible candidate. But, I don't think that is the case . . .

November 25, 1986

I couldn't sleep all night, thinking of what Ed Meese had told me yesterday—about what advice to try to give to the President this morning. * * *

The politicians will be piling on, but I am inextricably—and I would say, happily—on the President's side; although, I am troubled by a lot of this, obviously, so, the best thing is to see him succeed. I think we must have at least two changes. The best thing would be to make three. Get a hold of it—order—tightening of procedures

See DIARY, C7, Col. 1

and investigation to be sure that all of the facts are known. The President has to be out front on the arms transfer and the money and where the money went, etc. This will result in an enormous hue and cry in Congress and there will be a big investigation. It is important that the President act today. I think I've concluded that the best thing he can do is to go with the resignation of all three top people. It's tough!! It appears out of control and has some degree of reality.

November 25

The big day. It started out with a 9 o'clock meeting and Meese came in. Then outlined in more detail that which he had mentioned to me the night before about the money going to the Contras. He mentioned it—the President and Don Regan and I were there—Meese and Don outlined to the President that Poindexter had agreed to resign. That Ollie North was resigning. The President seemed troubled. He always thinks of his own people . . . didn't quite see that there was anything wrong. I told him that I felt that was going to be a major flap over this in the Congress and elsewhere. * * *

Poindexter then comes in. The President had a nice frank discussion with him. He told him that he was sorry that it had worked out this way . . . thought he had done the right thing. And, then he left and then, a little later, in came . . . we had a 15 minute break then . . . Shultz, and Cap [Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger] and [Director of Central Intelligence William] Casey came in. The President broke the news to them. I don't think any of them had known this—maybe Casey had been tipped off. Casey started explaining to the President about some contact he had had with some Casagie [perhaps a reference to Saudi billionaire Adnan Khashoggi] and someone—I was unclear as to why he was bringing it up. But, whether he was disclosing something that he had known something about this or not, but, I couldn't hear him very well. [Bush reports on meeting with members of Congress. "They were shocked."] * * *

I, later in the day, went in and told the President that I really felt that Regan should go, Shultz should go, and that he ought to get this all behind him in the next couple of months. I said, 'if you were told correctly, that either Shultz or Poindexter have to be fired. I don't see how you can accept that kind of ultimatum. Shultz wanted to go anyway.' The President is very unhappy. He keeps worrying about the people at the State Department. And, he also thinks that George is not backing him. I told him that I thought that one might be worked out. * * *

But, to get everything together, we really need to clean the slate. The President just smiled. He does not, I'm sure does not, want to do that. He does not resent it when we ask questions about different parts of all this. What do you think the Israeli reaction is? and all of that. Later on, I went in and told him that Poindexter—whom I had gone to say goodbye to—had told me that the Israelis were accepting it pretty well. And then I had to call him at the residence later on—5 o'clock—to tell him that Ollie (whom I had called to say goodbye to)—told me that the Israelis were up in arms and were in a really bad frame of mind and were having an emergency cabinet meeting, etc.

It is awful early to know if there was any illegality. The big point is that the President heard of it yesterday

and got right on top of it. He didn't know this and this simply is going to have to be proved because I think the Congress is going to go on and on. * * *

The Administration in disarray—foreign policy in disarray—cover-up—Who knew what when? Suggesting I head a Commission . . . The President was presented with Don and Ed Meese concept of commission, headed by Howard Baker or somebody. But, maybe the idea makes sense so I have written a memo. The problem being that I am so close to the Administration that some might say 'cover-up'.

But, the Commission is not supposed to find out who did what. It is suppose to find out what . . . how we should handle foreign policy in the future, etc. It is an intriguing idea and tomorrow I may try to go forward by talking to Meese, and perhaps others about that. * * *

A for John Poindexter and Ollie North, too. Both patriots—both decent and honorable men. Both walking the plank. The news is all over: Poindexter resigned. North was fired. North telling me that there was no money for lawyers. He's going to call Craig [Fuller, Bush's chief of staff] about a fund being set up. If ever these Contra supporters wanted to rally to the cause, now is the time. The guy went to bat for them, even though in doing this, he did something wrong—clearly wrong.

November 25th

On the 25th, I called the President early in the morning and made a suggestion to him that I head the investigatory panel. Bob Teeter [Bush pollster] and Fuller and I had talked about this. I told Teeter it might look so close to chicken coop that the fox would be guarding it. But, I proposed in my little memo to the President that I quietly take a polygraph test on any embarrassing questions likely to come up. I also listed some proposals, such as: The CIA guy not being in the Cabinet; the FBI, I mean the Intelligence Committee being combined into one. * * *

Craig called me with the latest on the arms shipment—the allegation being that Don Regan . . . that people are in disarray and hoping that I will give advice to the President. I do, but often, he does not take it. I did suggest John Tower to head the panel before I got this idea of doing it myself. That appointment seems to be going over pretty well. * * *

Our own people are appalled by this in Iran. Not sure where I fit in or don't fit in. Most think it is a real downer. But, my view is that you've got to take the good with the bad. You can't fine tune the opportunities. You can't jump sideways. So, you've got to weather the storm. Establish what you do and when. Then, trying to weather the storm, people will say well, why didn't you do something about it? People not recognizing always the Vice Presidents don't always have chances to "do something" about anything, given the myth about Vice Presidents. Then, something like this comes along and comes the crunch.

I know that I have told the truth. I know that I am not going to desert the President and I know that he has told the truth. That is really the fundamental ingredient here.

November 27th

[Bush recounts doing several press interviews] * * *

The press keep pursuing all kinds of lengths—the Hasenfus-Contra thing is raised again [Hasenfus told his Nicaraguan captors that he reported to a 'Max Gomez,' the code name for Felix Rodriguez, a former CIA oper-

and philosophical. * * * This morning, the President mentioned something to Don that Mike Deaver, Bill Rogers, and Bob Strauss [a Washington lawyer] had been over talking about this fracas, saying they had a good suggestion: that we can have some kind of public relations plan. * * *

December 6th

[Bush compares the on-going scandal to Watergate and CIA hearings in the 1970s and warns against "shouting into the middle of the hurricane."]

* * * Time will tell. My stature will tell. You've got to come out of this with integrity and honor, telling the truth, supporting the President and then in the future, making comments as to how to do things better. I'm convinced that it can be done. But who knows what events will unfold? The one thing I will not do is get into this panicky arena that seems to be out there on the part of some. * * *

[Bush says that he believes the administration may have turned the corner on the scandal.] * * *

December 10

I think in the long run—provided I'm right—that this whole matter will be resolved. It will be O.K. and then we can have stories out there 'didn't panic' 'didn't run' 'didn't duck away from the President.' But, I'm inclined to feel that I have been a loser out of this Iran thing, just as the President has. There was new polling numbers showing varying figures in lack of confidence and lack of believing in our telling the truth. But, that will all change as the facts come out.

Nixon urged the Governors to get the things in perspective and support the President. The Governors were

all saying get the facts out, get the truth out. Of course, that is exactly what everyone wants to do.

[Bush mentions various proposals for clearing the air, White House Christmas party and positive response to North congressional testimony.]

Discussion this morning in with the President. He'd like to testify. Don's going to check it out. My view is he ought to get limited exemption for North and Poindexter and say 'yes, the President did not know this.' The President say 'I didn't know it.' Address himself to that and that alone and then let the hearings go on. * * *

[Bush notes Reagan's standing in the polls.]

. . . But, Don seemed a little hesitant—and he doesn't want the President bogged down on a lot of detailing questioning. But, if the President can make a pre-Christmas dramatic statement before somebody even under oath—telling that he has told the truth about not knowing it—I think that will do an awful lot towards getting that behind us. Bill Rogers had called about limited immunity and getting immunity to North and Poindexter by one of the committees. For some reason, according to Don, that seems hard to get done.

December 11th

[Bush discusses proposals to have various participants testify before Congress.] * * * [More discussion of getting the truth out and Reagan's mood.] * * *

Morning of the 12th

They gave us some new polling figures that I have on

my chron file—showing strength, etc. but, there is still this belief that the whole truth hasn't been told. In my view, the main thing is for North and Poindexter to some way say that they didn't tell the President. They didn't! This is the fact and the President has said it, but people don't believe it. I am just not sure that we are driving hard enough to do this. * * *

December 14, 1986

* * * A very disturbing conversation with Shultz about by-passing the Secretary . . . his conviction we were still selling arms to Iran, even though the President ordered not. His feeling that Casey and Regan knew about it and his frustration that he couldn't see the President.

I called Al Keel [the deputy national security adviser] Sunday morning—this morning, the 14th. Keel called Shultz and worked it all out. There was some misunderstanding apparently, and Shultz backed off after hearing some details from Al on the fact that the arms were still going to Iran . . . A very important point. I worry because Shultz mentioned this in front of Meg [Greenfield, editorial page editor of The Post] even though everyone was saying "off the record . . . off the record." I found myself all alone in a very lively discussion about whether the Secretary of State can ever be by-passed. I quoted Kissinger in China. Shultz's liberal friends—and two of their roommates—his wife was saying, 'how could this have happened out of the basement of the White House?' I said 'Poindexter is a Kissinger.' * * *

As I wrote, the only other politics was all on this Iran stuff. A front page interview in the New York Times yesterday about Don Gregg and his connections with Felix [Rodriguez], and then one today that raises the questions as to whether Don Gregg told me about a meeting. It was unrelated to the diversion of funds, but it will simply blur in the minds of the people.

The President does not really welcome talking about these matters, but I continually raise them with him. But, then I don't want him to feel that everything is totally under control, 'cause it's not. * * *

December 15th

[Bush discusses suggestion to fire the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon and the news that Don Regan was going to testify before Congress. He also reports on meeting with Hill GOP leaders.] * * *

Morning of December 16th

The full disclosure by Don Gregg hits the front page of the Washington paper. More sensationalism to it because of the diversion of funds from Iran to the Contras. We've come clean . . . told the truth. Don seems to be more ???? than I had thought, but I see nothing illegal or any potential breaking of the law in any of this. But it gets a lot of treatment and indeed it has been all over the front pages. It still isn't bad to be seen helping the Contras out. * * *

December 17th—Christmas coming up

Clear and cold, 7:15 in the morning, waiting for Stuart Spencer. Spencer is very close to Nancy Reagan, very close to the President. He's perceived to have lots of influence, just heard [Sens. Warren] Rudman and [George] Mitchell's thing, it's too early to grant immunity. They really want their committee to go forward. This special investigating committee. It is not too early to grant immunity. We really ought to be giving immunity . . . get the facts out. Don Regan's testimony helped as [Sen. David] Durenberger came out and said he didn't think anybody else knew. But, it is just a tip of the iceberg. We now have

to get North and Poindexter to come forward and do what they ought to do. But, in the meantime this whole committee is going forward. They want their place in the sun and there is no logical reason to not grant immunity at this time. Unless somebody wants the last ounce of blood, because under use immunity, I am told the special prosecutor can still prosecute for crimes.* * *

Brady, [Lee] Atwater and all met and they're all on Don Gregg's case, thinking that Don is hurting me very much in a political sense. They didn't like the fact that this information about the Contras has kind of oozed out. Felix Rodriguez . . . they don't think I should have seen Felix Rodriguez. I disagree with that. There is a lot of pusillanimous worry here, but they are all trying to protect my interest.

December 18

[Bush discusses the complications around getting North and Poindexter "to come forward and say the President did not know.]" * * *

December 19th and 20

* * * Saturday, Dave Durenberger and Bernie McMahon, of the [Senate Intelligence] Committee, came out and briefed me on the full finding of theirs. I told Boyden Gray afterward that it almost appears that there was a deliberate effort to keep me out of the decision process. I may prove to be good, but I can't run out and . . . the press and saying I didn't know about that and I didn't know about that. If I were there I would have advised Shultz and . . .

[December 20 or 21]

* * * The Sunday papers on December 20 or 21st, are full of Dole/Bush stories. Bush being hurt; Dole emerging as the front runner. And, again that is not all bad. But, I have got to keep doing the best I can. Try to get the matter cleared up. The Saturday speech, I called for Poindexter and North to come forward and tell all they could. I said if they couldn't waive their Constitutional rights totally, they ought to answer one question: What did the President know? Or, did they tell the President? I am sure they didn't, but as I listen to the weird tale that McMahon and Durenberger, it is very hard to know exactly who knew what. I still am convinced that the President wasn't told. But, I also am convinced that there was a lot of shadowy manipulation . . . a lot of deliberately excluding facts from people. And, the story is so strange, so weird, so unbelievable that I am afraid that we are in for a real fire-

storm. That is one reason to get the cast of characters clear. It argues against keeping Don Regan. The President has cleared the decks on the National Security Council. Given Shultz's public differing with the President, coming down 'on the right side.' You can't make a change there. * * * The testimony before the Tower Commission, I think went well. I made several suggestions to them and I've written those down. They can find them in the chron file, but they include no more operations by the NSC; joint Committee on Intelligence; CIA to conduct covert operations, formalize process of the NSC staff; clearly oral findings, and failure to follow up on these covert operations was wrong. Nobody had any dream that these kinds of things were going on, and it should have been coordinated and reported.

[Bush discusses his unwillingness to go public on his

advice to Reagan.] One thing I might do is put out a chronology of what meetings I attended and let that serve as a record, cause on these key meetings that they are talking about, the key meetings that are disputed—it appears I was not there. I can not possibly reconstruct events. I cannot remember details and nobody can. But, I can only do my best to recall these matters. * * *

I am unclear about the games people are playing—the theme about Hasenfus and the Contras. It has been through the papers. On one of the talk shows last night, the . . . sky Show, Carl Rowan kept saying 'Bush hasn't come clean. We don't know anything about his role.' The implication being that I was somehow linked into the di-



ROB SHEPPERSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

version of funds to the Contras; or, that I was running a secret war. I keep getting that theme, and it is simply wrong. I think I should keep making it clear that I support the Contras, but not involved in these shenanigans.

The hardest thing of all this is to have your honor and your integrity questioned. The kind of doubt and meanness that gets into the faces of the reporters when they simply don't think you are telling the truth. I remember out in Iowa, [Washington Post reporter] David Hoffman showing a kind of vigor and strain in his face—almost like how can you ask me to believe these kinds of things. It is disappointing, but goes with the territory. This is the biggest political test—or test of any kind—that I've ever been through. * * *

The Sec. of State told me to beware of North. I guess he knew a lot more than he told me, because some of these things, I simply have never known. The idea that the program had been killed—told Shultz and Weinberger that it was killed—and then it wasn't. That it was on-going. I never heard any of that at any time. * * *

December 22

Morning meeting with the President. A certain unreality now—Don and the President, it seems to me. I mention to the President my concern that we did look like hostages for arms, and he reiterated his view that he was convinced that he didn't. Now, they are talking

about bringing in Fred Fielding, to view the documents.

December 24

One good thing that will affect politics is that Felix Rodriguez (Max Gomez) was talking to Don Gregg and he is going to come up and testify to the Special Prosecutor. He's willing to give a statement—on the record, sworn—and release it as to my role and Don Gregg's role. I think that will be extraordinarily helpful. I wanted to get an interview. But, Gregg pointed out that it's hard to confine the interview. But I hope this statement comes out, because there is some doubt in honest people's minds about the Nicaraguan connection . . . doubt that the press keeps raising . . . like in Newsweek: Unanswered questions by the Vice President. And then in this week's Time: Showing a picture of Don and a replay of that whole thing. In U.S. News: Saying we handled it well, getting it out . . . almost that Bush didn't know, and yet, it raises doubts . . . ugliness, the ugliness of this whole climate floating around. * * *

[January 1, 1987]

* * * There was no Iran stuff. The only thing we heard was that Felix . . . (tape runs out)

As I look back on '86, we come from strong front runner to behind in Iowa, bleeding slightly . . . diminished somewhat by the furor of Iran. The irony is that on many of these key meetings I was not there. The irony is that everyone says that the Vice President has no power, and yet I am the one damaged . . . he's not in on the decisions, etc.—and yet, having said that I have better access—I am diminished. The truth of the matter is: The President makes his decisions in very oblique ways. I am not in the decision process . . . not on personnel and not on major decision matters—unless I am sitting in at the time the President makes a decision, then I can speak up. These so-called findings on Iran—I'll be honest—I don't remember any of them, and I don't believe . . . I've got to see them to believe that they were even signed by the President, frankly. But, sometimes there are meetings over in the White House with Shultz, NSC guy Casey and Weinberger, and they make some decisions that the President signs off on. I am not trying to jump sideways on this, but I think it is important to have the facts. And, the facts are that the Vice President is not in the decision making loop. He does not have to sign off on decisions, is sometimes overlooked, although not on purpose by the NSC bureaucracy. There was a letter from Ollie North apparently to Felix Rodriguez saying, 'don't tell the Vice President' about certain funding things for the Contras, I guess. It is in writing and it will be a part of the Justices' record. What it seems to me that the big problem will be is how you point out 'I've learned from this . . . we're better because of it . . . we can do a better job because of all knowing this experience and not get the blame for the decision itself, even though I wasn't there for the decision itself. * * * But, that hasn't proved to be a major obstacle. I told the President just before the New Year, that I was concerned that it would look like that we were indeed selling arms for hostages. He is absolutely convinced in his own mind that we weren't. I have been saying that he is convinced in that way, but the question will come, 'well, are you convinced of it?' * * *