

Last Monday, on the opposite page, there appeared charges, authenticated by publication, which should have resulted in the immediate firing of this newspaper's managing editor and this columnist.

The writer accused the editor of gross negligence for permitting me to report that Israel instigated the selling of arms to Iran that resulted in the White House scandal, called Iranscam. My source was the Report of the President's Special Review Board, known as the Tower Commission report. (Copies are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402)

With obvious malice, the writer attacked me with a persiflage of irrelevant data culled from the paperback version of the Report. In the process, he committed libel and defamation of character, not for the first time. This is not my opinion, but that of an attorney after examining the pertinent material.

Because the accusations were completely without foundation, some immediate response is in order.

The following extracts from the Special Review Board's Report have been selected to show there was basis to fix on Israel a responsibility for enticing the White House into dealing arms to Iran. As stated in earlier columns, I still hold this nation to blame for its decisions. The fault for any fallout cannot be laid elsewhere, including the foreign nation of Israel.

The quotes come from Part III and can be found under the subheading Stage 2: The Israelis Provide a Vehicle. These excerpts have been reviewed with the *News-Post* management. The page numbers are copied from the report.

They have been selected within the narrow focus of my original contention, and are themselves the Commission's summary of more extended material found in the Report:

"Israel had long-standing interests in a relationship with Iran and in promoting its arms export industry. Arms sales to Iran could further both objectives...For both legal and political reasons, Israel felt a need for U.S. approval, or at least acquiescence in any arms sale to Iran." (RPSRB, page III-4)

"On July 3, 1985, David Kimche, the Director General of Israeli Foreign Ministry met at the White House with (National Security Advisor Robert) McFarlane...Mr. McFarlane told the Board that Mr. Kimche told him...the Iranians believed they could influence Hizballah to release the hostages in Beirut. But Mr. McFarlane also recalled Mr. Kimche expressing the view that ultimately the Iranians would need something to show for the dialogue, and this would 'probably' be weapons." (pp. III-5&6)

"On July 13, 1985, Mr. McFarlane

apparently received a second request, this time brought by an emissary directly from Israeli Prime Minister (Shimon) Peres ... The emissary carried word of a recent meeting (in which) the Iranians reportedly said that their contacts...could achieve the release of the seven Americans held in Lebanon but in exchange sought 100 TOW missiles from Israel." (Pg III-6)

"On August 2, 1985, Mr. McFarlane again met at the White House with Mr. Kimche ... Mr. McFarlane said that Mr. Kimche made a special proposal that 100 TOWs to Iran would establish good faith and result in the release of the hostages ... (Mr. McFarlane) said the president decided that, if Israel chose to transfer arms to Iran ... then it could buy replacements from the United States." (pp. III-6&7)

"(White House Chief of Staff Donald) Regan also recalled an August meeting with the president. He told the Board that the president expressed concern with any one-for-one swap of arms for hostages and indicated 'we should go slow on this but develop the contact.' Mr. Regan also told the Board that in early September, Mr. McFarlane informed the president that Israel had sold arms to the Iranians and hoped to get some hostages out. Mr. Regan stated that the President was 'upset' at the news and that Mr. McFarlane explained that the Israelis had 'simply taken it upon themselves to do this.' Mr. Regan said that after some discussion, the president decided to 'leave it alone.'" (Pg. III-7)

The Report charts out six separate sales of weapons to Iran (Pp. B-174 to B-186). According to the Board, no major U.S. involvement came until the third sale. "The United States had only a supporting role in the August and September deliveries to Iran. Israel managed the operation." (Pg. III-9)

Despite any controversy that surrounds testimony by the White House staff, the final quoted statement, supported by the charts, stands as proof that Israel more than instigated the Iran arms deals, it kept them going until the White House, still reluctantly, took over.

Israel's role was spelled out by the Tower Commission before TV cameras on Feb. 26, the day it presented this report that rests on my desk. I have not seen the paperback version, which was produced by the *New York Times*. As someone who has written for that newspaper, I cannot imagine its editors permitted any deviation from the official text, as published by the Government Printing Office.

As for the writer of last Monday's vitriolic diatribe, someone with greater curiosity than mine might wonder what he hoped to gain. As it is, he forced the publication of this substantiation that Israel led the White House into what turned out to be a major scandal.

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Matter of libel

