

Bush Urged To Grant Pardons

Senior Aides Advise Presidential Action On Iran-Contra Cases

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Some senior Republicans and White House aides, including the vice president, are advising a presidential pardon of Iran-contra defendants, starting with former defense secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, as President Bush begins clearing his desk of the final business of 12 years of Republican rule.

According to White House and GOP sources, no formal recommendation has been made to Bush, but some of his aides have raised the possibility informally. White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater said yesterday he had heard no discussion of such a move.

Bush is said by close aides to believe the announcement four days before Tuesday's election of a revised indictment of Weinberger and the release of Weinberger notes from the Iran-contra era eliminated any chance he might have had of catching Democrat Bill Clinton. Bush also is said to believe that Weinberger is "an innocent victim of [Iran-contra special prosecutor Lawrence E.] Walsh's drive to get [Bush] and that it is a travesty overall," according to one of the president's associates.

As Bush rests at Camp David this weekend, before a five-day Florida fishing trip next week, he plans a radio address today pledging his help and cooperation to President-elect Clinton and to rebuilding the Republican Party, split into conservative factions already battling over who will be the next party chairman.

Charles Black, a senior political adviser in the Bush campaign,

launched a quiet campaign this week to become the new party chairman. But other candidates are organizing to stop him, suggesting that his roles as a lobbyist, whose extensive consulting business includes foreign clients, and as what one called "a stalking horse" for the presidential ambitions of Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) would be counterproductive to rebuilding a shattered party.

At the White House and in Republican circles, thousands of Bush appointees have begun adjusting to life out of power, with the first sign being telephones that no longer ring. Fitzwater, who served as White House press secretary for

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President Ronald Reagan and then Bush, was uncharacteristically poetic about his abrupt change of status.

"Receding power rides a swift horse," Fitzwater said, adding, "You know, it's kind of nice. No hordes waiting outside my door. No endless phone list. It is kind of peaceful."

Some Bush aides got a more abrupt welcome to the new world. Margaret Tutwiler, director of communications at the White House and assistant secretary of state in the State Department under James A. Baker III, said she arrived home from Houston Wednesday to find letters from two Washington real estate agents offering to sell her Northwest house. Yesterday, television crews were filming the house as part of a story on the outgoing team. Tutwiler, however, plans to remain in Washington and find a job in the private sector after Clinton's inauguration.

Some senior aides described Bush as bitter about the final-hours re-indictment of Weinberger. "Many of us will go to our graves believing there was political motivation in the timing of this by Walsh and that any dim hope we had of catching Clinton died when we spent the last two days of the campaign on the defense over Iran-contra," said one.

Aides to Vice President Quayle

said yesterday his conversations with Bush are private and they did not know whether he directly suggested to the president that Weinberger and others be pardoned before Bush leaves office. One aide said that mid-level Bush aides discussed the issue on the flight from Houston to Washington on Wednesday after the election.

Weinberger's trial on five counts of perjury to Congress and false statements to prosecutors is scheduled to begin Jan. 5.

Both Bush and Quayle publicly expressed anger and frustration over the re-indictment of Weinberger and release of a 1986 note written by Weinberger that contradicted Bush's account of his role in the Iran-contra affair.

The note said that Bush, as vice president, supported the arms-for-hostages deal during a critical White House meeting in which several top aides, including Weinberger, opposed it. Bush has said he did not realize that a direct deal, in which arms were sold to Iran in exchange for Iranian help in freeing hostages held in Lebanon, was occurring until many months later, and that he did not realize the extent of the opposition to it.

Walsh has heard the pardon rumors but "can't do anything about them," according to sources close to the Iran-contra prosecution. Robert S. Bennett, Weinberger's attorney, said earlier this week that he was unaware of any such move being in the works.

A presidential pardon would not prevent Walsh from filing a report on the findings of his six-year, \$33 million investigation into the worst scandal of the Reagan administration.

"Bush has never been a target" of Walsh's inquiry, one source said, and the prosecutor agreed in August to postpone questioning the president in the final phase of the Iran-contra investigation until after the election.

If Bush did pardon Weinberger, questions would be raised about what he should do about other pending cases and about the seven other Iran-contra figures who have pleaded guilty to Walsh's charges.

Some Republican sources have connected the use of the Weinberger note in the new indictment to Walsh's newly named prosecutor in the Weinberger case, James J. Brosnahan, who took over the case on Oct. 15.

A California trial lawyer and head of Morrison and Foerster, a large San Francisco firm, Brosnahan is a registered Democrat. According to Federal Election Commission records, Brosnahan contributed \$500 to the Clinton for President Committee last March during the primary season. Other members of his firm gave an additional \$22,000 to the Clinton committee, the records show.

A spokesman for Walsh said that the independent counsel, a longtime Republican who was an appointee in the Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford and Reagan administrations, never

looked into Brosnahan's political background when he was deciding whether to hire him.

The Washington Times reported yesterday that Republicans were alleging that the Clinton campaign had advance notice of the Oct. 30 Weinberger indictment, because the campaign's press release on it was dated Oct. 29. The press statement was not released until Oct. 30.

Yesterday, George Stephanopoulos, spokesman for the president-elect, said he was "guilty" of having a wrong date on the release, but that there had been no contact with the Iran-contra prosecutors.

"I can say categorically we had no contact with Walsh prior to the indictment," Stephanopoulos said. He added that "no one on the [Clinton] staff talked to Walsh's staff as far as I know."

"Nobody from our office talked to anyone outside the office on this or any indictment," said James Wieghart, a spokesman for Walsh's office.

According to Stephanopoulos, the first he learned of the indictment was "around 1 o'clock" on Oct. 30, when a Reuters story came over the news wire. It took the Clinton "rapid response team" another two hours, Stephanopoulos said, to pull together a press release that went out under the headline: "New Iran-contra evidence released by prosecutor. . . ."

Sources close to Walsh have said that the Weinberger notes were included in the indictment to meet defense complaints that the earlier charge had been too broad and vague. They said the timing was set by court agreements, not the election.