

PAUL S. SARBANES
MARYLAND

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

May 28, 1987

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Mr. Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Thank you for getting in touch with me about issues of concern to you. As a member of the Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition, I appreciate your taking the time to contact me regarding the serious matters currently under review by the Select Committee. As you know, it is the objective of these hearings to develop as complete and accurate a narrative of the facts as can be established to better enable Congress and the American people to make an informed judgement on these events.

I appreciate having the benefit of your own comments on this very important matter. With the thought that it might be of interest to you, I have enclosed a copy of my opening statement before the Select Committee on May 5. Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

With best regards,

Sincerely,



Paul S. Sarbanes
United States Senator

PSS/cjo
Enclosure

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECRET MILITARY ASSISTANCE
TO IRAN AND THE NICARAGUAN OPPOSITION

OPENING STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE PAUL S. SARBANES
MAY 5, 1987

Mr. Chairman, as the Select Committee begins public hearings on secret military assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan opposition, it is the responsibility of this inquiry to develop as complete and accurate a narrative of the facts as can be established. This will better enable the Congress and the American people to make an informed judgment on these events and to reach conclusions about what must now be done to set the situation right.

Important work has already been completed by other committees of the Congress and by the Tower Commission, and I want to acknowledge their significant contributions. I also want to acknowledge the leadership of Senators Inouye and Rudman and Congressmen Hamilton and Cheney in insuring a fair and careful inquiry.

In the course of reconstructing fully and accurately the chain of events, there are a number of basic questions that need to be asked:

- How was policy made?
- How were policies carried out?
- Who was making policy and carrying it out?

We need to understand the process -- or lack thereof -- by which policy was made and implemented. What occurred was not only a breakdown -- or put more accurately, a deliberate breaking down -- of the checks and balances between the Executive and Legislative branches of our government, but also a breaking down of the checks and balances within the Executive branch itself. Established procedures were circumvented, internal controls were ignored, a private unaccountable network to raise funds and to supply arms was established to carry out major segments of American foreign policy. Furthermore, the policy actually being pursued secretly was sharply at odds with the policy publicly stated to the world and to our people.

These questions as to how decisions were made and implemented and by whom are central to our inquiry because they go to the fundamental issue of how our system of free self-government is meant to function. The complex system of checks and balances set out in the Constitution, the sharing of powers between the executive and legislature, was designed expressly to place a restraint on power and to result in better decisions for our people. Especially in this Bicentennial year of the Constitution, it is critical to remember that no substantive end, no particular policy, however zealously desired, can justify undermining the principles which are at the heart of our democracy.