

# Nixon and the Shah of Iran



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For six months, we have been investigating the strange relationship between President Nixon and the shah of Iran. There have been whispers, all vehemently denied, that the shah funneled money into the Nixon campaign by way of Mexico.

Our inquiries, including overseas calls to Tehran, Geneva, Bonn, Mexico City and other places, have got the Iranians in a dither.

Suddenly, we found Iranian officials were expecting our calls before we made them. Then the distinguished and decent former secretary of state, William Rogers, telephoned us in the shah's behalf.

He cautioned us kindly that we were chasing wild rumors. He called back twice, with more categorical denials. Then his law firm followed up with a telegram to United Feature Syndicate which distributes our column.

The story we were investigating was "implausible and totally baseless. . . ." The telegram charged, "We strongly urge that this story not be published."

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We can hardly resist publishing a story that the shah is so anxious to suppress. It all started six months ago when a former high Iranian official came to us with the allegation that the shah had routed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Nixon campaign.

The source admitted he had turned against the shah. His information, there-

fore, must be regarded with skepticism. The Iranian embassy flatly denied the story; the White House denied it; Bill Rogers denied it. And we certainly can't prove it.

But we have uncovered some curious circumstances that are worth relating. First, we contacted another prominent Iranian who, quite independently, told us the same story. The money had been routed, he said, through Mexico. But he, too, admitted he was opposed to the shah.

Then we learned from Swiss banking sources that the shah had transferred more than \$1 million from his personal, numbered accounts in the Schweizerische Bank Gesellschaft to the Banco de Londres Y Mexico in Mexico City.

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It also struck us as an interesting coincidence that other Nixon campaign money had been laundered through a Mexican bank. When the FBI began to check into this, it seemed to upset the White House more than any other phase of the Watergate investigation.

We checked with Watergate investigators who said they had detected no trace of Iranian money in their probe of the Mexican connection. But they had picked up hints that something is still lurking in the background which has yet to be revealed.

None of this proves, of course, that the shah's money ever reached the Nixon campaign. But the intriguing relationship between the President and the shah deserves closer examination.