

By Richard Ryan

THE ATTENTION PAID TO THE RELEASE OF THE report of the President's Special Review Board, better known as the Tower Commission, has overshadowed the release of a more ambitious report whose implications are much more far-reaching. While media attention centers on the Tower report, a private institute known as the National Security Archive has released its own chronology of Iran/contra events. Its report not only indicates that the scandal may have begun much earlier than the Tower report acknowledges, but it also demonstrates that, rather than being narrowly confined to the National Security Council (NSC), several branches of President Reagan's administration appear to be involved—including the CIA, the Pentagon and the State Department.

The report from the non-profit Washington, D.C.-based institute is entitled "Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition: A Chronology of Events



and Individuals." The Archive has reviewed news accounts and compiled public records dating back to 1980, summarizing them in a chronology that provides a never-before-seen picture of the evolution of the Iran/contra scandal (see story below).

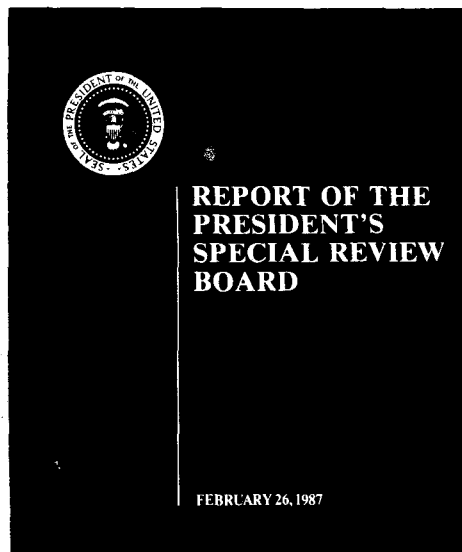
The Tower report adheres to the chronology established by the report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. The Senate report, a draft report of which was released in January at the White House's urging, chose the August 1985 transfer of TOW missiles from Israel to Iran as the beginning

An independent report sheds more light than the Tower Commission's

of U.S. involvement in the arms deals. The report excludes the possibility that earlier shipments—from both U.S. and Israeli sources—may have been made with administration approval. Since the committee was under Republican control when most evidence was gathered and when the draft report was formulated, this chronology—and the Tower report's faithful following of it—can be seen as a form of damage control for a Republican president. According to news accounts, the committee's chairman, Sen. David Durenberger (R-MN), briefed Vice President George Bush on the report's contents before it was released.

The Tower Commission was headed by former Sen. John Tower, a hawkish conservative from Texas, who since leaving the Senate has been one of the administration's chief negotiators at the Strategic Arms Talks in Geneva. Almost immediately following the report's completion, the White House offered Tower a chance to head the CIA, a post the senator declined. (Tower's fellow commission-member, Brent Scowcroft, was also reportedly offered the job; Scowcroft has been a military consultant to Reagan throughout his presidency.) It is some measure of the administration's faith in these commissioners that Reagan would feel comfortable having either of them oversee an agency that appears to have been so deeply involved in the Iran/contra scandal.

By contrast, the Archive's chronology traces President Reagan's covert dealings with Iran back to the administration's earliest days. The report cites a *Washington Post*



story from last November, alleging that in 1981 Secretary of State Alexander Haig approved an Israeli shipment of military parts to Iran. It also refers to a 1983 *Time* magazine

story regarding large-scale shipments of U.S.-made TOW missiles from Israel to Iran. *In These Times* has confirmed through U.S. and Israeli intelligence sources that these and other sales had official U.S. permission (see story at right).

In the Archive's chronology one individual's name appears time and again: Air Force Gen. Richard Secord. This is hardly surprising, given Secord's background. He was a member of the Special Operations Group, an organization of covert warfare specialists who were widely reported to have led the secret military operation against Laos during the Vietnam War. Then in the mid-'70s he was the Air Force's military attache in Iran. Eventually, he became deputy secretary of defense for the Near East in the Reagan administration. The Archive has compiled a copious stack of Defense Department travel vouchers documenting Secord's extensive travel in the early '80s, when he still worked at the Pentagon.

In 1981 Secord spearheaded the administration's successful lobbying effort to win congressional approval for the sale of advanced military aircraft AWACS to the Saudi Arabian government. The Archive cites several news accounts describing Saudi "kickbacks" to the contras in return for Secord's efforts. The general retired in May 1983,

Retired Air Force Gen. Richard Secord

Archive tracks national security information

The National Security Archive was founded about a year ago in order to make available to investigative reporters and other interested parties declassified and unclassified documents relating to national security matters. (One of the Archive's long-term goals is to establish computerized databases cross-referencing about 10,000 documents each. The databases would then serve as indexes leading researchers to the original source material.)

The idea for the Archive condensed around *Washington Post* reporter Scott Armstrong's recognition that the public needed a group that would keep track of the massive amounts of national security information that were coming into the public domain. Armstrong eventually left the *Post* to raise money and engineer the creation of the National Security Archive early last year.

When the news broke in November 1986 of how the White House diverted profits from the arms-for-hostages deal to aid the contras, Armstrong began preparing a chronology for Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HA). But when Armstrong realized how much energy the prospec-

tive study would take, he brought in Archive staffer Malcolm Byrne, who went on to become editor of the expanding chronology.

"Once we realized [the Iran-contra] scandal would be mushrooming into a real incident, we thought the chronology would become a full-scale project for us," Byrne told *In These Times*. "We believed it would be valuable to have these events placed in perspective, so that you can see how they unfold."

In addition to news accounts, the Archive's chronology encompasses numerous court documents and such materials as Salvadoran telephone records. And the Archive drew on documents already in their burgeoning files, such as Alexander Haig's logs, which Armstrong obtained by legal suit while still at the *Post*. The chronology also cites several overseas press accounts, which the Archive was led to by the CIA's own in-house presswatching apparatus, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS). The FBIS is one of the few easily available CIA publications, and Byrne describes it as a "wholly underutilized resource." R.R.



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about a year after investigators linked him to Edwin Wilson, an arms dealer accused of overcharging the Pentagon on weapons sold to Egypt. According to journalist Peter Maas, a Pentagon review of Secord's activities was stifled by then-Deputy Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci. Carlucci is currently Reagan's national security adviser.

After he retired in 1983, Secord became one of the leading private operatives in Lt. Col. Oliver North's efforts to fund the Nicaraguan opposition. Throughout the 225 pages

The National Security Archive's chronology of the Iran/contra scandal traces the Reagan administration's covert dealings with Iran back to their earliest days. In the chronology, one individual's name appears time and time again. The name: Air Force Gen. Richard Secord.

of the Archive's chronology, numerous entries track Secord's involvement in the contra supply network, culminating in Secord's management of a private Swiss bank account through which arms sales profits were diverted to contra coffers.

Establishing Secord's central role in the Iran/contra scandal is only one function of the Archive document. The chronology poses several unresolved questions about Reagan's foreign policy. Among them are the following:

The private arms network: As reported in the February 11 issue of *In These Times*, in addition to negotiating an official arms deal with the Iranians through the Israelis,

the administration gave tacit or explicit sanction to several private weapons sales to Iran. These included:

1. Ramco: According to a lengthy July 1982 *Time* article, Ramco, a major aviation parts company in New Jersey, openly sold spare parts to the Iranian Air Force in 1982. The same article describes the R.R.C. Company, supposedly a Persian rug shop in Stamford, Conn. The company was actually a front run by the Hashemi brothers, Cyrus and Jamshed ("Balanian"), two Iranian nationals on an arms-buying mission for their government throughout the early '80s.

2. The Hashemi-Evans-Northrop deal: Cyrus Hashemi acting as an informant for U.S. Customs, tape recorded meetings with several international arms dealers. As described in federal court records cited by the Archive, Hashemi was subsequently introduced to a number of Israeli arms merchants by Sam Evans, the chief counsel for Adnan Khashoggi. Eventually Hashemi was able to get the Israelis to agree to sell approximately \$1 billion worth of arms to Iran. Hashemi then lured the Israelis to Bermuda, where they were arrested by U.S. Customs agents.

In *These Times* recently learned that one of the Israelis, an American immigrant named William Northrop, is an agent for Mossad, Israel's secret service, and that the Justice Department ordered Northrop's arrest in response to Israeli interference with U.S. negotiations with Iran. Mossad retaliated for the arrest of Northrop and his fellow Israelis by leaking the story of the U.S. arms deal in late October of last year. It may have also been responsible for the mysterious death of Cyrus Hashemi in London last July (see *In These Times*, Feb. 11 and 18).

3. Demavand: This is the code name for a project involving numerous private arms dealers and U.S. arms contractors, whose existence was widely known in the Pentagon, according to documents obtained by the *New York Times* and published early this year. The Demavand Project, named for Iran's highest mountain, contracted to sell more than \$1 billion in weapons to Iran. At

least some of these arms are believed to have been delivered to Tehran.

4. The two colonels: Two U.S. Army colonels—Col. Ralph Broman in Paris and Col. William Mott in London—were implicated in a January 1987 *New York Times* story that alleges the officers brokered U.S. arms to Iran as far back as 1983. According to the *New York Times* report, the National Security Council, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the CIA knew about the colonels' activities.

5. Arif Durrani: An Iranian national charged with attempting to sell Hawk missile parts

to Iran, Durrani claims to have had extensive contact with retired Pentagon official Richard Secord and NSC staffer Lt. Col. Oliver North, according to Durrani's affidavit filed in Connecticut District Court and obtained by the Archive.

Like Durrani, all the above-mentioned arms merchants claim to have acted with official U.S. government assurance that their transactions reflected the approved (though secret) U.S. policy of selling arms to Iran. Despite widespread knowledge of these private

Continued on page 10

U.S. knew about 1982 Iran arms shipment

Among the many long-forgotten reports revived by the National Security Archive's chronology of Irangate is a fascinating story that first appeared in *Time* magazine in July of 1983. In an article by Ed Magnuson and several staff reporters, *Time* cite anonymous sources alleging that a shipment of U.S.-made TOW anti-tank missiles left Israel for Iran in November 1982.

According to the *Time* report, the shipment was sold to Iranian middleman Farouk Azzizi, whom *Time* identified as the primary buyer for the Tehran government. The arms were initially routed through Amsterdam and then on to Iran. At the time the Israeli government denied having violated a U.S. embargo on the sale of U.S. manufactured arms to Iran.

In *These Times* has independently confirmed the *Time* account of the 1982 Israeli arms shipment to Iran. An Israeli intelligence source told *In These Times* that the Israeli government could accurately claim that there was no violation of U.S. policy because the U.S. government knew about the missile sale in advance and approved of it. According to the source, the TOW shipment was cleared through then-U.S. Ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis, and Israel was subsequently allowed to replenish its TOW

stocks from U.S. supplies. The source estimated the shipment at either 1,250 or 2,500 missiles, depending on whether one or two 707 or DC-8 cargo aircraft were used to transport the missiles to Amsterdam.

These allegations significantly contradict the conclusions of the Tower Commission and the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, which hold that U.S.-sanctioned sales of arms to Iran did not begin until mid-1985. An American intelligence officer, who had himself been involved in arms shipment to Iran, confirmed to *In These Times* that Israel had repeatedly sold large quantities of U.S.-made arms in the early '80s. This official asserted that all the transactions had State Department approval. He went on to relate how, by 1985, the market was crowded with Americans, both in government and the private sector, trying to sell arms to Ayatollah Khomeini's regime: "If you looked like you even knew how to spell Iran you were on board."

Samuel Lewis, former U.S. ambassador to Israel, when reached at his home in McClean, Va., refused to comment on these reports. "I will neither confirm it or deny it," Lewis said. "I don't want to talk about it."

R.R.

Tower report protects NSC's "creative impulses"

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

THE TOWER COMMISSION WAS MANDATED TO study the procedures rather than the policy of the National Security Council (NSC), and its major recommendations pertained to the operation of the NSC rather than to the specifics of the Iran and contra scandals. Former NSC Adviser Brent Scowcroft summed up the commission's approach this way: "We think the problem was the people, not the process."

In its report, the commission insisted that the scandals were the result of "unprofessionalism." In the concluding section of its report, it proposed voluntary changes from within, but rejected every significant legal reform that has been proposed for the NSC, including Senate confirmation of the national security adviser and the restriction of its operational role. "Our review validates the current National Security Council system," the report states.

But the NSC's legal structure laid the basis for the scandal. The Tower report shows that the White House consciously took advantage of the NSC's ambiguous legal definition in

trying to get around the Boland Amendment that Congress passed in 1984 forbidding any military aid to the contras.

The NSC was created in 1947. Because the NSC members were supposed to provide a purely advisory role to the president, they were not made subject to Senate confirmation and cannot be required to appear before congressional committees investigating foreign policy. (See *In These Times*, Dec. 10, 1986).

The NSC and its head, the national security adviser, did not become significant until President Richard Nixon took office in 1969. Nixon decided to use the NSC under National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger not merely to formulate but to implement a foreign policy contrary to his public policy and to the policies recommended by his own State and Defense Departments and by Congress.

Following the Nixon precedent, the Reagan administration used the NSC to implement the Iran arms deals and the illegal support for the contras. Even though the NSC was engaged in covert activities, NSC members used the fact that the NSC was legally defined as an advisory or coordinating body

to get around the Boland Amendment.

The Boland Amendment prohibited the Defense Department, the CIA and any other agency or entity "involved in intelligence activities" from directly or indirectly supporting military operations in Nicaragua. But National Security Adviser John Poindexter secured a legal opinion from the President's Intelligence Oversight Board that the amendment didn't apply to the NSC because its "prescribed role...was to coordinate rather than implement covert action," the report said.

At the same time, the NSC staff could invoke the NSC's legal definition to justify its covert activities. Because the NSC's charter did not specifically forbid it from implement-

The Tower report rejected every significant legal reform that has been proposed for the NSC.

ing policy, its members were not doing anything wrong when they aided the contras.

The Tower Commission rejected, however, any "substantive change" in the NSC's charter that would prevent the NSC staff from engaging in policy implementation. "The in-

flexibility of legislative restriction should be avoided," the report argued.

It also reinforced the view that the NSC serves a useful function in counteracting the inertia of the Pentagon and State Department bureaucracies. These large institutions, the report states, "tend to resist policy change," while the NSC is the means by which "the creative impulses of the president are brought to bear on the permanent government."

As the report shows, this was exactly what the Reagan administration NSC believed. When the State and Defense Departments rejected the NSC staff's contention that a Soviet takeover in Iran was imminent and that the U.S. should try to re-establish influence in Iran by selling it weapons, NSC staff member Howard Teicher complained that the State and Defense Departments' reactions had brought consideration of a new policy to "a standstill." "It was clear there was no give and there wasn't any more creativity," Teicher said.

In his speech on March 4 President Reagan announced the appointment of an NSC legal adviser—a post recommended by the Tower Commission—and the institution of an order barring NSC member from engaging in covert activity. These steps may improve the conduct of the NSC during the last two Reagan years, but they will not prevent another scandal one administration down the road. □

IN THESE TIMES MARCH 11-17, 1987 7