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Ron used CIA on the sly

Agency's Iran role kept from Congress

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WASHINGTON—The CIA was operationally involved, from the start, in the Reagan administration's secret effort to win Iran's friendship by delivering arms, the White House disclosed yesterday, but the executive branch never reported the CIA involvement to Congress, as required by law.

"That's an impeachable offense," snapped Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), who, as vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, helped work out an agreement in 1983 requiring the President to report long-term CIA operations in advance.

Meanwhile, President Reagan predicted to a group of supporters at the White House that most Americans will support the controversial arms deal "now that the veil of secrecy has been lifted."

"Dealings with Iranian officials have been aimed at bridging the rivers of animosity and hostility that separate our countries and at using our influence to bring a just peace to the region," the President said less than 24 hours after his nationally broadcast address outlining the operation.

The House and Senate intelligence committees were not formally notified of the operation until yesterday, 11 months after President Reagan formally authorized the Iranian effort.

White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan, who first disclosed the CIA involvement, said Reagan was empowered by the National Security Act to delay notifying Congress in extraordinary circumstances. The law says that if Congress is not notified in advance of an operation, the President must notify it after the fact in "timely" fashion. "Timely" has never been defined.

But Moynihan said the 1983 agreement required that Congress be notified "of significant anticipated activities. That means in advance," he said.

White House press spokesman Larry Speakes said Attorney General Edwin Meese had ruled that Reagan was under no obligation to report the CIA involvement.

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