

December 5, 1986

Chronology: U.S. Arms Dealings with Iran

Note: This chronology is unclassified and is based on a compilation of newspaper accounts as of Friday, December 5, 1986. Subjective compilation — accuracy uncertain.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1981 Secretary of State Haig reportedly provides tacit approval for Israeli shipment of U.S. origin military equipment to build contacts with the Iranian military. Approval reportedly rescinded by Haig when he became convinced that shipments were contrary to U.S. interests.
- 1982 U.S. pressures Israel to stop sales to Iran, Israel publicly agrees not to sell arms to Iran. Moshe Arens - then Israeli Ambassador to U.S. - confirmed late in 1982 that Israel had provided military equipment to Iran in 1981 - reportedly 250 spare tires for F-4s.
- 1983 Israeli sources report that sales by Israel to Iran continue, including captured materiel from Lebanon war. Reported sales of \$100 million in 1983 alone, including overhauled jet engines, spare parts for M-48 tanks, and ammunition.
- Early 1985 Robert McFarlane and Marine Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North set off on a series of secret missions to London, Geneva and Iran.
- May 17, 1985 CIA memorandum sent by Mr. Casey to NSC indicating Khomeini regime might be on verge of collapse and that U.S. should be in position to move first.
- June 3, 1985 Hostage William Buckley reportedly dies in captivity in Beirut.
- June 14, 1985 Hijacking of TWA jet to Beirut.
- June 17, 1985 May 17 memorandum apparently leads to NSC draft proposal circulated to State and Defense suggesting arms embargo be relaxed and sale of military equipment be considered. Caspar Weinberger said to describe proposal as "absurd."

- June 23,24, 1985 Trip to Damascus, Syria by Speaker of Iranian Parliament Rafsanjani, which U.S. officials have said helped to lead to the end of TWA hijacking.
- June 30, 1985 TWA hostage crisis resolved.
- July 1985 An Israeli businessman in contact with Iranian officials told Shimon Peres, then Prime Minister, that a swap of arms for U.S. hostages could be arranged. McFarlane dispatches Michael Ledeen to meet with David Kimche, Director General of Israel's Foreign Ministry. Kimche suggests Jacob Nimrodi, a former Mossad agent with long experience in Tehran and now an arms dealer, make available to Washington his Iranian contacts. Also involved: Al Schwimmer, founder of Israel Aircraft Industries, and Saudi billionaire Adnan Khashoggi, who introduces Schwimmer and Nimrodi to Iranian exile businessman Manucher Ghorbanifor.
- late July 1985 McFarlane and Kimche meet. Kimche asks that if Israel provides Iran with American-made arms, would the U.S. agree to sell Israel the necessary replacements.
- early August 1985 McFarlane and Kimche meet again. McFarlane informs Kimche that the President condones the Israeli transfer of arms to Iran and provides assurances that Israel could buy replacements. Sale of arms opposed by Shultz and Weinberger at the time but President Reagan provides oral approval.
- Sept. 3, 1985 McFarlane and Kimche meet in London. Deal to release one hostage approved by Iranian Prime Minister Musavi for delivery of one planeload of U.S. weaponry paid for by the U.S.
- September, 1985 A DC-8 chartered by Israeli arms dealers loaded with unspecified U.S.-origin equipment departs Israel for Tehran via Portugal -- but no hostages released.
- Iran asks for more supplies. Israel refuses. Iran sent check for \$10 million as payment. Israel returned the check indicating this was not part of the deal.
- A second DC-8 was sent, picked up a shipment of military supplies in Tel Aviv and flew to an Iranian military base in Tabriz. The aircraft left Iran on September 14.

September, 1985 Each planeload worth \$10-\$15 million. Unclear whether financed by U.S., or "bridging loan" by Khashoggi. Iranian payment parcelled out to Israel for "expenses", to U.S. for reimbursement, and \$1 million to a Swiss bank account as directed by Colonel North.

Weinberger instructs aides to prepare shipment of weapons to "back-fill" Israeli stockpiles drained by arms sales to Iran.

Sept. 14, 1985 Benjamin Weir released.

After Sept. 14 President Reagan calls Prime Minister Peres and thanks him for his assistance.

Oct. 1, 1985 Israeli Raid on PLO Headquarters in Tunis, Tunisia.

October 1985 Reported meeting of U.S. and Iranian officials in Geneva. U.S. delegation headed by John Poindexter.

October 1985 A possible third DC-8 flight with arms was made out of Israel to Iran.

November 1985 Ship loaded with parts for F-4 jets and helicopters sails from northern Italy to Israel. Cargo transferred to a plane carrying Israeli-supplied Hawk missile parts.

Transit of this plane from Israel via Portugal to Iran held up by Portuguese authorities. Colonel North asked to intervene with the Portuguese and with the CIA. Upon oral request of Col. North, CIA arranges another plane to deliver to Iran what North tells CIA is "oil-drilling equipment".

Iran returns obsolete Hawk missile spare parts to Israel in February 1986.

Following November flight, CIA Deputy Director McMahon warns that he will not supply CIA assistance again without a written order from the President.

Later in November Col. North and other Americans suspect that Nimrodi and Schwimmer are trying to make their own arms deals with the Iranians. In turn, they criticize North for amateurish U.S. role.

End of November McFarlane becomes convinced that shipment of arms to Iran is a mistake, simply becoming a ransom payment to Iran.

Dec. 4, 1985 Robert McFarlane resigns from the NSC.

- Dec. 6, 1985 White House meeting at which the President approves a recommendation by Mr. McFarlane, seconded by Shultz and Weinberger, to halt all further arms sales to Iran and to inform Israel and Iran of this.
- Dec. 8, 1985 McFarlane in London meets with Kimche and Ghorbanifar, the Iranian go-between, to inform them that while the U.S. was interested in pursuing political talks with Iran, it was ruling out any more direct or third party sales. Both oppose this decision, arguing that without arms it will be impossible to make progress with Iran.
- Dec. 11, 1985 McFarlane reports about his London trip at White House meeting, Shultz absent. McFarlane leaves government with the impression that Iran operation has been closed down.
- Sometime in December 1985 Col. North decides to push Schwimmer and Nimrodi out of Iran operation in favor of Amiram Nir, counterterrorism and political adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Peres. Peres, Shamir and Rabin approve Nir's role as the Israeli contact after checking with Poindexter.
- Early Jan. 1986 White House receives word of Iranian military's unhappiness with the November Hawk shipment, but that if newer equipment is furnished, talks about hostages can continue.
- Jan. 7, 1986 Key advisers to Reagan hold "full discussion" again on proposed arms transfers to Iran. Shultz and Weinberger oppose the proposal. Shultz and Weinberger unclear on the outcome of the meeting.
- Jan. 17, 1986 President Reagan signs a finding authorizing Iranian arms transfer program. Casey ordered not to inform the Intelligence Committees, ordered to keep intelligence traffic on arms shipments from State and Pentagon.
- Later in January Between January and September 1986 some \$10 to \$30 million in profits from Iranian arms sales transferred to Swiss accounts for use by the Contras.
- February 1986 U.S. ships 500 TOW missiles via Israel to Iran.
- March 4, 1986 Resignation of CIA Deputy Director McMahon announced.
- April 1986 Rudolph W. Giuliani, U.S. Attorney in Manhattan, consults with Attorney General Meese, Secretary Shultz and CIA officials before seeking indictment of 17 international businessmen charged with conspiracy to sell more than \$2 billion in arms to Iran.

- April 15, 1986 U.S. raid on Libya.
- April 22, 1986 Giuliani indicts 17 on charges of arms sales to Iran.
- April-May 1986 Top Shultz aides learn of U.S. role in facilitating arms transfers to Iran, inform Shultz, who refuses to take further action to oppose the program.
- May 23, 1986 Col. North asks H. Ross Perot for \$2 million in ransom for the Beirut hostages. Perot agrees, sends courier with \$2 million to Cyprus.
- The money, together with military spare parts for Iran and the release of 300 Lebanese Shi'ite prisoners, is intended to be exchanged for the release of all U.S. hostages and an Israeli soldier. Deal falls apart when pro-Iranian militiamen in Lebanon refuse to release Israeli soldier. The \$2 million is not paid, but spare parts are delivered.
- May 28, 1986 McFarlane, Col. North, retired CIA Tehran Station Chief George Cave, and Amiram Nir travel to Iran on a plane from Israel and deliver I-Hawk spare part sets and missiles. A reported 235 sets delivered altogether. Retired Major General Richard Secord stays in Israel to monitor the operation.
- McFarlane mission spends 4 days in Tehran, holds talks with senior representatives of the Foreign Ministry and speaker of the Iranian Parliament Rafsanjani. Talks go nowhere because of the failure of Iran to live up to a commitment to release all the hostages. Mc Farlane had been led to believe that all remaining hostages would be released by the time he arrived in Tehran. Mission returns.
- During this trip, McFarlane informed of diversion of funds to the contras, informs no one else because he apparently believes those diversions represent U.S. policy.
- July 3, 1986 Boeing 707 [N345FA] departed Rijeka, Yugoslavia [origin point of flight unknown] with 23 tons of military equipment intended for the Iranian air force.
- July 4, 1986 It reportedly arrived in Iran at Tehran's Mehrabad airport at 5:30 a.m. The aircraft is registered in the U.S. to a former Iranian, Farhad Azima, based in Kansas City. His aircraft fly in the Middle East, have flown for the U.S. Government and have been used to transport military equipment. The aircraft returned to Madrid, Spain where Farhad's brother, Fadim, an arms dealer, resides.

July 26, 1986 Father Lawrence Jenco released.

May-Aug. 1986 Copenhagen-registered freighter Ilse TH made four trips from Eilat to Bandar Abbas between May and August, each time carrying a 900 ton container of U.S. weapons.

August 1986 Another U.S. shipment of TOW missiles to Iran.

Sept. 9, 1986 American Frank Herbert Reed is seized in Beirut, apparently by Revolutionary Justice Organization, tied to radical groups in Iran.

Sept. 11, 1986 Foreign Report (published by The Economist, London) quoting an intelligence source, reports that Israel, encouraged by "a group in [the] National Security Council" may have resumed arms shipments to Iran.

Sept. 12, 1986 American Joseph James Cicippio seized in Beirut by Revolutionary Justice Organization.

Mid-Oct. 1986 Son-in-law of Ayatollah Montazeri, Mehdi Hashemi, arrested. Montazeri is Khomeini's designated successor and reported leader of radical factions in Iran.

Oct. 17, 1986 26 containers of ammunition of Danish freighter Morso depart Israeli port of Eliat to Bandar Abbas, Iran. The Morso is owned by the Danish shipping company, J. Poulsen.

Oct. 21, 1986 American Edward Austin Tracy seized in Beirut by Revolutionary Justice Organization.

late Oct., 1986 Additional U.S. shipment of TOW missiles to Iran. A total of 1,500 TOW missiles sent in August and October shipments.

Nov. 1, 1986 Al Shiraa, a Beirut weekly magazine, reveals story of McFarlane mission. This magazine is considered pro-Syrian with ties to radical groups in Iran.

Nov. 2, 1986 David Jacobsen released.

Nov. 4, 1986 Iranian Speaker Rafsanjani gives his version of McFarlane mission to Iran and claims brilliant victory against the United States.

Nov. 7, 1986 Rafsanjani defends seizure of hostages in Lebanon.

Nov. 13, 1986 President Reagan addresses the nation on Iranian arms transfers.

- Nov. 19, 1986 President Reagan holds press conference, primarily on Iran arms transfer issue.
- Nov. 20, 1986 Ayatollah Khomeini denounces 7 Majlis members who had demanded an investigation of Iran dealings with the U.S.; they withdraw questions.
- Nov. 25, 1986 National Security Adviser Poindexter resigns, Colonel North fired. Attorney General Meese reveals diversion of funds from Iranian arms sales to the Contras, run as an NSC operation.
- Nov. 26, 1986 Iranian Foreign Minister defends arms deal with the U.S.
- President appoints special three member panel (Tower, Muskie, Scowcroft) to investigate the NSC and to make recommendations on the NSC's future role.
- Dec. 2, 1986 President announces decision to appoint an Independent Counsel to investigate Iran/Contra question. Announces appointment of Frank Carlucci as NSC adviser.