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White House Aides and Senators Criticize Shultz on the Iran Affair

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 23 — Pressure mounted today for President Reagan to disclose more details of his Administration's dealings with Iran, and new criticism began to focus on Secretary of State George P. Shultz.

In recent days, according to senior White House officials, Mr. Reagan has resisted strong appeals from aides to end the furor by acknowledging publicly that Washington's dealings with Teheran were a mistake.

Effort to Repair Damage

In addition, a confidant of the President said today that some of Mr. Reagan's longtime political supporters had discussed how to engineer high-level staff changes at the White House and in the Cabinet in the hope of repairing political damage to the President.

The confidant said the discussions involved a small group of associates who have been involved for many years in Mr. Reagan's political career.

The group is believed to include William P. Clark, the former national security adviser, and William French Smith, the former Attorney General, as well as Holmes Tuttle, a California businessman and an early financial patron of Mr. Reagan.

Nancy Reagan was reported distressed by the effect of the controversy on her husband, and a friend of hers said, "Obviously she feels he is being hung out to dry." [Page A14.]

Unhappiness With Shultz

The sudden criticism of Mr. Shultz today by Administration officials and senators reflected unhappiness that he had tried to distance himself from the White House over Iran by indicating that he opposed arms sales to Iran and that he was given only "fragmentary" details of the operation.

An official close to Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff, raised the possibility that the President might be losing patience with Mr. Shultz over his attitude on the Iran matter.

The criticism of Mr. Shultz began after Robert C. McFarlane, the former national security adviser, in a speech last week, challenged Mr. Shultz's public statements that he had only limited

knowledge of the Iran operation. Mr. McFarlane has said he briefed Mr. Shultz "fully and completely" on all aspects of the operation. But aides to Mr. Shultz, rallying to his defense today, said the Secretary was in the dark on many key points.

No Objection to Contacts

Mr. Shultz has acknowledged his involvement in high-level policy discussions on Dec. 6, 1985, and last Jan. 7, in which he reportedly argued against continuing to provide arms to Iran. He has also said he had no objection to the general policy of trying to open secret diplomatic exchanges with Iran.

But the aides said he had never been informed by Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter, the national security adviser, of the Presidential directive of Jan. 17 that authorized the Iran operation, including limited arms sales, as part of an effort to gain the release of American hostages in Lebanon.

They also said Mr. Shultz had not been informed of Mr. McFarlane's trip to Teheran, in which he met with some Iranian officials and took American arms to Iran at the end of May. Mr. McFarlane was accompanied on that trip by Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North of the National Security Council staff and George Cave, a retired Central Intelligence Agency expert on Iran who served as interpreter, officials said.

Aides to Mr. Shultz said today that he was pressing within the Administration for a candid and total disclosure of every aspect of the Iran operation, including its inception, the role of Israel and the connection between the arms sales and the release of hostages.

Mr. Shultz's position has been criticized by White House aides who contend that he has not been supportive enough, a view shared by Senator Bob Dole of Kansas, the Republican leader.

Calls for fuller explanations were made today by Senator Dole; Senator Sam Nunn, Democrat of Georgia, who will be the new Armed Services Committee chairman, and Senator Dale Bumpers, Democrat of Arkansas.

Mr. Dole said he and other leaders had been briefed by Admiral Poindexter for two hours about the operation and believed then that "we were told everything." But because of subsequent reports, he said, he believed they had not been told everything.

"I would say we don't know all the facts," Mr. Dole said on the CBS News program "Face the Nation." An aide said later that Mr. Dole wanted "a much fuller explanation."

Mr. Dole also said it was difficult for him as a Senate leader to be "out there supporting the President" when Mr. Shultz "is not doing anything."

He said he could not be expected to defend the policy when "those in the Administration's Cabinet are sort of hiding from the issue."

Asked if he believed Mr. Shultz should resign, Mr. Dole said: "I don't want to get into all that. But it seems to me that if we're going to have a united front, then we've got to have the Cabinet stand up."

'Somebody's Got to Go'

Senator Bumpers, appearing on the same program, said, "Somebody's got to go, obviously, in this, and maybe more than one."

He asserted that Admiral Poindexter was the one "most likely to go," but added, "I must say that Secretary Shultz was disappointing."

Mr. Bumpers said it was a "problem" to accept Mr. Shultz's statement that he had only limited information when "Bud McFarlane was saying that he was briefed time and again, kept up to speed on it."

Senator Nunn repeated his call for "wise men" to be called in to advise Mr. Reagan on how to maintain his credibility. He said that the Central Intelligence Agency had not been forthcoming on its role, and that senators had "some real problems" with the explanations so far.

Aides to Mr. Shultz insisted that while he had known of the origins of the Iran operation in 1985 and had taken part in policy discussions before the key Presidential directive of Jan. 17, he had been cut out of the flow of information. They said he had only late and incomplete details that his aides had been able to piece together.

Shultz Aide at Hearings

The aides said that Mr. Shultz still did not know all the details and that Michael H. Armacost, the No. 3 official at the State Department, sat in on the closed hearings for the Congressional intelligence committees on Friday, not only to be able to answer questions but also to find out as much as possible from William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence.

One aide said Mr. Casey had suggested at one point in the hearings that all key officials knew of the President's directive of Jan. 17. But the aide said Mr. Armacost had intervened to assert that Mr. Shultz or the State Department had not known about it until it became public knowledge two weeks ago.

Congressional leaders were told that the arms sales to Iran were valued at \$12 million, which is less than the amount at which notification of Congress would have been required. Senator Dole and others said the amount was probably much higher, thereby raising questions as to the legality of the move. Senator Bumpers said the total was probably more than \$100 million, including American arms provided to Iran by Israel.