

The Iran-Contra hearings: the congressional cover-up

by Paul Goldstein

To date, most of the hearings concerning the Iran-Contra affair have been fundamentally a cover-up of the "secret government's" operational capabilities. Despite the sometimes dramatic and revealing testimony of Lt. Col. Oliver North and Rear Admiral John Poindexter, targeting the secret government, the essential policy-making apparatus of the secret government has not been eliminated.

The reason for the congressional cover-up Iran-Contra hearings is centered upon the activity of Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) whom syndicated columnists Evans and Novak accused of protecting the predominant role of Israeli intelligence in not only aiding the Iran-Contra caper, but creating the policy basis for running the operation through the National Security Council and the intelligence community. Evans and Novak point out in their July 17 column that Inouye is the largest senatorial recipient of American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) funds. Although the funding is not direct, but carried out through so-called Jewish political action committee organizations, AIPAC directs the political coordination of who gets the funding.

The Israeli involvement in the Iran-Contra affair is probably one of the most essential elements in how the "secret government" operates. Although Sen. James McClure (R-Idaho) queried North on the role of the Israelis and the fact that Iranian go-between Manichur Ghorbanifar is an Israeli agent, which North acknowledged knowing, none of the key players from the Israeli side of the operation, including Al Schwimmer, Jacob Nimrodi, and Amron Nir, were systematically targeted in the questions by any other senator. The behind-the-scenes debate in the congressional cloakrooms on

whether former NSC consultant Michael Ledeen will be forced to testify remains unsolved. Ledeen is one of the key players who convinced North that the Iran "opening" would be in the long-term interests of the United States.

All of Casey's men

The three-day testimony of Admiral Poindexter, President Reagan's former National Security Adviser, revealed that he made the decision on the Iran arms sale "residuals," i.e., profits would be diverted to the Contras. Poindexter's admission of this action, on the basis of keeping the President distanced from the decision based upon "plausible deniability," was the brainchild of deceased former CIA Director William Casey. According to U.S. intelligence sources, Casey's authorization of the operation could be kept within the same framework as the "plausible deniability," since he knew that he was going to die for nearly a full year before it happened. North and Poindexter were considered "assets" of Casey's conception of how the Iran-Contra caper would be conducted.

Perhaps more important than the North and Poindexter involvement in Casey's scheme is the role of what intelligence community insiders refer to as the "Shackley Network." What congressional investigators and inquisitors have covered up is the role of ex-CIA deputy director Theodore Shackley's apparatus. Included in this network are ex-CIA personnel who went on contract with the NSC, Cuban operatives from the 1960s, Israeli contacts, and former military personnel such as Maj. Gen. Richard Secord. Ledeen is considered to be key in this apparatus as well. Albert Hakim, the

Iranian financier, is on intimate terms with Shackley, through an ex-Savak official named Nozar Razmara.

According to these intelligence community sources, Casey went to Secord through cut-outs associated with Shackley, and told them to go to North with the proposals on setting up "the enterprise." This private business venture was to be the commercial cover for running the operation, using the NSC as the operational center for the network.

It is ironic, but nonetheless fitting, that the Casey scheme to create a covert intelligence apparatus was blown by North. North is simply another Vietnam-era military officer who desires to correct the past mistakes made by the policy-makers, only to repeat practically the same errors the second time around. However, the blowing of the Casey component of the "secret government" apparatus does not blow the secret government capabilities. All that has occurred is that one specific and powerful network centered around Casey is damaged. There are other similar "secret government" operations which have remained untouched by the congressional investigations.

The Walsh probe

Independent prosecutor Judge Lawrence Walsh's investigations have now targeted nearly 300 individuals for possible prosecution, according to informed sources. Many of the individuals have been identified in the Iran-Contra hearings. It is anticipated that at least 30-50 individuals will be indicted, including North and Poindexter. Both North and Poindexter will probably be charged with obstruction of justice.

The limited immunity given some of the congressional witnesses will not stop the judge from conducting a wide-ranging investigation. The original congressional moves to force the limited immunity protection were part of the behind-the-scenes effort of the "secret government" to undercut Judge Walsh's probe. However, there are powerful forces inside U.S. policy-making institutions that want to restore the constitutional authority of the presidency to determine foreign policy, while keeping Congress informed, and who are fighting to preserve the integrity of Walsh's investigation.

On the other side of the fight, the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal* called for a reining in of Judge Walsh in an editorial on July 17. This faction represents key elements of the "bankers' CIA" operatives who are desperate to protect their assets in the Reagan administration, such as Elliott Abrams, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, who is now out to destabilize the government of Panama on behalf of the bankers.

Walsh's probe is extending into the conservative networks around the Heritage Foundation and its involvement in the fundraising efforts of Carl "Spitz" Channell. The Heritage Foundation has been key in shaping the "secret government's" agenda for the Reagan administration from the very outset.

In addition, known Soviet asset and disinformation agent, Roy Godson, who heads up the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies "Intelligence Center" is also under investigation. Godson is one of the main middle-level players in the apparatus identified with the right-wing Social Democracy and Jewish Lobby links. This faction has had extensive ties to the Shackley network.

The intelligence community warfare

Another major inflection point in the war between the secret government and the "reformist party" is within the intelligence community. Despite Judge William Webster's cover-up of the Federal Bureau of Investigations involvement in the Iran-Contra obstruction of justice, certain intelligence community forces are using Webster to target those CIA and other intelligence community personnel who participated in the Iran-Contra affair. First to be purged will be the powerful head of the Directorate of Operations, Claire George.

George, who has been DDO for nearly four years, is one of the main characters who sat on the 208 Committee, which interfaced with the Restricted Interagency Group that ran both the Iran and Contra components of North's NSC unit. George's ouster would represent a major break within the CIA from the Casey era, and is seen by intelligence community insiders as the beginning of a major clean-up.

The sources also stated that this will not be a wholesale purge of the Operations section, such as Stansfield Turner conducted during his tenure at CIA, but rather a needed surgical operation to eliminate those individuals who played politics for the White House rather than maintaining their professional and patriotic functions.

Another top CIA official to be removed is the head of the Counter-Terrorism Division, Duane (Dewey) Claridge. Claridge and Alan Fiers, former head of the Central American Task Force for the CIA, also slated to resign, were key in setting up the support network on behalf of Casey that aided North. It is anticipated that anyone who was associated with this network and those who were tied to Michael Ledeen will be ousted. Webster's bold move should bolster those forces inside the CIA who were opposed to the Contra policy and the Iran initiative and it will strike a significant blow to the secret government's manipulation of U.S. intelligence.

Congressional finale

One of the critical outcomes of the battle within Congress over the cover-up of the secret government operations, will be an attempt by congressional opponents of the secret government to propose legislation which strengthens the official intelligence community capabilities to run covert operations. Whether this moves the Executive branch to revoke Executive Orders 12333 and 12334, giving the intelligence community a "national mission" as proposed by Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche (see page 28), remains one of the critical questions of the battle now taking place.