

Iran probe spurs factional warfare in Washington

by Paul Goldstein

It has become fully evident to the American people and the pundits of Washington, D.C. that President Reagan was not in control of the policy on dealing with Iran nor on how the decision-making process functioned in the National Security Council. Nonetheless, the intense factional warfare over the control and direction of U.S. policy remains unabated. This political warfare has gone beyond the usual questions of who did what and when, into which political grouping—the patriotic forces within the Reagan administration, or the bankers' faction—will emerge as the dominant force for the next two years.

As of the New Year, the institutional forces centered around National Security Adviser Frank Carlucci with primary backing from Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger have managed to control the dismantling of the old NSC, with its secret relationship to the Israelis and factions of the Central Intelligence Agency. What this has led to is an ongoing battle to determine the future director of the CIA. Despite White House denials that no list has been prepared for replacing William Casey who is recuperating from a brain tumor operation, one of the key questions to be answered is whether the "institutional" forces inside the intelligence community would have enough clout to determine the next director.

The CIA "sweepstakes" is on, and the following individuals are being considered for the job. Former Deputy Director of the CIA, Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, is apparently in the running. His asset is that many top professionals in the intelligence community believe he could now handle the job which eluded him the last time around. His liability is that certain forces within the CIA and the Republican right wing fear that what Carlucci has done at NSC, would occur at CIA. For this reason, those still inside the Agency who supported Casey's policy positions on Central America and Iran and received

career advancement, are opposed to Inman.

Admiral Inman was known to oppose the manner in which the so-called Contra policy was designed, especially using the Shackley apparatus—former Deputy Director of Covert Operations Theodore Shackley, whose "business" associates and former CIA buddies have been involved from the start in both the Contra support and Iran arms-for-hostages operations.

Another obstacle to Inman is the President. During his tenure at CIA, Inman not only had difficulty winning access to Mr. Reagan, but had problems with the President's judgment about certain policies and operations the President desired. This tension between Inman and Ronald Reagan remains. However, with the CIA again coming under scrutiny by Congress and the Independent Counsel for reasons tied to Casey's wheeling and dealing with the National Security Council and the Israelis, the President may seek out Inman to restore the prestige of the CIA with Congress and the American people.

Other contenders are current CIA Deputy Director Robert Gates, U.N. Ambassador Vernon Walters, National Security Agency director Lt.-Gen. William Odom, and an assortment of politicians including ex-Senator Howard Baker and Sen. Malcolm Wallop. The importance of the CIA directorship is not to be underestimated, for the choice could determine the direction of the next two years of Reagan administration policy.

Don Regan and Abshire

One of the central mysteries in the Irangate "soap-opera" is whether Don Regan will survive. The President's chief of staff, under attack from day one, is desperately trying to keep his job on behalf of the Eastern Liberal Establishment's banking interests. But informed sources report that even if Don

Regan stays, the overwhelming power that he held for the last two years will virtually vanish; and that Regan will probably be forced to resign because the President hates to fire anyone. Nonetheless, Regan's backers on Wall Street no longer have their past blackmail power over the White House, after the Ivan Boesky affair and related financial scandals. It may be only a matter of time before Regan is out and the power struggle to replace him begins.

In this context, the appointment of NATO Ambassador David Abshire to be a cabinet-level special counselor to handle "Irangate" is a compromise between the bankers' faction and the "institutional" forces. While informed sources believe that Abshire's appointment is a political dead-end which will not give him policy-making powers, the appointment is seen by Henry Kissinger's friends as a foot in the door to get Abshire named chief of staff.

Abshire, a West Point graduate and Korean War veteran, helped to found Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). A longtime Kissinger associate, Abshire was appointed as part of the deal which brought in Carlucci as NSC director. The Kissinger group sees Abshire as key in keeping the lid on the underpinnings of the policy which led to Irangate. Abshire's policy orientation has been to place himself as a compromiser between the Weinberger group and those representing the outlook of Georgia's Trilateral Senator and presidential aspirant, Sam Nunn.

In a recent interview with *Armed Forces Journal*, NATO Ambassador Abshire opposed "unilateral troop withdrawal from Europe" but endorsed the notion of a "European Defense Initiative." His centrist position keeps him well-placed for the bankers' faction to ensure that the mobilization for the Strategic Defense Initiative is kept within the limits defined by the arms control mafia. Informed sources believe that without Abshire's presence, the banker's faction would go all-out to "Watergate" the President. These sources told this writer that the "hemorrhaging" of the "strong presidency" would go on unabated.

The backstage battle for Abshire's appointment was led by Sen. Robert Dole, whose presidential ambitions have much to do with his statements and choices. Dole sees opportunities for getting Wall Street support to undercut Vice-President Bush's front-runner position for the Republican nomination in 1988. Reports of Don Regan's role in Abshire's naming, in the Dec. 26 *Washington Post*, were a move by Regan's underlings to give the appearance of his political clout, according to well-placed sources, who say that Regan had little to do with the appointment.

Justice Department war

Perhaps the most critical battle is the one raging inside the Department of Justice. Since the appointment of the Independent Counsel and the expansion of the counsel's mandate, the Eastern Liberal Establishment is on an all-out drive to oust Attorney General Edwin Meese. Meese is being tar-

geted by the liberal press for "impeding or obstructing justice." As a result of this campaign, Assistant Attorney General and left-wing sympathizer Stephen Trott has been announced as the DoJ liaison to Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh.

According to sources, Trott is now in the crossfire of the political warfare. He is involved in the cover-up of the Contra side of the operation. Along with Criminal Division chief William Weld, Trott was responsible for halting an FBI investigation into illegal supplying of the Contras and various assassination plots launched in Miami, especially against the former U.S. ambassador to Costa Rica Lewis Tambs.

The original story on the halting of the inquiry was that Meese, on behalf of John Poindexter, then National Security Adviser, asked the U.S. Attorney in Miami to stop for 10 days the investigation of Southern Air Transport (SAT), a company with former CIA connections and possibly partly owned by former CIA official Theodore G. Shackley. The actual delay lasted some 26 days, according to DoJ officials. The rest of the story is a chain-reaction of events which marks a number of DoJ and FBI officials as all complicit in the cover-up.

Besides Trott and Weld, there is the case of FBI Assistant Director Oliver B. "Buck" Revell. Simultaneous with Meese's request to Trott and then to Webster, Oliver North, the former NSC official who was the prime actor in the Irangate affair, made a similar request to Revell. Revell, the FBI liaison with the NSC's covert action group, intervened with the FBI officials conducting the probe in Miami. Despite attempts to cover up the Miami investigation, Revell was caught with a document proving that North had made the request. Revell subsequently removed himself from the investigation.

The DoJ/FBI internecine warfare is reaching critical mass. One of the reasons for FBI director William Webster's delayed retirement is to crisis-manage this battle. One group in the DoJ is determined to get to the bottom of the Iran/Contra-gate scandal and willing to challenge the FBI group linked to the illegal operation.

Finally, informed sources told *EIR* that one of the key weapons in this battle is the infamous Cyrus Hashemi case, the case of the Iranian intelligence operative exposed by *EIR* in 1980 for running arms and terrorism, and then protected by the Justice Department in an ensuing lawsuit. (*EIR* law editor Ed Spannaus has prepared a full dossier on the Hashemi case for the "Irangate" investigation, presented to the Washington press on Jan. 5.) A key indicator of which way the battle is going, will be how the Independent Counsel and the select congressional committees handle this delicate matter.

Sources state that protagonists of the "Israeli connection" to the illegal arms sales to Iran are especially concerned about the Hashemi affair. If this should come out publicly, or be utilized in the right way by the Independent Counsel, the Eastern Establishment may be in for some significant surprises in 1987.