

British and Bush ran Iran-Contra

by Edward Spannaus

What is known as the "Iran-Contra" affair actually began much earlier than is commonly thought, and was run by Vice President George Bush in coordination with British intelligence, says a newly published book. The factual account presented in *The Secret War against the Jews* by former U.S. Justice Department attorney John Loftus and Mark Aarons, is the only account outside of *EIR* and associated publications which has so precisely identified the role of the Bush secret White House apparatus and the role that Oliver North played within the Bush machinery.

Much of what the new book presents has been known to readers of *EIR* for years, and parts of it were also recounted in *EIR*'s 1992 book, *George Bush: The Unauthorized Biography* (Washington, D.C., 1992). A full review will appear in a forthcoming issue of *EIR*. But meanwhile, *EIR* readers will be especially interested in its relevance for current U.S. election campaigns.

The first arms-for-hostages deal

The chapters of the book dealing with the Iran-Contra period, document, with much new evidence, two crucial aspects which *EIR* has exclusively reported: 1) the central role of George Bush's Crisis Pre-Planning Group (CPPG) and the Special Situations Group (SSG), created in late 1981-82; and 2) the 1984 arms-for-hostages deal involving North, the British arms dealers Leslie Aspin, Ben Bannerjee, and others (see *EIR*, March 25 and May 6, 1988).

The importance of the 1984 deal is that it blows the official chronologies of Iran-Contra to smithereens. The reports of both the congressional Iran-Contra committee and special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, present the first arms-for-hostage deal as having been attempted in 1985, and run through the Israelis. It is the contention of Loftus-Aarons that the British, working with Bush and CIA head William Casey, set up the Israelis to take the blame for the arms-for-hostages arrangements, in order to divert attention from the British-run operation which began a year earlier. The first channel, run by British intelligence and the Office of the Vice President, utilized Leslie Aspin, the Azima brothers, and Monzur al-Kassar, the Syrian arms- and drug-smuggler who was actually working for Soviet military intelligence, the GRU.

In the Reagan administration, National Security Decision Directive #3 established a new intelligence organization for Vice President Bush. Bush was running "a White House

within the White House." The SSG could coopt, or circumvent, any government agency. Already in 1982, say the authors, Bush, Robert McFarlane, and Donald Gregg were planning to use the British to go behind the back of Congress. "The vice president's private back-channel to MI-6 was the best-kept secret in government," the book contends. And already by May 1982, North was deployed to work for Bush's CPPG.

The first arms-for-hostage secret deals had their origins in the efforts by Bush, in conjunction with Casey, to undertake "preemptive action" against terrorists in the Middle East—counter-kidnapping operations. Bush personally approved sending CIA officer William Buckley to Lebanon to recruit a Lebanese team to kidnap terrorists. This is what Buckley was doing when he was taken hostage, and this is one of the things he revealed under torture. This is one of the reasons Bush and Casey were so frantic about ransoming Buckley with money or with arms.

The first deal was put together by British intelligence and arms dealer Leslie Aspin, beginning in March 1984, only a week after Buckley's capture. Aspin's middleman was Monzur Al-Kassar. By May 10, 1984, North had been brought into the operation, and met with a British intelligence officer about the hostage ransom effort.

Also in 1983, as *EIR* has repeatedly pointed out, Felix Rodriguez was hired by Gregg for the Contra operation. Thus, by 1983, both sides of Iran-Contra were being run out of the CPPG and Bush's office. By 1984, North was also involved with the Contra operation being run out of Bush's office. Bush had three different channels all delivering Communist-bloc arms to Central America: Al-Kassar, General Singlaub, and Richard Secord-Albert Hakim.

North was sent to London and then to Paris on Nov. 14, 1984 as Casey's courier to arrange a \$5 million deposit in the Paris branch of Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI). North recorded much of this in his notebooks, which show that North was working with the British and French on an arms-for-hostages deal a year before the Israelis (who supposedly came up with the idea) shipped arms to Iran in 1985.

Congress never learned the story. North's secret November 1984 London-Paris trip was never investigated in either the Iran-Contra or BCCI investigations.

"By the beginning of 1985 people were beginning to whisper in Washington that some kind of crazy spy operation was being run out of the White House," write Loftus and Aarons. "Even the CIA staff did not know about Bush's Special Situations Group. Agency insiders thought it was all 'Ollie' North's fault that there was a 'mini-CIA' operating over at the White House running such operations. Actually, it was a mini-branch of MI-6, and North certainly was not in charge. His diary shows he repeatedly briefed Don Gregg, Bush's national security adviser, and, occasionally, Bush himself."