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EXCERPTS FROM
STATEMENTS AND BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS
ON IRAN

11/13/86 - 11/19/86

Peter,
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public domain but not in the
form so please don't let
it out of your hands.
Dan

1) When did the shipments begin?

Q Mr. President, going back over your answers tonight about the arms shipments and the numbers of them, are you telling us tonight that the only shipments with which we were involved were the one or two that followed your January 17th finding and that, whatever your aides have said on background or on the record, there are no other shipments with which the US condoned?

Press Conf. 11/19/86 p7

Mr. Regan: In the summer of '85, before we had arrived at this conclusion, there was a request that a third party be allowed to sell them some weapons. And we agreed that if that third party want to sell weapons of that same nature as we were discussing, we would not object to that.

Q Well, now is there a legal requirement under the foreign sale -- Military Sales Act? Did we have to waive some requirement which says a third party may not transship U.S. materiale.?

MR. REGAN: We don't think so -- not in this particular case, no.

Q So what you said is, we said we would not object. This was before the President, in January of '86, signed an order lifting for our purposes his own embargo?

MR. REGAN: That is correct.

Q And you are saying they're the same type of weapons -- the September shipment were defensive?

MR. REGAN: Yes.

DR 11/14/86 p5

Q Can you describe for us the shipments that the Israelis were making?

MR. REGAN: All I'll say on the record -- that is we are aware that Iran has been scouring the Earth looking for arms. . . . We know that there have been stories -- some of them, perhaps, factual -- involving Israeli people. We already have a case that we are trying in New York involving Israeli citizens.

Q Don't you expect that the Iranians might have thought that the Israeli shipments that were arriving at the same time you were conducting these negotiations were approved by the United States and that there might have been, if not official above the board agreement between the United States and Israel, at least something going on?

MR. REGAN: From everything that I know of the discussions that took place between our people and their people, nothing should have led them to that conclusion, because everything that we discussed with them was referencing the fact that we were not choosing sides between Iran, Iraq and that we were opposed to these large arms sales to either side in the war.

Q Will you say flatly that the United States did not replace any parts in Israel that might have been shipped on to Iran?

MR. REGAN: I won't say that flatly, because I don't know all of the facts and -- you're giving me a wide universe here and I don't want to put my foot into it and mislead you by saying yes, I can say that or no I can't say that and have you think there's either something sinister or else I'm dumb. DR/JP 11/14/86 p4 5

2) What country aided the shipments?

. . . They've gotten arms from China, from the Koreas, from Western Europe, from other countries in the Middle East, and there are numerous arms shipments going into Iran. We have been working for many years now to try to staunch that flow. JP 11/13/86 p2

Q Now, when you say, "We sent," are you talking about -- are you including the Israelis sending on the big --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'm not saying anything about the Israelis. JP 11/13/86 p4

Q So you're saying that the reports of shipments being done last summer, last September, that they are not through the United States?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: They are not related to the U.S. government. JP 11/13/86 p9

Q -- a few things on the shipments, just to clarify this. Any shipments that were made prior to January of 1986 you're saying the U.S. had no role in, either condoning, winking, encouraging, or anything of that nature? Is that correct?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's correct. JP 11/13/86 p10

There were efforts by Israel to be helpful there on the transfer and in actual details of getting Father Jenco out. And that's why the President called Mr. Peres. JP 11/14/86 p6

3) Did the U.S. condone the shipments before they took place?

Q Why was it necessary to give U.S. approval for those country x shipments in the summer of '85?

MR. REGAN: It was not necessary, but we were asked.

. . . Q Isn't it necessary under the act? It is necessary if it's American-made parts.

MR. REGAN: It depends upon the type of equipment and the like, and all equipment is not. DR 11/14/86 p8

Q Am I correct, though, that this is the only shipment we condoned prior the President's signing of his Executive order in January of '86 or were there others?

MR. REGAN: Yes. No.

Q Just one?

Q There were no other shipments --

Q Subsequent --

Q -- that the United States condoned or approved?

MR. REAGAN: Not to my knowledge, no. I believe I'm correct -- DR 11/14/86 p10

4) Who in the USG condoned the shipments?

Q A senior official said in the White House yesterday that there was a shipment in the summer of '85 that was condoned by this Administration, did not come directly from the United States. The official would not name the country. Now, if there was such a shipment --

Admiral Poindexter: And that amount is included in what the President said last night. . . . It means that it was authorized within the context of this project. . . . It -- it was authorized verbally. . . . By the President. . . . Let me go back and correct that. That -- what I said I will retract that. That's not quite right. In fact, I don't think I -- don't really want to go any further on that particular point because the only way I can address it is to get very specific and I simply -- we don't want to get --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Let me go OFF THE RECORD and I'll tell you --

. . . Q Yes, I'm not sure -- I didn't identify the senior official. JP 11/14/86 p5

Now, if there were major shipments -- and we know this has been going on -- there have been other countries that have been dealing in arms with Iran. . . .

Q But on . . . that first point your own Chief of Staff, Mr. Regan, has said that the U.S. condoned Israeli shipments of arms to Iran and aren't you, in effect, sending the very message you always said you didn't want to send? . . .

Q . . . The U.S. apparently condoned shipments by Israel and other nations of other quantities of arms as an ancillary part of this deal -- not directly connected, but had to condone it, or the shipments could not have gone forward, sir. . . .

THE PRESIDENT: Bill, everything you've said here is based on a supposition that is false. We did not condone, and do not condone the shipment of arms from other countries. Press Conf 11/19/86

Q Now, we have knowledge from senior officials -- whether on the record yet or not is what we're discussing I suppose -- that there was one prior shipment which, not coming from the United States, was condoned by the United States. I'm not asking what country at the moment. I'm not asking the dates. I want to know what "condone" means and whether the law was followed. And, frankly, I don't want you to just tell me, yes, that law was followed, I want to understand how it was the law was followed. . . .

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: This is ON THE RECORD. There were no transfers from the United States until after the authorization for that was signed by the President in January of 1986. . . .

Q "From the United States" is the operative clause there.

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: That is correct.

Q Now, what we're asking is were there any other shipments that the United States condoned from any other place on the globe?

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: Well, I just -- I don't know how to get any more specific without revealing information that we simply don't want to reveal at this point.

JP 1/14/86 p7

5) When did the President know of shipments?

Q And that was in January. But the verbal was, what? In September or --

Admiral Poindexter: I honestly don't remember the date, but it was several months prior to that.

Q You're suggesting that that is what led to the previous shipment that was "condoned?"

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: That would be a fair way of putting it. . . . I'll stand by that.

Q But did that, in fact, happen? Did the President give this verbal approval before that condoned shipment was made?

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: That's a tougher question.

Q Well, surely you can't mean it to apply before the fact.

Q If it was condoned, how was it condoned? Someone must have said something to someone. . . .

Q But were you surprised to know the Chief of Staff on the record today had said condoned means that we were asked and we said we had no objections.

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: Well, let -- I'll tell you what. Rather than spend so much time on this issue, let me think about it and we'll get back to you with an answer on that.

JP 11/14/87 p8

6) Did the President condone the shipments?

Q Mr. President, going back over your answers tonight about the arms shipments and the numbers of them, are you telling us tonight that the only shipments with which we were involved were the one or two that followed your January 17th finding and that, whatever your aides have said on background or on the record, there are no other shipments with which the US condoned?

Press Conf 11/19/86 p7

Q Mr. President, to follow up on that, we've been told by the Chief of Staff Donald Regan that we condoned, this government condoned an Israeli shipment in September of 1985, shortly before the release of hostage, Benjamin Weir. That was four months before your intelligence finding on January 17th that you say gave you the legal authority not to notify Congress. Can you clear that up why we were not -- why this government was not in violation of its arms embargo and of the notification to Congress for having condoned American-made weapons shipped to Iran in September of 1985?

THE PRESIDENT: No, that -- I've never heard Mr. Regan say that and I'll ask him about that, because we believe in the embargo and, as I say, we waived it for a specific purpose, in fact, with four goals in mind.

Press Conf 11/19/86 p7

7) Did USG ask the third country to initiate shipments?

Q Mr. President, I don't think it's still clear just what Israel's role was in this -- the questions that have been asked about a condoned shipment. We do understand that the Israelis sent a shipment in 1985 and there were also reports that it was the Israelis that contacted your Administration and suggested that you make contact with Iran. Could you explain what the Israeli role was here?

THE PRESIDENT: No, because we, as I say, have had nothing to do with other countries or their shipment of arms or doing what they're doing.

Press Conf. 11/19/86 p5

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: . . . there was one shipment that was made not by us, but by a third country prior to the signing of that document.

Q This shipment to Israel?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'm not confirming that, George.

Q Was that on our behalf?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It was done in our interests. . . .

Q You just said previously that you did not condone any shipments.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I went back and corrected -- there was one exception and that was the one I just described. DR/JP 11/13/86 p11

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It was in the general time frame. DR/JP 11/13/86 p 12

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: . . . Now, we don't want unlimited shipments from the United States, we don't want unlimited shipments from Germany, from France, from China. DR/JP 11/14/86 p15

Q At any point, did the Administration give the Israelis the authority to transfer arms shipments of spare parts or munitions that they had received from us to Iran?

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: I don't want to get into any details on the record of U.S. government arrangements with Israel. What the President said last night is accurate.
. . .

Q So there was no indirect shipment authorized through another country, namely Israel?

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: That's not in anything beyond what I have just described. DR/JP 11/14/86 p7

Q But who are we to object? If Iran wants to make a deal with France -- name a country -- what business is it of ours?

MR. REGAN: We were asked about that, if we would object, and we said no, we would not object. DR 11/14/86 p6

Q In that sense, were the Israelis the only ones who knew what we were doing -- that we were condoning --

MR. REGAN: I have not identified this as being the Israelis. That's yours.

Q . . . I think it's pretty common knowledge. I think it has --

MR. REGAN: It's not coming from me.

. . . Q I understand that. But were there other countries that were aware of either the condoning of this particular act or of any other dealings with Iran?

MR. REGAN: Possibly. DR 11/14/86 p10

Q Can you tell us whether the U.S. Government is aware of any offensive weapons, weapons unlike what the President described last night, going from a third country, a third country with whom we were dealing as part of this whole operations, such as Israel -- going to Iran?

Admiral Poindexter: We are aware of a large number of shipments that move from more than one third country, that go to Iran against our desires, and you should -- I am not . . . I am not talking about -- I mean, the country that you are referring to is Israel, I assume, and I'm not just talking about Israel. Our Eastern or Western European allies

Q But according to this policy, as I understand it, American spares can't go to Iran -- we have control over that equipment, even from a third country. Is that not correct.

Admiral Poindexter: That is correct.

Q Are we aware of a third country -- are we aware of Israel sending offensive weapons to Iran, either as part of this ongoing diplomatic initiative, or not as part of it, during this time?

Admiral Poindexter: I'm not going to comment on any specific country, but what I will say --

Q But the Chief of Staff has already put Israel on the record.

Admiral Poindexter: I would prefer and I won't identify any third countries.

Q There was a shipment in September that we condoned from a third country that was part of this growing exploration with Iran. That is the only one that we've condoned.

Admiral Poindexter: The statement that the President made last night is absolutely correct, that if you take all of the shipments that are associated with this project, whether they be directly from the United States or with third country involvement. The only shipments that were authorized, if you took them in toto, they would -- they could be placed in a single cargo aircraft.

. . . Q In that September shipment, there were no offensive weapons?

Admiral Poindexter: That's correct. . . .

Q The September '85 shipment. JP 11/14/86 p3

8) When did the President call Shimon Peres?

Q How do you account for the proximity of the timing of your arms shipments and the release of hostages, and the President's call to Shimon Peres, thanking him for Israeli efforts in getting Father Jenco out -- Dr. Weir out? . . .

MR. REGAN: There were efforts by Israel to be helpful there on the transfer and in actual details of getting Father Jenco out. And that's why the President called Mr. Peres. DR/JP 11/14/86 p6

9) What is the relationship between arms deliveries and hostage releases?

Q The last thing that Don Regan said was that the President did call Shimon Peres to thank him for the release of Reverend Weir. Doesn't that imply, A) that Israel was shipping arms to Iran at our behest and, B) that was done directly in exchange for Reverend Weir?

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: I don't think it implies that at all. . . .

Q Are you saying Israel did not ship arms to Iran at our behest?

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: I'm not saying that.

Q Did they?

ADMIRAL POINDEXTER: And I'm not confirming that. I said in the beginning that I did not want to get into the actual involvement -- specifics with regard to third countries. DR/JP 11/14/86 p13

MR. REGAN: At the time we established this, we thought we had better avenues for hostages and didn't think of it in terms of hostages. We were then trying the Syrian connection, we were then trying various Lebanese faction avenues. DR 11/14/86 p14

MR. REGAN: . . . I can say is my knowledge -- there may have been others in the Administration who knew that -- but to my knowledge, I personally as Chief of Staff, had no knowledge in September of '85 that we either asked Israel to intercede or Israel on its own told Iran that the release of a hostage would be payment or however you phrased it. DR 11/14/86 p15

10) Did USG resupply Israel for its shipments to Iran?

Q -- you deny that there were replacements sent to Israel along that period -- in 1986 -- replacements for things that we must have known were being shipped simultaneously to Iran?

MR. REGAN: You're talking in terms of the description along the line that I just said -- the minimal amounts of defensive weapons or are you talking about F-4 parts -- F-14 parts and the like? . . .

MR. REGAN: I said where someone transferred parts for us we replaced those parts. DR 11/14/86 p14

MR REGAN: . . . I don't know what Israel or any third country has sold to Iran. All I'm telling you is to my knowledge we did not replace any spare parts for Israel in F-14s or F-4s.

Q So you have no knowledge of any transfer by Israel or any other third country to Iran of parts for F-14s or other offensive weapons systems?

MR. REGAN: No.

Q And you're saying that the United States never resupplied Israel, in particular with those parts after they had been transferred to a third country.

MR. REGAN: That's what I have been informed of, yes. DR 11/14/86 p15

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