

1980-1986, Iran: Supporting Khomeini's War

1980: The October Surprise

Ronald Reagan's
Inaugural
Parade



Two events of Jan. 20, 1981:

- 52 Americans were released after 444 days as hostages in Iran.
- Reagan was sworn in as President.

Coincidence?

*The "October Surprise" refers to efforts by Ronald Reagan, George Bush, William Casey, and others, to bribe Iranian government officials so that U.S. hostages, then being held in Iran, would **not** be released until **after** the October 1980 election. An earlier hostage release would have given incumbent President Jimmy Carter such a boost of public support that he would likely have won the election.*

By Robert Parry, investigative journalist (formerly with Associated Press, *Newsweek* and PBS *Frontline*), who broke many of the Iran-Contra stories.

In the summer of 1980, President Jimmy Carter was facing a crisis. His failure to free 52 U.S. hostages held in Iran was threatening his political survival. As he wrote in his memoirs, *Keeping Faith*, "The election might also be riding on their freedom." Equally alarming, Carter was receiving reports that the Republicans were making back-channel contacts with Iran about the hostage crisis.

This multi-sided political intrigue shaped history from 1980 to the present. Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980 deteriorated into eight years of warfare that killed and maimed a million people. The war also generated billions of dollars in profits for well-connected arms merchants – and spawned a series of national security scandals.

In 1986-1987, the Iran-Contra Affair peeled back some layers of secrecy, but bipartisan investigations dumped blame mostly on Oliver North and a few low-level "men of zeal." Later, Iraqgate allegations of secret U.S. military support for Saddam Hussein also ended inconclusively. The missing billions from the sleazy Bank of Credit and Commerce International disappeared into the mist of complex charge and counter-charge. So did evidence implicating the CIA and Nica-

raguan *contras* in cocaine trafficking.

A similar fate befell the October Surprise story and Carter's suspicion of Republican interference in the 1980 hostage crisis. A special House task force concluded in 1993 that it could find "no credible evidence" to support the October Surprise charges.

The Iraqi invasion did make Iran more desperate to get U.S. spare parts for its air and ground forces. Yet the Carter administration continued to demand that U.S. hostages be freed before military shipments could resume.

FBI wiretaps revealed that an Iranian banker, the late Cyrus Hashemi, who supposedly helped Carter on the hostage talks, was actually assisting Republicans with arms shipments to Iran and peculiar money transfers in fall 1980. Hashemi's older brother, Jamshid, testified that the Iran arms shipments, via Israel, resulted from secret meetings in Madrid between Reagan's campaign director, William Casey [who became director of the CIA], and a radical Islamic mullah named Mehdi Karrubi.

On Election Day 1980, Carter still had failed to free the hostages and Ronald Reagan won in a landslide. Within minutes of Reagan's inauguration on January 20, 1981, the hostages were finally freed.

Source: "October Surprise X-Files (Part 5): Saddam's 'Green Light,'" <www.webcom.com/~lpeace/collections/denied/octsurprise.htm>

1980-1986:

Iran-Contraagate

By Webster Tarpley and Anton Chaitkin.

The principal elements in the Iran-Contra scandal may be reduced to the following:

1. The secret arming of the Khomeini regime in Iran by the U.S. government, during an official U.S.-decreed arms embargo against Iran, while the U.S. publicly denounced the recipients of its secret deliveries as terrorists and kidnappers – a policy initiated under the Carter presidency and accelerated by the Reagan-Bush administration;
2. The Reagan-Bush administration's secret arming of its *contras* for war against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, while such aid was explicitly prohibited under U.S. law;
3. The use of communist and terrorist enemies – often armed by the Anglo-Americans – to justify a police state and covert, oligarchical rule at home;
4. Paying for and protecting gun-running projects with drug-smuggling, embezzlement, theft by diversion from authorized U.S. programs and the "silencing" of opponents and knowledgeable participants in the schemes;
5. The routine perjury and deception of the public by officials pretending to have no knowledge of these activities; and the routine acquiescence in that deception by Congressmen too frightened to oppose it.

When the scandal broke, in 1986, George Bush Sr. said he knew nothing of these illegal activities; that other government officials had kept him in the dark; and that he attended no important meetings on these subjects. Since then, many once-classified documents have suggested that Bush organized and supervised many, or most, of the criminal aspects of the Iran-Contra adventures.

Source: Excerpt, *George Bush: The Unauthorized Biography* (1992). <www.tarpley.net/bush18.htm>