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## CIA Official Testifies He Ignored Efforts By White House to Evade Contra-Aid Ban

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WASHINGTON—A high-ranking Central Intelligence Agency official acknowledged that he turned a blind eye to what he suspected were White House efforts to circumvent congressional restrictions on U.S. military aid to the Nicaraguan rebels.

Alan Fiers, chief of the agency's Central American operations, also told the Iran-Contra investigating committees earlier this month that he purposely misled Congress last year about his knowledge of secret U.S. assistance to the rebels known as the Contras.

Mr. Fiers, a 20-year CIA veteran, admitted that he was "technically correct" but "specifically evasive" when he testified last October and December before the House and Senate Intelligence committees on such topics as Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North's role in providing assistance to the insurgents.

His account is contained in a declassified transcript of testimony he gave to the House and Senate Iran-Contra committees on Aug. 4-5 and released yesterday.

### Reluctant to 'Break Ranks'

"I could have been more forthcoming," Mr. Fiers acknowledged in describing his sworn testimony last year, but said he was part of a Reagan administration team and was reluctant to "break ranks with the team." His admissions drew rebukes from lawmakers, including Sens. David Boren (D., Okla.) and William Cohen (R., Maine), chairman and vice chairman, respectively, of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Mr. Fiers also made these points before the Iran-Contra committees:

—He said Vice President George Bush's national security aide, Donald Gregg, sharply criticized "the corrupt nature of the people" involved in the Contra-resupply network managed by retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard Secord, and urged the CIA to stay away from them.

—He said that shortly after Congress voted \$100 million in new aid to the Contras last year, William Casey, then CIA director, developed the idea of soliciting additional millions from Taiwan. Although a CIA employee met in New York with an intermediary, the plan, which Mr. Fiers said would have been legal, never got past the "exploratory" stage.

Previously, Taiwan had funneled \$2 million into Swiss bank accounts used by Gen. Secord and associates to fund their covert airlift of arms.

—Mr. Fiers supported Col. North's public testimony that the former White House aide had a close relationship with Mr. Casey. "I knew they were close and talked a lot," Mr. Fiers said. Col. North described Mr. Casey as the driving force behind the Iran-Contra operation and said Mr. Casey embraced the plan to divert Iran arms-sales profits to the Contras when it was first proposed in January 1986.

But according to Mr. Fiers, Mr. Casey told him in mid-1986 that he didn't know where the Contras were getting their funds, and had kept himself ignorant of the sources while U.S. aid to the Contras was prohibited.

Mr. Fiers said he couldn't be sure who was telling the truth. He said Mr. Casey played with words, and he had this to say about Col. North: "I never knew Col. North to be an absolute liar, but I never took anything he said at face value because I knew that he was bombastic and embellished the record, and threw curves, speed balls and spitballs to get what he wanted, and I knew it and I knew it well."

Mr. Fiers testified that he didn't learn of the diversion until it was announced last November.

Mr. Fiers disclosed that the CIA developed "considerable evidence . . . that people in and around" former Contra leader Eden Pastora "were in fact involved in cocaine running" to the U.S. to raise revenue. But, he said, "we see no indication that . . . anybody currently active in the resistance has been involved in drug trafficking." Moreover, a House committee in-

vestigator, Robert Bermingham, reported in a July memo that congressional investigators hadn't uncovered any evidence of drug trafficking by Contra leaders.

Mr. Fiers also disclosed that he has testified before a federal grand jury here looking into the Iran-Contra scandal, including the CIA's involvement in helping provide assistance to the Contras when such aid was prohibited.

### 'It Was No Secret'

Mr. Fiers said he was asked during his grand jury appearance why he failed to inform his superiors or other U.S. officials about what he knew of Col. North's pro-Contra activities. Mr. Fiers asserted that officials at the White House, State Department, the CIA and the Defense Department "knew Ollie North was around the Central American operation. If people wanted to look at it in depth, it was there to see. It was no secret in Washington."

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The transcript and other documents released by the Iran-Contra committees yesterday contain repeated references to efforts by Mr. Fiers, who reported directly to Mr. Casey, to insulate and distance himself and the CIA from Col. North's operations. Although he had suspicions about the propriety of some of Col. North's operations by early 1986, Mr. Fiers acknowledged, "I did not allow myself to develop a deep understanding in specific terms" about the Contra resupply operation.

To try to protect the CIA, Mr. Fiers told the Iran-Contra committees, he was guided by the following creed: "God give me the strength to change what I can and to accept what I can't." Mr. Fiers said he told another CIA official that he didn't want to interfere in Col. North's work with "private benefactors" to help the Contras. "Don't try to put a pencil in the spoke," he recalled saying. "Just don't get involved with it."

Mr. Fiers also testified that during an August 1986 meeting in Bush aide Mr. Gregg's office, which was attended by other White House aides, he became concerned that the discussion was getting too deeply into the workings of the Contra-resupply operation. "There were things being discussed there I didn't want to be a party to discussing," Mr. Fiers told the Iran-Contra committees, because "I was working on actively disengaging, trying to distance myself" from the covert Contra-aid network.

Former CIA operative Felix Rodriguez, who had a falling out with Gen. Secord, complained to Mr. Gregg before that meeting that the retired general and his associates were profiteering on sales of weapons to the Contras.

Later, when congressional committees began raising questions about the CIA's knowledge of such operations, Mr. Fiers testified, he either remained silent or failed to provide "a complete and accurate answer" to lawmakers.

According to Mr. Fiers, Clair George, the CIA's deputy director for operations, also knew in general terms about Col. North's work for the Contras. "Clair had the broad strokes, he knew that Ollie had been around and was involved," Mr. Fiers told the Iran-Contra panels. Declassified transcripts of Mr. George's testimony to the committees are to be released in the next few days.

Under sometimes tough questioning by congressional investigators, Mr. Fiers acknowledged that he frequently passed to Col. North intelligence information that dealt with Nicaragua but didn't believe such actions were improper or violated congressional restrictions on aid to the Contras.