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# Uproar Over Iran: What Is Known And What Remains to Be Learned

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 16 — A succession of senior Administration officials have sought in the last few days to quell Congressional and public anger over Washington's dealings with Iran.

Despite their statements, many key questions about the diplomatic contacts and arms shipments remain clouded or unanswered. The House and Senate intelligence committees have not yet been briefed, and closed meetings are scheduled for Friday.

Here are some questions that the committees can be expected to raise, and what is known, what is suspected, and what remains to be answered:

## Arms Shipments

**Q. What quantity and type of arms were shipped to Iran, and by whom?**

A. The national security adviser, Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter, said today that the weapons sent by the United States or authorized for delivery by others would fill one cargo plane. The Administration says the weaponry was defensive, such as parts for antiaircraft batteries or antitank weapons. The Congressional committees plan to demand specifics.

Administration officials say each of three releases of American hostages in Lebanon in the last year roughly coincided with a shipment of arms to Iran. The first, in September 1985, is said by Administration officials to have been an Israeli delivery. At least two other deliveries are believed to have been facilitated by the Administration. These include a plane sent from Yugoslavia to Iran last July that was described by Iranian dissidents as containing American arms, and a boatload of arms loaded by members of a Danish seamen's union and delivered to Iran late last month.

President Reagan denied reports that Iran had been "using Danish ships to carry American arms," but he did not mention the possibility that Israel had done so. Israeli officials say they have been sending arms to Iran and receiving replacements for those arms from the United States.

It is not known if countries other than Israel aided Iran, but it is possible that some, such as China, were involved.

**Q. Could the shipments have shifted the military balance in the Iran-Iraq war?**

A. Administration officials say no. Iraqi officials and military analysts are less certain. Iraq's strategy in its six-year-old war with Iran centers on air attacks, and a defensive weapon like radar for an antiaircraft weapon can thus have a decided effect. Iraq has detected signs in recent months of improved Iranian abilities, including more flights by Iranian fighters. The Administration says aircraft parts were not shipped.

## Consultations

**Q. Why were members of Congress and some officials in the State Department, the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency kept from knowing about the operation?**

A. Administration officials say that to maintain secrecy, they informed only a small group of officials to prevent unauthorized disclosures. It appears that members of the Administration were informed on a "need to know" basis. Among those left out was Adm. William J. Crowe, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and one of six officials on the National Security Council. Admiral Poindexter said Admiral Crowe had not been told because it was an intelligence operation, not a military one.

A classified finding by Mr. Reagan — a form of executive order that sets in motion a covert intelligence operation — in effect instructed William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, not to inform Congress because of "security risks." Mr. Reagan cited a provision of the law on intelligence that allows him to forgo briefing Congress in advance. It calls for reports in a "timely fashion" on such operations.

Congressional officials say they can recall no other instance in the 10-year history of oversight of the C.I.A. in which a Presidential finding was not reported to the committees.

**Q. Did the Administration violate the law?**

A. Administration officials insist not, but some in Congress are very unhappy about the 10-month lag between the signing of the Presidential order and the briefing of Congress. They say the law was intended only for unusual circumstances of short duration.

**Q. Why is Congress being briefed now?**

A. Largely because the operation was disclosed by a pro-Syrian magazine in Beirut and was in turn confirmed by American press reports.

**Q. Are there any other Presidential orders authorizing covert operations that have not been reported to Congress?**

A. Administration officials say no; members of the intelligence committees want to be sure.

**Q. Why did the Administration go ahead with the operation when it was opposed by Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger?**

A. The decision was made by Mr. Reagan, and only he can say for certain why he chose to disregard the advice of two such senior officials. A senior Administration official said that Mr. Reagan had taken considerable personal interest in the fate of the American hostages in Lebanon and that the issue arose at fully one-half of his daily briefings on foreign policy.

## Contacts With Iran

**Q. Why did the Reagan Administration decide, in mid-1985, to make overtures to Iran?**

A. For years, Iran had been strongly attacked by the Administration as a nation supporting terrorism. In an essay published this year, Mr. Casey wrote that "probably more blood has been shed by Iranian-sponsored terrorists during the last few years than by all other terrorists combined."

Nonetheless, Robert C. McFarlane, the national security adviser at the time, has said he felt overtures could be made to moderates in Iran in an effort to forge a geopolitical realignment in the Middle East. Officials have stressed the strategic significance of Iran and its location astride the Persian Gulf.

The importance of Iran in the region was underscored last year by the crisis over the hostages on a Trans World Airways flight diverted to Lebanon. The Administration learned then that it was Iran, and not Syria, that held the key to dealing with Shiite Moslem extremist groups, officials say. "Syria controlled the territory," one official said. "Iran controlled the groups." •

The Administration has asserted that its major opening to Iran came to include talks about the hostages held in Lebanon. Some Administration officials, critical of the program, assert that these statements are window-dressing, an after-the-fact cover story for a misguided attempt to negotiate freedom for American hostages.

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**Q. Do "moderates" really exist in Iran?**

A. Mr. McFarlane said today that the crucial question in assessing the program was, "Are there elements in Iran or not who wish to reorient Iran's policies?" The Administration says it was reaching out to elements in Teheran that wanted to end the Iran-Iraq war and to improve relations with the United States.

Regional specialists inside and outside the Government question this idea. One Administration official not consulted about the operation said, "There are no moderates in Iran." There has been speculation that figures in Iran may have portrayed themselves as friendly to the United States in an attempt to dupe the Administration into sending arms.

**Q. Why were arms chosen to further talks?**

A. Administration officials say spare parts were sent as a means of showing "good faith" to the Iranians, whose armed forces depend almost entirely on American-made weapons. They say that in the early days of the contacts with Iran, negotiators for both sides demanded evidence that the talks were serious. Administration officials say the arms shipments were intended to bolster the so-called moderate factions and prove they were directly in touch with the White House.

**Q. With whom was the United States dealing in Iran?**

A. Mr. McFarlane has said he met with officials at the highest level of the Iranian Government on a trip to Teheran in May. A State Department official has said Mr. McFarlane met with a group of officials, including Prime Minister Mir Hussein Mousavi.

When the Lebanese magazine revealed the McFarlane trip, the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Hojatolislam Hashemi Rafsanjani, came forward with his own account. He declared that Mr. McFarlane came to Teheran in July carrying a cake and a Bible but was rebuffed and imprisoned. Administration officials strenuously deny this account. There has been speculation that Hojatolislam Rafsanjani or his aides may have been involved in the talks and that his account was an attempt to protect his position.

Mr. McFarlane has said those with whom he met now risk execution.

## Achievements

**Q. What did the United States achieve in the talks?**

A. American officials cite two concrete achievements: the release of three hostages and an Iranian pledge to stop supporting terrorism against Americans. But Mr. Shultz said today that Iran had continued to foment terrorism in the Middle East. He also said groups that have kidnapped Americans in recent months have ties to Iran.

**Q. What does Iran say about the affair?**

A. The President of Iran, Hojatolislam Ali Khomeini, said Friday that his country had received a small amount of weapons from the United States. He denied any diplomatic negotiations.