

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 53

THE REBEL  
22 November 1983

# A QUESTION OF TREASON

By Donald Freed

**T**he Carter debate briefing book is the tip of the wrong iceberg. In the capacious Reagan dragnet it was one small shiny object dredged up from the murky depths of the 1980 campaign. Reagan's secret operation—run by Casey, Allen, Clark—had as its target, not the debate, but the Iranian hostage crisis—"the October surprise." Reagan did not fear Carter's television persona in a debate—Reagan had "the speech." He feared Carter's executive power to launch a daring rescue of the American hostages that he could not overcome, that would re-elect Carter, that alone.

In the winter of 1980 Ronald Reagan's candidacy was floundering. He had lost Iowa to George Bush; New Hampshire hung in the balance. Enter William Casey. Casey and Richard Allen huddle with Reagan's closest advisers, Ed Meese and Judge William Clark, and decide to pull out the stops. They decide to activate a mole in the Carter White House, and other moles in the National Security Council (NSC), and in the CIA. They decide to activate a spy ring inside their own government—in diplomatic terms they put into operation a *coup de main*. Is this scenario credible?

This network of moles delivered many secrets but none so important as news of an "October surprise." Sensitive material from the NSC began to flow to Allen. Secret information from CIA and ex-CIA sources reached Casey. A top "control" or "agent-handler" in Casey's ring was Stephan Halper, a "researcher" from the Bush campaign. Halper's father-in-law was Dr. Ray Cline, former Deputy Director of the CIA and a high Reagan adviser. Halper, through Cline, had far-reaching access to the

most sensitive sources. Consider Cline is.

Ray Cline's illustrious or notorious career in the clandestine world had led in his mature years to the directorship of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) housed at Georgetown University, and to The Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO).

Thanks to the background, then, of Casey, Allen, and George Bush, as former director of CIA, it is now possible to grasp the range and depth of the Reagan operation in 1980.

A memo has now surfaced, directed to Meese and Casey, referring to a White House mole. This has been laughed off by Reagan and aides as the work of someone "who's read too many spy novels." Elizabeth Drew, writing in the *New Yorker*, raises a compelling argument against such wisecracks.

What if, she asks, there is another possibility? It was known that the Reagan campaign was obsessed with the possibility that Carter might, shortly before the election, obtain the release of the hostages held in Iran. When Casey told a breakfast meeting of reporters at the Republican Convention in Detroit, that the Reagan people thought there might be "an October surprise," his suggestion just seemed like good politics. Any successful move by Carter would be seen as having been manipulated for the election. At the time, Casey used the term "intelligence operation" to describe the monitoring activity the campaign would conduct in order to anticipate the "surprise." One aide told Elizabeth Drew that some of the campaign leaders saw the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962, just before that year's congressional elections, as a parallel for what Carter might do in October, 1980. "They knew what happened on what day in October, 1962," this man said, "and how the Congressional Elections were affected." It had already been reported that one Reagan campaign aide, Admiral Robert Garrick (Ret.), had organized a network of retired military officers to watch military bases for the movement of troops or transport planes. Garrick confirmed this. The disclosure was at once ludicrous and worrisome. When Carter attempted the rescue mission that failed, in April of 1980, the ships and helicopters were already in the area. A former Carter foreign-policy official says that a vital requirement of that or any other rescue mission was that it be carried out without any noticeable movement of troops or ships from the United States. He and others say that there were some contingency plans for another hostage-rescue attempt but that it was never seriously considered, because, among other things, the hostages had been dispersed from the American Embassy, where they had been held.

Logical observers ask what the Reagan campaign could possibly have done with information of a Carter rescue mission. To reveal the plan or use the information for political gain would be treasonous.

This question leads to a series of related questions. Was the CIA, for instance, loyal to Carter (as they had not been to Nixon)? "Old boys" had blocked Carter's appointee, Theodore Sorenson, to head CIA. This unprecedented rejection of a notable figure such as Sorenson, forced Carter, in 1977, to appoint an outsider, Admiral Stansfield Turner, to the directorship of CIA.

Turner removed about six hundred people from their jobs in the area of covert operations: many of these people were placed in other positions, about two hundred of them retired, and a few were fired outright. This makes for a very unhappy network.

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Some of these people were what one former Carter official calls "the cowboys—the ones who run around and do things." Moreover, Carter, in 1978, issued a charter designed to put reins on the activities of the FBI and the CIA. Many of the former CIA people who helped out in the Bush campaign joined the Reagan-Bush campaign after the nomination. Among the people working with Cline, Halper, et al. was Robert Gambino, who had been the CIA Director of Security, a position that gave him access to the files of people who had received high-level security clearances. All of Casey's men were active in the Association of Former Intelligence Officers national network.

Ms. Drew sums up well by saying that "it is known that the Reagan campaign was extremely worried that Carter might do something about the hostages. It is clear that there was within the Reagan campaign a pattern and practice of obtaining sensitive information from within the White House. Perhaps all this activity amounts to separate pebbles; perhaps it forms a mosaic. In any event, as far as is known, this sort of activity does not represent, as some suggest, politics as usual. Of course there have been 'dirty tricks' before, and, especially in the pre-Watergate days, some high-handed activities on the part of administrations—but that was then. As of now, there is no sign that anything quite like this has occurred before."

If the Casey-Allen spying had as its priority the sabotage of Carter's hostage policy, was the Carter briefing book of any importance at all? Yes. What is not generally recalled is that Carter and Reagan were even in the polls in October, 1980, when the crucially important debate was held. The debate was the climax of the campaign. Reagan had to prove that he could do more than smile and joke, that he was more than an actor. In short, Reagan had to be briefed to destroy Carter in detail.

The debate was a fraud because Reagan had been stuffed with stolen information. Just as he had stolen football plays while in High School, and President Johnson's message on Vietnam to the Governor's Conference in 1967, so Reagan had had stolen for him the other side's signals in 1980. The stakes were high, the debate was the key event of the race; Richard Wirthlin told Elizabeth Drew that, "given the political environment, the election is going to hang or fall on that debate."

Reagan's aides confided to *Time* magazine that the stolen documents "had included every important item Carter used on the air . . ." David Stockman bragged in a speech that Reagan would win the debate and the election because of the "filched" briefing material.

Casey and Allen had been sucking up information right across the Federal bureaucracy; the briefing material used in the debate was one of their ancillary discoveries. Casey's campaign aide Max Hugel was later rewarded for his efforts by being appointed to head covert actions at CIA (but he was fired over charges of improper stock-trading purchases).

During those few short months, March to October, in 1980 a domestic "destabilization," of America by Americans, was shaking the country, unknown to its citizens. To recapitulate: Casey used the term "intelligence operation" to describe the monitoring when he and Reagan's campaign Chief of Staff, Edwin Meese, met with reporters at a breakfast during the Republican National Convention in Detroit in July 1980. A Republican official said use of this term "alarmed" Meese and others in the campaign and was not repeated.

Robert Garrick, who was in charge of plans and policy for Reagan's campaign, said the campaign intelligence group's information came chiefly from a network of retired military officers who monitored the movements of U.S. troops and transport planes at various air bases across the country.

A former high-level campaign adviser to Reagan said that one of the campaign chiefs, Richard V. Allen, received copies of portions of daily staff reports that had been sent to Carter's adviser on National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski.



*William Casey ran Reagan's intelligence system.*

*Photo by Wide World*

Brzezinski told the *Post* that the reports to him from NSC staff members on each day's activities were "sometimes extraordinary sensitive material of the highest nature . . . any unauthorized distribution to anyone outside the White House would be very serious."

The stealing of the debate material is compounded by the involvement of journalists in the scenario. Coaching Reagan were William Buckley, George Will, Evans and Novak, to name several. These men were, in fact, acting as Reagan agents.

High Carter adviser, Jody Powell, had tried, with little success, to identify the double standard applied to Carter by Reagan media friends. Powell writes that:

"The problem is that Will also put himself over, in the spring of 1980 at least, as a reporter, telling his readers that he had heard on both sides of the Atlantic that there would be an 'October surprise' and that Carter would probably arrange the release of the hostages just in time for the November election.

At the time, the possibility that Carter might succeed in bargaining the release of the U.S. hostages from the Teheran embassy was one that haunted the Reagan campaign. They saw what happened on the very day of the Wisconsin primary, April 1, 1980. Polls had been showing Kennedy running very close to Carter.

At 7:18 am on primary day Carter appeared on network TV to announce a possible deal on the hostages. He won the primary by 20 points.

On no less than three occasions in Campaign '80 journalists friendly to Reagan—Will, Evans & Novak, and Jack Anderson—reported the possibility of an October surprise. The effect of such stories, which had no foundation in reality, was preemptive down-playing of an actual hostage release, by implying that it would merely be part of a sordid campaign maneuver; in effect playing politics with people's lives. So was Will being a reporter or a political activist?

(I assume, incidentally, that the only real scandal on the part of the Reagan campaigners would be if they were illicitly obtaining classified information on the status of hostage negotiations. The Carter White House had offered briefings on these negotiations,

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but the Reagan team turned them down, doubtless not wishing to be implicated in failure. If there really was a high-level Reagan mole in the NSC, he would have been truthfully telling the Reagan team that there was no change of an October surprise, and that all negotiations on the hostages had ground to a halt. But perhaps the mole did say this and the Reaganites rejected it as potential disinformation. You simply can't tell, at that level of paranoia.)"

Again, the "October surprise." Except that the hostage rescue attempt came in April, and it was not a surprise to the Iranians. We shall see that Reagan's "media assets" (Buckley's term of clandestine art) worked at two levels. First there was "disinformation." The media was being used, unwittingly. That explained, for example, the *Los Angeles Times'* misunderstanding about the heavy cost to the Reagan regime that the discovery of the pilfered debate book brought.

This seems particularly true when the relatively unimportant fruits of the effort that have come to light thus far are weighed against the potential cost to President Reagan of the present FBI and congressional investigations into possible White House "moles;" the removal of national security documents; the pilfering of Carter's debate briefing book; and allegations that "sexual favors" were exchanged for information.

What first made Carter's aides suspicious was the glaring appearance of "disinformation." Quoting Carter adviser Lloyd Cutler: "In all their talk about the October surprise, there was a certain element of disinformation or misinformation. In October, Evans and Novak ran a story that I had just been to Geneva making a secret trip and a handshake deal to bring the hostages out just before the election. It was just made up out of whole cloth. I had not been in Geneva, except in May."

The column by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, a special "inside report" timed for release to subscribers a few days before the election, said Carter had decided to "compel" transfer to Iran of the frozen assets and hand over \$1 billion in gold "at once."

The column also reported a "deal exchanging American hostages for military equipment vital to the Iranian war effort" and spoke of war material of various sorts being transferred from military warehouses to the Philadelphia Navy Yard for transfer to Iran.

"Roly is an old friend," Cutler said, "and when I reproached him, he indicated that it had come from an impeccable source, which I understood to be in the Reagan campaign. Whether it was disinformation—planting stories or making them up—or whether they had some sort of intelligence operation which brought in the wrong intelligence, I could not say."

President Carter's aide Jody Powell has documented the disinformation campaign, with some specificity, for those like Reagan who first called the entire affair "much ado about nothing."

Although careful reporters were able to spot and largely to foil two of the disinformation efforts, a third was a spectacular success, resulting in a series of columns by Jack Anderson that appeared in hundreds of newspapers around the country.

In August 1980, Anderson says he was presented with documents showing that Carter had ordered an invasion of Iran to take place in mid-October. This "tentative invasion date" was confirmed, according to Anderson, by someone working with the National Security Council in the White House. According to the columnist, his NSC source also said that the President had issued the order "to save himself from almost certain defeat in November." From August 18 through August 22, Anderson wrote and distributed five columns based on this information.

In fact, no such orders ever were issued, and the idea of launching a second rescue mission never was seriously considered or discussed. Although a contingency plan was prepared as a matter of course, conditions never arose that were even remotely consistent with its use.

If, as Anderson claims, he has documents showing that such orders were issued, those documents were forgeries. "If someone on the NSC staff confirmed the authenticity of these documents, much less described the President's motives for the non-existent orders, he was lying," according to Powell.

As the first Anderson columns about the politically inspired invasion orders were appearing, *Washington Post* Defense Correspondent George Wilson became the target for the second disinformation effort. Wilson was contacted by an anonymous source who claimed to work for the CIA. For several weeks this source tried to sell Wilson a variety of stories, all damaging to the Carter administration. One described a CIA study, supposedly done in connection with the April attempt to rescue the hostages, that had predicted that the effort would result in 60% casualties among the hostages.

Wilson was interested, but insisted that he needed something more substantial before he could write such a story. In mid-September, he received through the mail what appeared to be the "something more" that he had requested: A copy of a CIA study, dated March 16, 1980, entitled "Oplan Eagle Claw Loss Estimate." The document stated that 20% of the hostages would be killed or seriously wounded during the assault on the compound, another 25% during the effort to locate and identify the hostages and another 15% during their evacuation to the waiting helicopters.

That document was a forgery. In the words of former Deputy CIA Director Frank C. Carlucci, the man who supposedly ordered the study, "I have been unable to find anything in this alleged CIA document that is either accurate or which approximates any memorandum we prepared."

Wilson was persuaded by Carlucci's analysis, which listed a series of flaws and errors in the document, and wrote no story.

The third and by far the most vicious portion of the disinformation campaign was launched on Capitol Hill in early September. Allegations were spread by Republican Senate Staff Members that David Aaron, Deputy to National-Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, had been responsible for the arrest and execution of a valuable American spy in the Soviet Union. The charges were proved false, but not until after the election. In the meantime, the staff members succeeded in provoking a full-scale investigation by the Senate Intelligence Committee and in leaking word of the supposedly secret investigation, along with Aaron's name, to several news organizations, including the *New York Times*.

On September 23 the *New York Times*, persuaded that journalists were being used, blew the whistle on the smear campaign. A week later, Cable News Network Senior Correspondent Daniel Schorr, writing in the *New Republic*, concluded an in-depth analysis of the affair by describing the attack on Aaron as "a classic piece of covert action that left the desired taint of suspicion."

Those responsible for the Aaron smear were members of "The Madison Group"—established, according to columnist William Safire, to "embarrass, bedevil and defeat" the Carter administration. The group of ultra-reactionary Senate Staff Members maintained a liaison with the Reagan campaign, through the Heritage Foundation.

The mole propaganda concerning Aaron is now understood for what it was—disinformation to protect the Reagan mole that was functioning in the NSC. Powell summarizes the affair in this way:

**Question:** What other dirty tricks did the Reagan campaign perpetrate?

**Hint:** The notebook was stolen not from the campaign headquarters but from the White House. Fewer than a dozen people ever saw it. The person who took it almost certainly had access to other information even more valuable to the Reagan campaign. It is logical that he (she?) would risk copying and sneaking out a thick notebook but ignore more important information that could be passed over the telephone?

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**Question:** Who else in the Reagan campaign was involved? Was the mole paid in cash? With a job? A pat on the head?

**Hint:** Baker and Gergen have only the vaguest recollection of the whole incident; they don't even know who handed them the notebook. (Presumably it was left under Gergen's pillow by the tooth fairy.) Baker described to Barrett how he agonized over the "ethical dilemma" presented by the stolen material, but now says that he didn't even try to find out who was responsible so that he could make sure that it didn't happen again. If you can swallow that, take a friend along the next time you buy a used car.

**Question:** Did Reagan know that he was using stolen material?

**Hint:** Baker, Stockman and Gergen swear that they never told their boss anything. Remember, however, that both camps viewed the debate as the most crucial event of the campaign. At that point, pollsters from both sides saw the race as a dead heat. If you can believe that Reagan was never told that what he was hearing in the rehearsal was the genuine stuff, not just someone's best guess of what Carter might say, take two friends and a lawyer to help you with that car.

So we do have espionage in the classical sense from the Reagan campaign. Elizabeth Drew's question still burns—to what end? Election is the wrong answer. Frustrating the "October surprise" could not have involved premature disclosure and, thus, treason. Could it?

We are now obliged to approach the threshold question of Reagan's "October surprise." In the light of the Reagan camp's "obsession" (their word) with Carter's handling of the Iranian hostage crisis, and the revelation that William Casey had woven a web of "domestic espionage" (*N.Y. Times*' term) to catch National Security Council information, the basic question arises: was the Iranian crisis, to the Reagan forces in 1980, what the Paris peace talks were to the Nixon campaign in 1968 and 1972; matters of the highest national security that could be manipulated in order to gain political power (as we now know Nixon did in both '68 and '72)?

The obligatory question is: what were the Reagan-Casey agents (the retired intelligence and military officers) looking for? And if it was information about a hostage rescue (admittedly the only event that could stop Reagan) what would Reagan have done with it? What could he have done without exposing himself to charges of criminal opportunism that threatened American lives? Could or would the Reagan-Casey-Allen spy ring disclose prematurely or blow the rescue operation, the operation that would rescue, as well, Jimmy Carter's chances for re-election?

The "debacle in the desert," as the aborted rescue mission of April 1980 would be called, doomed the Carter presidency once and for all. Did the Ayatollah's military and police have advance warning? Did someone sabotage the top secret plans to rescue the American hostages? Further, did the constant Reagan campaign charge that Carter was "weak" force his hand in a rescue scheme that was probably doomed to fail? Most alarming, according to Carter aide Hamilton Jordan, was the March 29, 1980 disinformation. A professionally forged, very clever letter purporting to be from Carter was given to Khomeini through "channels." The letter apologized for all past U.S. "crimes against Iran." The story of the letter was leaked to the British News Agency *Reuters* and then released to the world press. The ploy worked, the American media refused for weeks to accept Carter's protestations of forgery. By the time it was realized that someone had foisted a forgery on Khomeini, another dirty trick was wrecking Carter's desperate attempt at keeping the rescue mission secret.

On Sunday, April 20, 1980, the *Washington Star* played a long, vivid story—"the hostages can be freed"—by one Miles Copeland. The Carter White House and National Security Council were aghast. They knew who Miles Copeland was.

Miles Copeland was so high in the secret world of the Central Intelligence Agency that he had been the American liaison to Colonel Nasser and Egypt during the most sensitive period of Middle Eastern maneuvering in the 1950s. Copeland, in his book *Game of Nations*, discussed in detail the "zero-sum" techniques used by CIA to "destabilize" governments—as in Iran where Copeland had been a master player in the 1953 coup which restored power to the Shah.

Copeland, then, had intimate knowledge of Egypt, Iran, and Oman and the oil Sheikdoms (where his own private intelligence "P.R." firm operated for giant oil consortiums). This is important because Egyptian, Iranian and protectorate sources figured vitally in the secret hostage negotiations and rescue plans, these same sources had been Copeland's for many years past.

Oman was a primary channel in the flow of information about the rescue. Carter, in his memoirs, stresses again and again the almost incredible lengths to which the President's White House and National Security Council (NSC) were going to keep the raid secret. But Reagan had a "mole" and, it is becoming credible to believe a "back-channel"—Miles Copeland and his various firms and fronts of "old boys", referred to in his own *Star* article. The Carter White House was also concentrating on Oman.

"My persistent anxiety was to maintain secrecy. However, I was soon forced to share the news with one other head of state, when I received information about disturbing stories originating with a former British officer in Oman, who was employed by the Sultan.

"He had reported to British officials in London that we had planes in Oman (which was true) and that they were loaded with ammunition and supplies for the Afghan freedom fighters. The British and Omanis were getting nervous, and I had to send Warren Christopher to London to brief Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Foreign Minister Peter Carrington about the true purpose of the planes. Christopher was careful not to ask them for any comment, but simply informed them about our plans for the rescue."

Copeland had worked with British intelligence since World War II and his MI-6 assets in Oman are the best there are, according to his colleagues. The ship movements for the rescue were in the Gulf of Oman, the transport planes supporting the ship in the Gulf of Oman were flying out of Egypt. There was nothing for Casey's retired watchers to watch in the United States. Casey's eyes, and Copeland's, were watching from the Middle East, the source of the back-channel.

Finally, Copeland is an almost legendary figure in Iran. He refers to every level and area of the country continually and it is clear that his contacts in the "Savak" are still alive. Copeland had helped to set up the notorious, murderous, secret police of the Shah in the first place.

According to authoritative accounts, although the Joint Chiefs of Staff had told Carter categorically after the hostages were taken that no rescue effort was feasible, the military had done a complete turnaround in the intervening months. They knew exactly where the hostages were (a fact they hadn't been certain of at the outset), they had evolved a plan of operation in which they believed, and they had a force in training to execute it.

Copeland starts out his astounding "speculative fiction" by saying:

"Early last December, a young chap from a certain government agency made the rounds of us old timers, 'unofficially and off the record,' to ask whether we thought an 'Entebbe-type' or SWAT-type raid on the U.S. Embassy in Tehran was feasible. His intention was to elicit a resounding 'no' so as to justify President Carter's policy of 'restraint' when pressure was building up to get the hostages home by Christmas."

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Copeland, code-name "Mr. Lincoln," now disclosed that he and "Safford", "The Weasel," "Masterson," and "The Whistler" were all somehow involved in the military planning for some kind of surprise rescue. The Weasel, et al., Copeland assures us, are the kings of covert action, from O.S.S. days with William Casey.

Shortly after being approached by the government, Copeland states that he and the other old boys did, in reality, work out a rescue scenario. If one compares the "Copeland plan" with what, in fact, we know the Carter plan contemplated, the most serious questions arise.

Hamilton Jordan quotes his boss, Jimmy Carter, at a National Security Council luncheon meeting on April 11, 1980:

"As you know," Carter continued, "the first week the hostages were seized, I ordered the Joint Chiefs to develop a rescue plan that could be used in dire circumstances. A team of expert paramilitary people now report that they have confidence in their ability to rescue our people. Before I make up my mind, I want to know your reactions."

The President might say—or even believe—he hadn't made up his mind, but I knew he had.

"Harold," he said, "I'd like for you and Dave Jones to outline the plan, the risks, the problems—and the prospects for success."

So secret was the meeting that Secretary of State Cyrus Vance only learned of the decision to proceed with the rescue after April 11, because he had not been in Washington for the meeting. On April 20, Vance read the Copeland story in the *Star* and, perhaps, because of it demanded to know how much was true! (Carter tells Vance the plan. Vance is very upset because it is too late, the "go" order had been given on the 18th. On April 21, Vance submits his letter of resignation to Carter.)

Vance had not known, but the NSC had. We know now that the Reagan-Casey spy operation had sources or "moles" in that NSC. Besides moles, there is strong indication that Casey, Copeland, and the old boys had deep back-channels all along from MI-6 and old CIA "assets."

Copeland knows that he is in a minefield with his speculation, and attempts to cover himself.

"Before proceeding, it must be stated that President Carter has not confided his intentions to me, nor has this article been cleared by the CIA or anyone else. It has, however, been agreed to by my old colleagues, who wish to be associated with it."

Copeland then proceeds to discuss how he and other CIA agents "turned" the crowd when the agency orchestrated the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Mossadegh in 1953. We now know from the Carter memoirs and other sources that that is precisely what the U.S. plan to rescue the hostages envisaged, and that CIA street agents were in place and ready to go into action when the violence around the embassy should reach the stage of mass confusion.

If we compare what President Carter and his aides have written and said about the rescue plan, one conclusion is inescapable.

#### Reconnaissance

**Carter:** We had blueprints of our embassy buildings in Tehran, of course . . .

Much more important, we received information from someone (who cannot be identified) who was thoroughly familiar with the compound, knew where every American hostage was located, how many and what kind of guards were there at different times during the night, and the daily schedule of the hostages and their captors. This was the first time we knew the precise location of the Americans.

**Copeland:** Already we have detailed maps of the embassy compound.

We will need to know more, however, about where and how the prisoners are kept, where the booby traps, if any, are planted, how the patrols work, what arms and munitions there are, how food and medical supplies are delivered . . .

#### Recruitment of Agents

**Carter:** Our agents, who moved freely in and out of Tehran under the guise of business or media missions, had studied the degree of vigilance of the captors.

**Newsweek—May 12:** For weeks beforehand, American intelligence agents, some posing as European businessmen, had infiltrated Iran to ease the way for the commando raid. Some agents, presumably in Tehran much longer, may have penetrated the ranks of the militants guarding the hostages at the U.S. Embassy . . .

**Newsweek—May 12:** A senior U.S. official told NEWSWEEK that excellent intelligence had been turned up on the Tehran embassy—"virtually from the inside." Writing in the London Daily Telegraph, respected defense correspondent Clare Hollingworth claimed that more than 100 American agents still were operating in Iran last week. "Iranian members of the teams," Hollingworth wrote, "managed to 'bend' several of the captors, who then became 'moles' inside the embassy. These 'moles' were ready and willing to assist in the escape."

**Copeland:** Considering what we might offer . . . and considering that there are sometimes as many as 40 of them (students) away from the compound out on the town or spending the night at their homes, this is an easier feat than it might appear (recruitment).

Considering the number of prospective agents—and, to the CIA pro, every one of those students is a potential agent until proven otherwise—the law of averages is on our side.

#### Cover

**Carter:** (The) trucks our agents had purchased would be removed from a warehouse on the outskirts of Tehran, driven to a point near the mountain hiding place, and used to carry the rescue team to the city. At a prearranged time, the rescue team would simultaneously enter the foreign-ministry building and the compound, overpower the guards, and free the American hostages . . . (The) helicopters would land at the sites, picking up our people and carrying them to an abandoned air-strip near the city.

Communication between the Pentagon and the rescue team, using satellites and other rally facilities, would be instantaneous. I would receive telephone reports from David Jones and Harold Brown (from the Pentagon).

**Copeland:** There will be a "staging area" somewhere within helicopter range of Tehran at which brush-up training will be given the two teams.

There also will be a point . . . known as the . . . "penultimate position," from which the attack actually will be launched.

The choice of this latter is highly important. It—or they—must be near enough to the target to allow for a thrust lasting less than one minute and, at the same time, it must be part of the "peoplescape" in the immediate area.

This (staging area) may or may not be the same as the "field headquarters" where some communication assistant will monitor the operation keep Washington informed . . .

#### Safe Haven and Evacuation

**Carter:** From there (the abandoned air strip near Tehran), two C-141s would fly all the Americans to safety across the desert area of Saudi Arabia.

We also planned the procedure (after the mission was completed) for notifying Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, whose territories would be used or crossed during the mission.

**Copeland:** There are several well-stocked areas near Tehran to which our helicopters may flee in a very short time with minimum danger of being followed . . .

This (use of foreign airspace or landing areas), or course, is a matter for our State Department. For present purposes, it need only be said that our government has more friends in the Middle East than is commonly suspected.

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### Anesthetization

**Newsweek:** There was speculation that the Americans intended to use nonlethal gas to neutralize the embassy guards.

**Copeland:** This step, which security considerations prevent me from describing in any detail, consists of measures to incapacitate all resistance.

(It) includes such measures as . . . the use of stunning or nauseating but otherwise harmless gases . . .

### Secrecy of Mission

**Carter:** "On April 18, I had quite a discussion with my closest advisers about how to deal with the congressional leadership on the Iran decision. Fritz (Mondale) led the argument for minimum advance notice and maximum secrecy. Cy (Vance) took the opposite tack, maintaining that we should advise the Democratic and Republican leaders in the House and Senate. I agreed with Fritz . . ."

**Copeland:** Unfortunately, this whole plan, whether executed separately or as part of an overall military assault, has a weakness . . . It is that our government can take no action which does not have the full support of the people and of Congress.

There is a sad quote in Jimmy Carter's journal for April 21st.

"We listened carefully to all news reports, but heard only one other indication of a leak. In monitoring radio broadcasts all over Iran, we heard a story from up near the Iraqi border of an attempted rescue mission. It turned out to be a repeat of a conjectural story which had run earlier in the *Washington Star*—no damage was done."

But the damage was done. Copeland dwells on CIA assets in Iraq, in his article. The Iranians have made clear that they had advance warning. That only the mechanical problems in the desert that aborted the full raid, prevented the police and military from slaughtering the American hostages, agents, diplomats, all. By Sunday, April 20th, according to Carter, Radio Iran was broadcasting Copeland's story: the "surprise" was spoiled—Iranian double-agents had remained loyal to the Ayatollah as had Western-trained military men. Repeat: according to the highest Iranian sources the rescue of the hostages had been blown. Were the Iranians bluffing when they insisted that the raid never could have succeeded, was doomed in advance?

There is a final, strange piece in the puzzle. During the hostage crisis, in 1980, U.S. army intelligence set up a special unit in Iran. "Intelligence Support Activity" (ISA) was so secret that it operated virtually under an illegal status. It has since been disbanded. However, in 1980 CIA Director Stansfield Turner did *not* know of the existence of ISA, but Reagan campaign director William Casey *did*. According to a former Carter associate, the ISA "smells" like a back-channel of Casey's.

The coincidence between Copeland's version and official plans revealed by Carter, Jordan, Powell and others, is too great to let pass. Copeland and the official sources agree: disguise will be used; false communications will be employed to confuse the authorities; agents pretending to be media people would infiltrate the compound during the excitement. Further, Copeland chatters along about cover stories when, in fact, it is Copeland's *Star* piece that is ripping to shreds what Hamilton Jordan describes as "a disinformation campaign that will relax the Iranians."

There was more than mechanical problems at "Desert One," where the mission began. The commander of the operation, Charles Beckwith, let it be known that there was a sudden and suspicious rate of traffic that night in the desert. In Washington, planners feared that the raid's cover had been blown. Had it? According to *Time* magazine:

"One of the many ironies of the entire mission was the fact that the C-130s were heading for a remote spot in the desert that the Iranians had feared might some day be used by U.S. forces. In-

deed, they even had a map of the spot. It was discovered in the papers of Mahmoud Jaafarian, a pro-Shah counterinsurgency strategist who was executed after the revolution . . . Jaafarian told his captors that the staging site had been secretly built by the CIA, with the *Shah's* knowledge, for possible emergency use."

Carter's plan to rescue the hostages had even more odds against it. William Casey's law firm, Rogers and Wells, represented the "Pahlevi Foundation" a huge conduit for the Shah and his family specializing in narcotics and overseas covert acts. The foundation was riddled with agents who had served with Casey and Copeland in the OSS and after, throughout the Cold War.

Mary McGrory, the Pulitzer Prize winning columnist, speculated in the *Washington Post*, "what would the old soldiers have done . . . ? Would they have told the public that Carter was planning a coup to rescue the hostages . . . at the risk of endangering the lives of those involved?"

Somehow, the Iranians did know. Rescue team leader Charles Beckwith, himself, told *Newsweek* that a number of CIA agents in Teheran had pulled out, so that if the rescue had gone forward the Americans would have been compromised and at total risk.

We now know from the *New York Times* book on the aborted mission that within a week of the embassy takeover, "Brzezinski convened in his office the first in a series of high-level secret meetings of what came to be known as the 'Military Committee' . . . The Military Committee, which met two or three times a week also laid the plans for the rescue effort that was finally launched the following April." Among those the group consulted was H. Ross Perot, the flamboyant Dallas millionaire, who ten months earlier, had employed former Green Beret officers in a successful raid that freed two of his Electronic Data Systems Corporation employees from a Teheran jail.

Perot had worked closely with Casey and many of his "old boy" aides over the years—so here is still another potential back-channel to the Reagan operation.

Is it coincidence that on April 9, 1980 the students holding the embassy vowed "to destroy the hostages immediately" if the U.S. began "even the smallest military act against Iran"?

The *New York Times*, too, quoting "informed sources" reported on the rescue plans with words that had been anticipated in Copeland's article. The *Times'* maps also amplified Copeland's predictions.

### Rescue Team

**New York Times:** Rescue teams move to warehouse on outskirts of Teheran for last-minute briefing by American infiltrators.

**Copeland:** It is essential, however, that for both internal and external reasons, the rescue team must have a definite mercenary character and be a discreet combination of Qashqais, Kurds and, of course, Farsis.

### Escape

**New York Times:** Troops break into embassy, cut telephone and electricity lines.

One group neutralize Iranians; another frees hostages and evacuates them by helicopters from embassy grounds or nearby Anjaki soccer stadium.

**Copeland:** Once the embassy has been entered and the defenses neutralized, "Team A" will have on its hands a lot of confused defenders and very sleepy hostages.

By then, our 3 helicopters . . . will land at designated points, and the attackers will begin leading the hostages . . .

Meanwhile "Team B" . . . will have taken control of all communication into and out of the compound . . .

Does this sinister evidence tally with Ronald Reagan's record on campaign covert action, and his attitude toward Iran? In 1979 Reagan charged the revolt in Iran "could have been halted" if the U.S. had not "appeased student rebels." A familiar Reagan theme sounded on the *first* day of his campaign.

**CONTINUED**

Pressed by reporters, Reagan said, "there were certain leaders who could have been separated from their followers and they weren't." He said such a separation, by throwing the student and Islamic leaders in jail, "would have been justified because they were inciting riots and causing death and destruction."

When a reporter pointed out that Iran's jails were full of leaders of anti-Shah factions, Reagan replied: "I don't know about that. I just know what people on the scene told me." He declined to identify them.

So much for the candidate's sources "on the scene;" were they now his campaign back-channel? Reagan sideslipped further questions and concluded his press conference with what was later exposed as an outright lie:

Reagan criticized former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and actress Jane Fonda by telling a story he said was first told to him by a former prisoner of war: "The young man's shoulder and arm were crushed, and they tied his arm to a wall until he agreed to meet with Ramsey Clark and Jane Fonda in Hanoi," Reagan said. The crowd booed Clark and Fonda.

Reagan's stale attacks on anti-war critics aside, the press conference was revealing, though the candidate did not say on that day—as he had before—that "espionage in a political campaign is not a criminal act."

What did Reagan know about the rescue mission, and when did he know it? How much more does Charles Beckwith know? Reagan rewarded Beckwith for his "failure" by giving him the top job of the 1984 Olympics security and anti-terrorism responsibility. Copeland's article appeared in the U.S. 96 hours before the rescue began, and in Iran it was broadcast repeatedly up until the day itself—why are those who blame researchers and the freedom of information act for "emasculating covert action" silent on this shocking leak? Is the Copeland piece the crown jewel of the Casey "intelligence operation to monitor an October surprise" (Casey's words)?

This question is as terrible as those asked of Nixon and Kissinger about the manipulation of the Paris Peace Talks for political gain. A terrible question of treason.

*Donald Freed is a prize winning historian. His Secret Life of Ronald Reagan will appear in January. Freed's play The Last Testament of Richard Nixon is currently being staged in New York.*