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Phone Calls Link U.S. Aides to Contras

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MIAMI, Nov. 29 — Telephone records from Nicaraguan rebel "safe houses" in El Salvador show a series of calls on the same days in September to the former White House offices of Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North, as well as to the company run by a retired general involved in dealings with Iran and the Nicaraguan rebels.

They also show calls to a telephone in Costa Rica that appears to belong to an American intelligence operative.

The telephone calls were from a safe house in El Salvador used by American crews secretly flying weapons to the Nicaraguan rebels during a Congressional ban on such aid, and the calls appear to offer the strongest circumstantial evidence so far that there was close coordination between the rebels, Colonel North, American officials in Costa Rica and someone in Stanford Technology Incorporated, of which Gen. Richard V. Secord, retired, is a leading member.

Senior Administration officials had previously contended that the rebel supply operation was "strictly private" and therefore did not violate the Congressional ban on delivering arms to the guerrillas. It appears increasingly likely, however, that the program may have been prompted by American officials, financed by secret arms sales to Iran and then monitored by American officials in Central America.

A Link to North's Office

The White House numbers listed in the telephone records from El Salvador are in the executive office building and, according to close associates of Colonel North, were his former numbers. They have since been disconnected. When dialed now a recording says, "You have reached a nonworking number for the executive offices of the President."

The telephone numbers dialed from rebel safe houses in immediate succession on the same days in September include not only calls to Colonel North's offices but also calls to what appears to be the home phone of an American official in Costa Rica whose name the embassy there has asked to not be published for "security reasons." It is against the law to publish the name of an American intelligence agent.

Other calls on the same days went to what appears to be an unlisted number in the United States Embassy in Costa Rica. An embassy spokesman refused to comment when asked if the number was an embassy line.

The evidence of the telephone calls, supported by detailed descriptions by those involved in the covert supply program, also appears to offer the most complete picture so far of how the secret operation worked in flying weapons to the rebels.

Crew members on the rebel flights say the more than \$2 million program began in earnest last April and included the building by Americans of a secret airstrip in Costa Rica. The operation was closely overseen by three retired American military officers, General Secord, Col. Robert Dutton and Richard Gadd, the sources said.

Attempts to reach the men for comment today were unsuccessful. Mr. Secord has a long history of work in Iran and reportedly accompanied American officials in their failed trip to Iran earlier this year as part of the Administration program to sell arms there. Mr. Gadd and Mr. Secord have denied any wrongdoing in the rebel operation. Mr. Secord and Mr. Dutton work for Stanford Technology Incorporated, a company with a history of arms trades and dealings with Iran.

Two rebel crew members said Mr. Dutton had worked as Mr. Secord's assistant and had asked that rebel crews call him from El Salvador to tell him of impending rebel weapons drops. Two former Cuban-American Central Intelligence Agency operatives working in El Salvador monitored the program and delivered coded messages saying where weapons were to be delivered to rebel units, the sources added.

The two rebel sources closely involved in the rebel flights said Mr. Secord, Mr. Gadd and Mr. Dutton all visited El Salvador earlier this year to help set up an improved rebel supply line during the time Congress had banned the Administration from arming the guerrillas.

The same two rebel sources said Mr. Secord and Mr. Gadd, whose company is the American National Management Corporation, went to El Salvador in April to say there would be more money and new planes available for the stepped-up rebel supply line. Mr. Gadd hired some members of the rebel flight crews, two rebel sources said.

Contract for 'Humanitarian' Aid

According to State Department officials, Mr. Gadd had a contract earlier this year to supply Congressionally approved "humanitarian" assistance to the rebels.

Two sources closely involved in the rebel flights said Mr. Dutton went to El Salvador in September, when the telephone calls were made from rebel safehouses to Colonel North's offices, to Stanford Technology Incorporated, and

to American officials in Costa Rica.

The rebel operation was officially run under a front company called Corporate Air Services. A key question for investigators in the covert operation would appear to be whether Mr. Secord or others involved set up Corporate Air Services and whether money from Swiss bank accounts holding profits from Iranian arms sales was used to pay Corporate Air Services bills.

The telephone records for rebel safehouses in El Salvador were obtained by reporters from the National Telephone Company.

The records show that between Sept. 9 and Sept. 17 of this year, 14 calls were made to two White House offices used by Colonel North, five calls to what appear to be numbers of American officials in Costa Rica and several calls to Stanford Technology Incorporated in Virginia, as well as other unlisted numbers in Virginia.

Succession of Calls in September

On Sept. 15 the telephone records list calls made in succession from the rebel safehouse in El Salvador to the home of the American official in Costa Rica, who cannot be named, as well as to Colonel North's office and to Mr. Secord's company.

On Sept. 17 the records again list successive calls to Colonel North's office, Mr. Secord's company and the other number in Costa Rica that appears to be an unlisted telephone in the American Embassy there.

The calls to Costa Rica and the White House came as the rebel crews based in El Salvador were flying missions over Costa Rica and into southern Nicaragua to drop weapons to rebel units there.

They also came as the new Costa Rican Government decided to clamp down on covert rebel activities, seizing a secret rebel airstrip built under the advice of two Americans, one of whom has said he was working on classified matters. According to members of the rebel supply crews, the airstrip was part of their operation and had been built as a refueling and supply station for their planes.

Providing weapons to the so-called rebels' southern front near the Costa Rican and Nicaraguan border was considered crucial by rebel and American officials earlier this year, because rebel units there had been without supplies for almost 12 months. A senior rebel official said the C.I.A. promised the guerrillas weapons in this period and "the weapons arrived."

The weapons were all dropped by the American crews based in El Salvador, members of the supply operation said.