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Retired General Secord is characterized as North's operative outside government

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WASHINGTON — If Marine Lt. Col. Oliver L. North was the inside man in the bizarre scheme to funnel profits from Iranian arms sales to embattled Nicaraguan contras, retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard V. Secord may have been the man on the outside who touched all the bases for him.

By most accounts, General Secord sits atop a network of former military officers and intelligence operatives who worked with Colonel North over the last two years to assure that adequate supplies, possibly including weapons, got to the contras despite a congressional ban on such activities.

For more than a year, General Secord's name has been linked in published reports to a private funding-and-supply network allegedly established by Colonel North after the passage of the October 1984 version of the Boland amendment, which forbade direct or indirect American aid to the contras other than \$27 million in so-called non-lethal humanitarian assistance.

That ban was effectively lifted in November with the authorization of \$100 million in military and humanitarian aid to the anti-Sandinista forces.

More recently, Salvadoran telephone logs showed repeated calls last summer to General Secord's Northern Virginia business office from "safe houses" used by the crew of the C-123K cargo plane shot down over Nicaragua Oct. 5, an incident that resulted in the capture and imprisonment of American Eugene Hasenfus and the deaths of three other people. The logs also showed calls to Colonel North's office, among other places.

Through his government service and business associates, General Secord also has significant ties to Saudi Arabia, whose role in the Iranian arms affair, if any, remains murky despite some reports that say it was significant.

Less is known of General Secord's Israeli connections, but some reports place him in Israel monitoring the action in May when Colonel North, former National Security Ad-



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RICHARD V. SECORD
Had ties to Saudi Arabia, Iran

viser Robert C. McFarlane and others flew into Tehran in a plane loaded with military supplies for the Iranians.

Earlier reports said General Secord was one of those who traveled to Tehran with Mr. McFarlane.

General Secord is no stranger to Iran. During the mid-1970s, when the shah was still in power, the general was the senior Air Force official overseeing U.S. arms sales and military assistance to Tehran. Another close business associate is an Iranian emigre.

This week, General Secord surfaced as a key player in another alleged North project: an effort to free Americans held hostage in Beirut through activities tied in with the administration's sale of military supplies to Iran.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz Monday named General Secord as one of two men — Colonel North was the other — with whom the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, John H. Kelly, admitted having had "numerous conversations" about American hostages in Lebanon.

That marked the first time General Secord has been named officially by the government as among those who allegedly played a role in the Iran operation, although his name had come up previously in various news reports.

A day later, General Secord was called to testify in closed session by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, but claimed his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

General Secord, along with Colonel North, reportedly is under federal investigation for his alleged role in the arms diversions. According to published reports the two are the subject of a criminal probe related to two different Swiss bank accounts that may have been used to direct weapons-sale money to the contras.

Those who have worked with General Secord over the years describe him as intelligent, able, sometimes opinionated, more often given to keeping his own counsel, at least in public. And, they say, if he was running the secret contra supply effort, he was the right kind of man for the job.

"Secord may be a bit of an activist, he may be the kind of guy you want fighting a war for you, but he's not a roughneck," said one source. "If you want to get anything done in this government, you've got to have guys like that to do it for you."

Attempts to reach General Secord through his Washington attorney, Thomas C. Green, were unsuccessful.

In a recent magazine interview, General Secord said that any suggestion that he was involved in shipping arms to Iran was "absolutely false." But, he added, "If you asked me, was I an adviser on arms imports to Iran, that's another matter. I can't talk about that."

General Secord was named as one involved in efforts to aid the contras in an October 1986 report prepared by the staff of Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., that the authors said was based on interviews with more than 50 sources involved in the contra resupply effort.

A congressional source said this week that General Secord, an associate, Richard Gadd; and an employee of General Secord's Northern Virginia-based firm, Stanford Technology Trading Inc., Robert Dutton, were all involved in the contra resupply effort. All three men are retired Air Force. None could be reached for comment.

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The source said General Secord "was in charge of running the day-to-day logistics" in a two-year effort to keep the contras supplied with arms and other necessities during the two years Congress banned U.S. support of the contras.

Mr. Gadd, the source said, played a major role in the supply chain from the United States that ended at the airport in Ilopango, El Salvador.

As the Kerry report described it, the network put together by Colonel North "helped the contras with arms purchases, fund raising and the enlistment of military trainers."

General Secord, 54, a West Point graduate, was associated with Colonel North in 1981 when both were part of an administration-wide lobbying effort to win congressional approval for the sale of sophisticated Airborne Warning and Control Systems planes to Saudi Arabia.

The lobbying drive, which ultimately overcame stiff resistance in Congress from Republicans and Democrats alike, also included Mr. McFarlane, then a senior State Department official and later national security adviser.

Another lobbyist on the AWACs sale was Colonel North's boss at the NSC, Robert H. Lilac. Mr. Lilac is now a consultant to Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the United States.

In addition, Mr. Lilac and General Secord are associates in a firm called American Marketing Consultants Inc.

At the time of the AWACs battle, General Secord was serving as deputy assistant secretary of defense for Middle East affairs, the first active duty military officer to hold the post.

He retired two years later after his name was linked to Edwin P. Wilson, a contract employee of the CIA convicted on a variety of charges, including shipping guns and explosive equipment to Libyan leader Muammar el Kadhafi in the 1970s.

No charges were ever brought against General Secord, but the controversy, he later said, caused him to lose a promotion to lieutenant general. A month before his retirement in May 1983, however, he won a \$2 million libel and slander judgment against the ex-Wilson aide who leveled the accusations against him in a television interview.

During the Vietnam period, General Secord was involved in CIA-controlled operations in Laos, with some accounts saying he was a senior officer in the secret air war there. His prominence in that conflict could not be immediately determined, but an authoritative intelligence source said, "There is no doubt at one time he was connected with the war in Laos."

"That's where he would have found out how to find planes not in the [U.S. military] service, how to find cover companies — it was very good schooling," the source said.

During that period, General Secord may have met a number of other pilots, intelligence operatives and mercenaries who have since been mentioned in connection with the contra resupply network.

A few years later, from 1975 to 1978, General Secord headed the Air Force component of the U.S. military mission in Iran that supervised and oversaw American military advisory efforts and arms sales there.

Researcher Robert G. Fahs of The Sun's Washington Bureau contributed to this article.