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Scholar Says Casey Was In London In July 1980

By PETE YOST

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Reagan campaign manager William Casey abandoned his political duties in late July 1980 and traveled to London for a meeting of World War II history scholars.

That much is now known.

What isn't known: whether Casey made a side trip to Madrid to strike a deal with Iran delaying release of the 52 American hostages held in Tehran, as alleged by an Iranian arms dealer.

Historian Robert Dallek said Tuesday he had his photograph taken with Casey at the London conference the evening of July 28, 1980 and sat down with him at breakfast, probably the next morning.

The two chatted about politics and about Reagan's acceptance speech 10 days earlier at the Republican National Convention, recalled Dallek, author of a forthcoming biography on President Lyndon Johnson.

Arms dealer Jamshid Hashemi alleges that Casey was in Madrid in late July, holding secret talks so that U.S. hostages held in Lebanon wouldn't be freed until after election day.

Hashemi's allegations have been aired by public television's "Frontline" program and ABC-TV's "Nightline."

Casey's campaign schedule in the United States was blank for July 27-29.

Casey spoke to the London conference the morning of July 29 about secret operations during World War II, participants told "Nightline" last week.

It is a two-hour flight by commercial airliner from London to Madrid.

"Where he was before and after the conference I don't know, but I know he was in London" starting late on July 28th, Dallek, a history professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, said in an interview.

Dallek says he retrieved an old file on the London conference at the request of Spencer Oliver, special counsel to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. That's where Dallek turned up the photo with Casey.

Congressional staffers are looking into allegations that the Reagan-Bush camp dealt with Iran to avoid what it feared could be an October Surprise - success by the Carter White House in negotiating the release of the 52 U.S. hostages held in Tehran.

So it's a fact that Casey abandoned the presidential campaign for several days late in July 1980.

Dallek finds that "somewhat puzzling," but not out of the question. Casey was a history buff as well as a World War II veteran of the Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the CIA. He had been contacted in 1979 about appearing at the London conference.

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