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3 April 1987

Mr. Anthony Day
Editorial Page Editor
LOS ANGELES TIMES
Times Mirror Square
Los Angeles, CA 90053

Dear Tony:

I would appreciate your publishing the following paragraphs in your "Letters to the Editor."

J
A In an op-ed article in the LOS ANGELES TIMES on 1 April ("Iran Affair was Standard Fair") Robert Morris inaccurately stated: "...the nomination of CIA Deputy Director Robert Gates to succeed the ailing William J. Casey had to be withdrawn after it was revealed that Gates, in a 1985 memo to the White House, formally and enthusiastically favored the arms deal with Iran."

In the first place, Mr. Gates' nomination was not withdrawn for the reasons Mr. Morris cites, as any reader of the record of that period would know. In his public statement dated 2 March, Mr. Gates said that no one asked him to withdraw his nomination and that President Reagan had never ceased his support of it. Mr. Gates took the initiative himself to ask the President to withdraw the nomination, believing that while he probably would ultimately have been confirmed, a protracted struggle with Congress over the matter would damage the Agency and Intelligence Community and prevent them from getting on with their important tasks. He said he believed it was impossible for them to do so while his nomination was pending. The White House issued a similar statement when President Reagan acted on Mr. Gates' withdrawal request.

Secondly, Mr. Morris' statement that Mr. Gates "in a 1985 memorandum to the White House, formally and enthusiastically favored the arms deal with Iran" is totally without foundation. Mr. Morris is apparently referring to a

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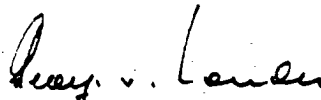
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NEW YORK TIMES story which erroneously asserted that Mr. Gates encouraged, approved and disseminated a paper by the National Intelligence Officer for the Middle East in May 1985 recommending that the US consider allowing European arms sales to Iran.

In a letter dated 2 March to Senator Boren, the Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Mr. Gates responded to this story. He told Senator Boren: "The memorandum was prepared by the NIO at his own initiative. I did not know that the paper was being drafted, and neither saw nor approved it prior to distribution. I received my copy simultaneously with others inside and outside CIA. The NIO's actions were consistent with my policy that intelligence analysts feel free to challenge conventional wisdom and provoke debate." A copy of Mr. Gates' letter to Senator Boren was made available to the LOS ANGELES TIMES on the same day it was sent to Senator Boren.

It is surprising that Mr. Morris, a former NSC staff member, did not take the trouble to check the facts before he wrote his article.

Sincerely,



George V. Lauder
Director, Public Affairs