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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 7, 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

FROM: ARTHUR B. CULVAROUSE, JR. 

SUBJECT: Conversations with Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition Regarding the Testimony of Major General Richard Secord

On Wednesday, May 6, 1987, Howard H. Baker, Chief of Staff to the President, spoke with Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee ("the Senate Select Committee") on two occasions, and the undersigned spoke with Arthur L. Liman, Chief Counsel of the Senate Select Committee and Mark Belnick, Executive Assistant to the Chief Counsel of the Senate Select Committee, regarding the testimony on May 7 of Major General Richard Secord. Senator Inouye and Select Committee counsel advised Senator Baker and the undersigned that the Senate Select Committee wishing to question General Secord in public hearings regarding his solicitation of support for the Contras from an official of the Government of Saudi Arabia. After consultation with the Department of State representatives and senior White House staff, Senator Baker advised Senator Inouye, and the undersigned advised Mr. Belnick, that the Administration would not object to, but did not consent to, such testimony by General Secord, although it was our strong preference that such testimony be taken in closed session. It was noted that the Government of Saudi Arabia repeatedly had denied that such contributions had occurred, and that the U.S. Government had refused to confirm such contributions or such solicitations. Since General Secord was not a Government employee at the time he made such solicitations, it was agreed that The White House would not criticize the Senate Select Committee if General Secord chose to reveal the identity of the official and the country involved, but that it must be emphatically clear that The White House did not endorse or consent to such disclosure, and that no U.S. Government documents or testimony of U.S. Government officials could be utilized in pursuing that line of inquiry with General Secord since such documents and testimony were and must remain classified.

DECLASSIFIED

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BY LOI NARA, DATE 5/8/06

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Mr. Belnick further advised Mr. Culvahouse that the same issue would arise in connection with the testimony of Robert McFarlane, the former National Security Adviser and Assistant to the President. The undersigned advised Mr. Belnick that The White House would consider the Select Committee's request to, in effect, declassify the testimony of Mr. McFarlane as it related to the Saudi Arabian contributions, but that The White House expressly reserved judgement on this question since Mr. McFarlane's knowledge of these contributions was obtained while he was a U.S. Government employee and would be subject to his nondisclosure agreement. Mr. Belnick stated that the Senate Select Committee wished to question Mr. McFarlane in connection with whether there was any relationship between the Saudi Arabian contributions and the approval in 1985 and 1986 of certain AWACS certifications and arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The undersigned advised Mr. Belnick that it would be very difficult and unlikely that the Administration could consent to such public testimony.

cc: Howard H. Baker, Jr.
William B. Lytton, III