

# IRAN-CONTRA INVESTIGATION

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## JOINT HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

### SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECRET MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO IRAN AND THE NICARAGUAN OPPOSITION

AND THE

### HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE COVERT ARMS TRANSACTIONS WITH IRAN

ONE HUNDREDTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

100-7

Part I

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JULY 7, 8, 9, AND 10, 1987

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### TESTIMONY OF OLIVER L. NORTH (Questioning by Counsels)

Printed for the use of the Select Committees on the Iran-Contra Investigation



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

75-544

WASHINGTON : 1988

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For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office  
Washington, DC 20402

**—EXCERPT OF COL. OLIVER NORTH'S TESTIMONY  
ON SECURITY FENCE AND ABU NIDAL—**

Mr. NORTH. No, ever. I do want to make one point clear. I did at one point express concern after I would guess in February, March, April, somewhere after I had met Mr. Hakim, became aware what his role was in the financial network that had been established, I did at some point express concern to General Secord, "Suppose both of you guys go down on the same airplane, flitting back and forth to Europe or wherever you are going; what happens then?"

I was told, "Don't worry about it, arrangements will be made so that these operations can continue", but nobody ever told me that a single penny was set aside for my purposes, for my benefit whatsoever, ever, and I never heard of Buttons or Belly Buttons until these hearings began.

Mr. NIELDS. I would like to separate out then the two issues raised by this will, or this testamentary document. You are indicating that the portion of it that provides for the moneys being distributed to the estates of the individuals is a foreign notion to you?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, could we please have a copy of the document?

Mr. NIELDS. It is exhibit 169.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I object to the term "will." Mr. Chairman, I believe the term has been used 50 times in these hearings prior to today. This is not a will, and any lawyer in the room knows it is not a will.

Mr. NORTH. This is the first time I have ever seen this document, ever.

Mr. NIELDS. Understand, you have said that. I just want to separate out the issues. There is a part of the document that provides for distribution to individuals' estates in the event of death. It is on the second page. I take it your testimony is that that—not only have you not seen the document, but that concept is foreign to you. You never heard of anything like it.

Mr. NORTH. I never heard of it before. I don't know how much more clearly I can put it. Counsel, I never ever heard that proposal before, that suggestion.

Mr. NIELDS. There is a second part of the document that relates simply to control over the use of the funds, and that is on the first page of it, the second paragraph. And I take it that although you never saw the document, the concept that you would control disposition of the funds, I don't mean in your personal capacity, but in your governmental capacity in the event of the death of Hakim and Secord, that is not foreign to you, is it?

Mr. NORTH. Well I—I never professed to have control over a single penny of this. I elicited the cooperation of General Secord. To my knowledge, he cooperated in every case with the things that we asked him to do, but I never once saw those words, nor do I want to leave you with the impression that this was what I had in mind when I said to them, "What happens if both you guys drop dead?" I was more than willing to have anybody else they wanted so that we could continue the activities, but I didn't necessarily wish to become the person who had to fly back and forth to Switzerland. I have never even been in a Swiss bank.

Mr. NIELDS. There has been testimony that several thousand dollars was spent on a fence, a security system, that was put in at your residence and that the moneys to pay for it came from Gener-

al Secord, and my question to you is, were you aware—I take it there was a security system put in at your residence?

Mr. NORTH. There is a security system in at my residence. It has since this April been sufficiently supplemented that it is now extraordinary.

Mr. NIELDS. And I take it——

[Counsel conferring with witness.]

Mr. NIELDS. Were you aware that that security system was paid for by General Secord?

Mr. NORTH. I am going to waffle an answer. I am going to say yes and no, and if you would indulge me, I will give you another one of my very straightforward, but rather lengthy, answers.

The issue of the security system was first broached immediately after a threat on my life by Abu Nidal. Abu Nidal is, as I am sure you on the Intelligence Committees know, the principal, foremost assassin in the world today. He is a brutal murderer. When I was first alerted to that threat by the Federal Bureau of Investigations in late April, I was simply told that there was a threat that had been promulgated by Abu Bakar, who is the press spokesman for the Fatah Revolutionary Council, which is the name of the Abu Nidal group. He targeted me for assassination.

We then made an effort over the course of several days to have the story killed and not run in the United States—not me, but the story—killed and not run on the U.S. media. Nonetheless, it ran, and I believe the date was the 28th of April. The initial assessment was that this was a response to the attack on Libya, which we had run a preemptive counter-terrorist raid on Libya on the 14th of April, in which I had a small role to play. CBS chose to run the film anyway.

The FBI was then contacted again and told—asked what protection can be offered. The FBI correctly said “We don’t offer protection. I then sought other types of protection. I went to my superiors and said, “What can be done?” Contrary to what was said some days ago, this lieutenant colonel was not offered at that time any protection by the Government of the United States, Senator Rudman. I asked for it, and I was told that the only thing that I could do is to immediately PCS, permanent change of station—you and I, as Marines, know well what that means—and jerked out of our home and sent to Camp Lejune. In that I was preparing at the time to go to Tehran and we didn’t want to tell the whole world that, that was deemed not to be an appropriate thing to do.

The next thing that we looked to try tried to do was to find a secure telephone to put in my home to justify the installation of a U.S. Government security system. That too was impossible or not feasible or couldn’t be done.

The next thing I did was to ask for a list of who installs these things for the U.S. Government, maybe I can get a better price by calling them. I believe it was someone in the Secret Service gave me a list of three or four of these companies that do that kind of installation.

I called two or three of them. It is now late April, early May, it is within days of this threat, and I called and I asked can you come out and do a survey and give me an estimate, and in each case, I think it was two or three of them, and I was at that point relative-

ly busy, I was told, "It would be several weeks before we can come out and do an estimate and a survey, and it will be several more weeks or months before we can complete the installation because, after all, summertime is our busy time."

At some point along in there, either General Secord raised with me or I raised with him this threat, and I told him I couldn't get U.S. Government protection; I couldn't find a contractor to come out and do it myself; and he said, "Don't worry about that, I have got a good friend, or an associate"—I don't remember the words—"who is an expert. This guy has a company that does these things."

And he shortly thereafter, I believe it was around the 5th of May, introduced me to Mr. Glenn Robinette. He was introduced to me as a man who, one, had been a former CIA, or perhaps I understood at the time FBI, I don't remember, technical expert; a man who owned a security company and a man who could immediately go out and do a survey and an estimate.

He did. Over the course of the next few days, he went out to my home, I called my wife or told my wife, whatever, that he would be out and went through the situation. And he came up with an estimate of \$8,500 max, as I recall it was \$8,000 to \$8,500, and he could furthermore immediately install the system.

Now, I want you to know that I would be more than willing—and if anybody else is watching overseas, and I am sure they are—I will be glad to meet Abu Nidal on equal terms anywhere in the world. OK? There is an even deal for him.

But I am not willing to have my wife and my four children meet Abu Nidal or his organization on his terms. And I want you to know what was going through my mind. I was about to leave for Tehran. I had already been told by Director Casey that I should be prepared to take my own life.

I had already been told that the Government of the United States on an earlier proposal for a trip, might even disavow the fact that I had gone on the trip, on an earlier proposal, and we can come back to that at some time, if you like.

And so having been—having asked for some type of U.S. Government protection for my wife and children, and having been denied that, and perhaps for fully legitimate reasons and if there is a law that prevents the protection of American Government employees and their families from people like Abu Nidal, then gentlemen, please fix it, because this kid won't be around much longer, as I am sure you know, but there will be others, if they take activist steps to address the problem of terrorism, who will be threatened.

And I would like to just, if I may, just read to you a little bit about Mr. Abu Nidal just so you know my mental state at the time.

"Abu Nidal, the radical Palestinian guerrilla leader, linked to last Friday's attacks in Rome and Vienna"—that was the so-called Christmas Massacre in which 19 people died and 200 were wounded—"is the world's most wanted terrorist." That is the *Christian Science Monitor*.

When you look at his whole career, Abu Nidal makes the infamous terrorist Carlos look like a Boy Scout.

Abu Nidal himself, quoted in *Der Spiegel*, "Between America and us, there exists a war to the death. In the coming months and years, Americans will be thinking about us." "For sheer vicious-

ness, Abu Nidal has few rivals in the underworld of terrorism." *Newsweek*.

Our own State Department, and we have copies of these that we can make available for insertion in the record, but the State Department summary on Abu Nidal, not exactly an overstatement, notes that his followers, who number an estimated 500, have killed as many as 181 persons, and wounded more than 200, in 2 years.

Abu Nidal does not deny these things. We also have an exhibit that we can provide for you that shows what Abu Nidal did in the Christmas Massacres. One of the people killed in the Christmas Massacre—and I do not wish to overdramatize this—but the Abu Nidal terrorists in Rome who blasted the 11-year-old American Natasha Simpson to her knees, deliberately zeroed in and fired an extra burst at her head just in case.

Gentlemen, I have an 11-year-old daughter, not perhaps a whole lot different than Natasha Simpson. And so, when Mr. Robinette told me on or about the 10th of May that he could immediately install a security system, I said please try to keep it to the 8,000 to 8,500. I am, after all, a Marine lieutenant colonel, and I live on my salary; and he installed that system.

Now, let me go to your next question, because I know it is coming, and it deserves an answer. I never got a bill, and it is after all—

Mr. NIELDS. Wait, before you go to the next—

Mr. NORTH. It is, after all, the answer to your question. It is the answer to your question. You asked me where it came from, and I am trying to tell you.

Mr. NIELDS. I am going to ask you that question, but—

Mr. NORTH. You have already asked me the question. You asked me whether or not the money came from General Secord. I am getting there.

Mr. NIELDS. All right, OK.

Mr. NORTH. OK.

When that system was installed, it was practically—it was totally complete. It allowed, for example, that when my wife would trigger an alarm, an alarm would ring in the central station and the Fairfax Police would immediately be notified, and that arrangement was worked out—this wasn't surreptitious.

The Fairfax Police came out—you pay your taxes in Fairfax County, but you get your money's worth. And by golly, they came out and they photographed the house and they did the normal precautionary things to respond to the kind of terrorist alert that they had been briefed on by the FBI.

And that is the best that they could do, and it was at that point with that security system installed, it was adequate that instantly, they would respond to one of those emergency alarms. And Mr. Robinette provided it.

Now, I then went on the trip to Tehran. I came back. I never got a bill. I didn't ask for a bill, and I never received one. I never asked, where is the bill, until well after it was too late, and I will cover that.

When I didn't get a bill, I basically understood what had happened, and I don't know exactly how it worked out, but I believe that an accommodation was worked between Mr. Robinette and

General Secord to make a gift out of that security system, that I did not pay for.

When I came to the end of my tenure at the NSC, it was, to say the least, a busy time. There were other things to be done besides shredding documents when I left. There was a lot of work to be done, and one of the things that I did was to sit and contemplate the previous 5½ years of my work, and I am proud of that work.

I believe that we accomplished a lot. But there was one thing that just didn't look right, and that was that for the first time in my life, I had accepted something that I had not paid for, and even though I honestly believe that the Government of the United States should have paid for it, should have put it in, I then picked up the phone and asked for a bill.

I got a bill. In fact, I got two of them. I didn't ask that they be back-dated, but after all, Mr. Robinette is an old hand in the CIA. Alright? The bills came with the old original dates, and I think there was another bill with a later date on it.

And then, as I told you yesterday, I was going to tell you the truth, the good, the bad and the ugly, this is the truth, I did probably the grossest misjudgment that I have made in my life. I then tried to paper over that whole thing by sending two phony documents back to Mr. Robinette. It was not an exercise in good judgment.

I don't believe I have any particular monopoly on bad judgment. I think it was a gross error in judgment for this committee to put my home address up on the screen for the whole world to see, when I have got 20 security agents guarding my wife, my children and me right now.

I would also like to point out that it is not quite as bad as originally seemed. This year—these things kind of come in Aprils, I guess—but this April the FBI called again. This April the FBI called and told me that there was another threat on my life. The big difference was this year I was back with a band of brothers that has a long reputation for taking care of its own. And the U.S. Marine Corps and the Naval Intelligence, Naval Investigative Service of Naval Intelligence, got together and immediately put security on me and my home, where my wife and children are protected.

I can't tell you how grateful I am for that. The security system that was installed by Mr. Robinette with General Secord's money, or the Enterprise's money, or Mr. Hakim's money, or I don't know whose money, was put in and supplemented enormously by the folks, some of which are sitting in this room right now, some of whom are at my home right now, some of whom drive me around in an armored motorcade that makes it look like a European potentate.

But the fact is I am grateful for that assistance beyond measure, because when you think about what could happen when somebody like that is out to kill you and doesn't care if he takes out your children with you, you run out of options in a big hurry. I ran out of options.

I think the Government of the United States should have stepped up to it and didn't. Whether it is because of laws or regulations, I don't know.

I admit to making a serious, serious judgment error in what I then did to paper it over, and I am willing to sit here and admit to that. But I am also suggesting to you, gentlemen, that if it was General Secord who paid the bill, whatever it was—I thought it was \$8,000, didn't learn until the hearings started it was more—I also suggest to you that if it was General Secord—first of all, thank you, General Secord—and second of all, you guys ought to write him a check, because the Government should have done it to begin with.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. NIELDS. Thank you, Colonel North.

I need to ask you one other question on this subject.

Mr. NORTH. I will make my second answer shorter.

Mr. NIELDS. The documents which I believe you had reference to that you wrote and back-dated are exhibit 172 and exhibit 173.

Mr. NORTH. Yes.

Mr. NIELDS. Before I get to the document, who was it that you made the request for security to and who turned you down?

Mr. NORTH. Well, I went to—first of all, I asked the FBI what they could do about it, and the FBI told me—and I have since checked and I was since told this again this April when they called about a threat this spring—that the FBI is not in the business of providing protection. And they indeed are not.

I am not necessarily, by the way, saying that I think they should have, because it is clearly not within their jurisdiction to do so. It is up to you whether you change that jurisdiction, I suppose.

But I then asked if there was anything that could be done at the White House.

Mr. NIELDS. Who was it that you asked at the White House?

Mr. NORTH. I asked Admiral Poindexter and I was referred to Mr. McDaniel. I was then—it was then suggested that there is only two things that can be done, you can either get a secure phone—we can find a secure telephone and put it in your home, and use that to justify a installation of the security system.

Well, for whatever reason, no secure telephone could be found. And I am not—it may well be the case, I don't know.

I was also told that the other alternative was immediate PCS to Camp Lejeune or another military installation, which did not seem entirely practical, given that I was getting ready to go to Tehran. Thus, there were no answers.

Mr. NIELDS. That was Admiral Poindexter or Mr. McDaniel who told you that you could be transferred to Camp Lejeune?

Mr. NORTH. I don't recall whether—which one it was. I know that that issue came up and was dismissed.

Mr. NIELDS. OK.

Turning now to exhibits 172 and 173, I take it what you are saying is that they were both typed on the same day?

Mr. NORTH. No. Actually I think they were typed on two different days or maybe even 3 different days, but they are both phony documents. I have admitted to that. I am here to tell you the truth, even when it hurts, OK? They are phony.

Mr. NIELDS. The second one, exhibit 173, there are three letters from the typewriter that don't type correctly. How was that arranged?