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Collection Name

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IRAN/ARMS TRANSACTION: ROBERT KIMMITT

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ID	Doc Type	Document Description	No of Pages	Doc Date	Restrictions
164210	PAPER	ADDENDUM TO MEMO RE: KIMMITT	1	ND	B1

The above documents were not referred for declassification review at time of processing

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- B-1 National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
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alt 2/18/14

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

(Dictated on 4/24/87)

Unclassified with
~~TOP SECRET~~ Attachment

May 7, 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

FROM: PETER D. KEISLER *PK*
SUBJECT: Interview of Robert Kimmitt

On April 24, 1987, Robert Kimmitt was interviewed by Bud Hall (House Select Committee) and Victoria Nourse (Senate Select Committee). Dean McGrath and I attended the interview. The interview began at 9:40 a.m. and lasted until approximately 10:20 a.m.

Kimmitt said that he served on the NSC staff from June of 1976 to August of 1977 in a part-time capacity, while he was in his last year at Georgetown Law School. Kimmitt said that he worked during that time in the Security Assistance Policy Office. Kimmitt said that he returned to the NSC staff on a full-time basis in July of 1978. Kimmitt said that he continued to work in the Security Assistance area and took on additional responsibilities as Staff Legal Counsel. Kimmitt said that beginning in May of 1982, and continuing through 1983, he took on further responsibilities for Legislative Affairs. Kimmitt said that from 1983 to 1985 he served as Executive Secretary and as General Counsel.

Kimmitt said that "security assistance" refers to the arms export program, and his work in that area involved arms transfer policies, individual sales to foreign nations, and related budgetary issues before Congress. Kimmitt was asked "what [his] impressions were" concerning the arms sales to Iran. Kimmitt said that had he still been at the NSC staff, working at the conventional arms transfer desk, he does not believe that he would have had anything to do with those arms sales. Kimmitt said that those sales appear to have been conducted outside of the traditional process, and run more as a covert operation. Kimmitt said that there are instances in which there are Presidential findings involving the provision of weapons to foreign countries, and that such matters were separated from the conventional security assistance work. Kimmitt was asked whether there were specific people who were traditionally involved in covert arms transfers. Kimmitt responded that those people would be the regional officers, the political-military officers, and the intelligence group.

Kimmitt said that he first met Oliver North in the fall of 1981, when North joined the NSC staff to work on the AWACs sale. Kimmitt said that the AWACs sale was a conventional arms transfer, and that accordingly he (Kimmitt) was involved with it. Kimmitt was asked "How did North begin in this nominal role and then become the confidante and point man for Iran and the Contras, such important accounts?" Kimmitt responded that there were only forty or fifty professional staff officers at the NSC. Kimmitt said that the NSC is different in this respect from the State Department, the Defense Department and the CIA, which have many more employees. Kimmitt said that people on the NSC staff generally operate in a circle which includes people at all levels in the other agencies. Kimmitt said that, as a result, if they are working on a matter which becomes "hot," NSC officials become quite important. Kimmitt said such situations are often driven by external events, and that his sense is that this is what happened with respect to North. Kimmitt was asked "And he exploited the opportunity?" Kimmitt responded "Well, is it exploitation, or is it him doing his work?" Kimmitt said that he was not "disputing what [the interviewer was] saying," but that it was a subjective matter. Kimmitt said that NSC officials across the board tended to operate at higher levels than people imagined, just because there were so few of them.

Kimmitt said that he did not recall having any knowledge of North's operational roles in Central America. Kimmitt said that he knew that North was responsible for Latin American political-military affairs, with an emphasis on Central America.

Kimmitt said he knew General Secord because Secord was either in the Air Force or on the staff of the Secretary of Defense in 1981, and Kimmitt worked with Secord on the AWACs sale in 1981 or 1982. Kimmitt said that he did not connect Secord with North in 1985, or with any private operation of assistance to the Contras.

Kimmitt said that he did not recall any conversation with North concerning allegations that North had been engaging in illegal behavior.

[Kimmitt was then shown certain classified documents. The discussion of those documents is summarized in a classified addendum to this memorandum.]

Kimmitt was then shown a memorandum from North addressed to him. The date was not entirely legible, but it appeared to be March 28, 1985. David Chew had sent Kimmitt a copy of an article on the Federal Page of the Washington Post, and Kimmitt had sent it to North to draft a memo in response. The article concerned the Boland Amendment. Kimmitt explained that North wrote the response memo, sent it back to Kimmitt and that Kimmitt sent it to Chew. There was no further discussion concerning this memorandum.

Kimmitt said that he does not recall any discussion in the summer of 1985 concerning an opening to Iran through arms shipments.

Kimmitt said that, at that time, we had no diplomatic relations with Iran and there was an arms embargo in effect. Kimmitt said there was nevertheless a general feeling in the national security community that we had failed to keep in touch with events in Iran before the Shah fell and there were people in the Middle East offices throughout the government who felt that we should be looking at the situation. Kimmitt said that people at the NSC who fell into that category were McFarlane, Fortier, and Teicher. Kimmitt said that he believes that at the time that he was leaving the NSC there was some academic and general discussion on the matter, but he does not recall the draft NSDD on the subject.

Kimmitt said that the Executive Secretary was not in a position to exercise operational control over the NSC staff. Kimmitt said that it was his responsibility to see that the NSC "fit into the interagency process." Kimmitt said that it was "more of an external job." Kimmitt said that his feeling is that the direction in which Carlucci has moved -- to have senior managers in each of the directorates, and people beneath them reporting to those senior managers -- is correct, because one person cannot manage forty or more people. Kimmitt said that the Executive Secretary in particular cannot play that role given all his other responsibilities.

Kimmitt said that he was not aware of any job description for the position of Executive Secretary, or any guidelines concerning its responsibilities. Kimmitt said that the National Security Act of 1947 states that the Executive Secretary shall head the NSC staff.

Kimmitt was asked whether he would expect the Executive Secretary to know about all matters pending before the NSC. Kimmitt said that he would not. Kimmitt was asked whether he would expect the Executive Secretary to know about all sensitive and covert matters before the NSC. Kimmitt responded that he believed that the Executive Secretary should be aware of all matters which have policy-level implications and which therefore require coordination with other departments and agencies and with the White House. "So the answer would be yes."

Kimmitt was asked whether as Executive Secretary he would have been expected to know about the arms sales to Iran, the diversion, and the assistance provided to the Contras. Kimmitt said that this was a "hard question to answer." Kimmitt said that the Executive Secretary would probably know whatever was in the system, but that it would be difficult for the Executive Secretary to go beneath or outside of the system.

Kimmitt was asked how Howard Teicher was able to reach the position he attained at such a young age. Kimmitt responded that he assumed that anyone who came over to the NSC staff was a competent person. Kimmitt said that what set Teicher apart was that he had worked with McFarlane for a year at the State Department. Kimmitt said that he did not socialize with either Teicher

or McFarlane and therefore would not know whether they socialized with each other.

Kimmitt was asked whether minutes were taken at NSC and NSPG meetings. Kimmitt said that there was a standing rule that the NSC staff officer at a particular meeting was supposed to take minutes. Kimmitt said that the extent to which that rule was followed varied from staff member to staff member. Kimmitt was asked who would have taken notes at NSPG meetings on Central America. Kimmitt said that it would depend on the subject matter of the meeting; Kimmitt said that if the subject were the Contadora process it would be Raymond Burghardt, while if it were security assistance to El Salvador, the notetaker would be North.

cc: Arthur B. Culvahouse, Jr.
Jay B. Stephens
William B. Lytton III
C. Dean McGrath
Alan C. Raul
Paul Schott Stevens
Paul L. Colby

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