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News Summary

OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 1987 -- 6 a.m. EST EDITION

TODAY'S HEADLINES

OVAL OFFICE ADDRESS

'It Was A Mistake,' Reagan Tells Nation (Atlanta Constitution)

Reagan Takes Responsibility In Iran Affair (Cleveland Plain Dealer)

Reagan Admits Arms Hostage Swap (Boston Globe)

Reagan Admits Iran Policy Failed (Kansas City Times,
Minneapolis Star-Tribune)

Speech Plays Well In President's College Town (AP)

Governors Praise Reagan's Address (AP)

Apologetic Speech Brings Sigh Of Relief From Republicans
(Washington Times)

Reagan Admits 'Mistake' On Iran Sales But Doesn't Apologize
(Scripps Howard)

NETWORK NEWS (Wednesday Evening)

OVAL OFFICE ADDRESS -- The President will admit mistakes were made on the Iran initiative.

HOWARD BAKER -- The new chief of staff made a round of courtesy calls in Congress.

ARMS CONTROL -- U.S. negotiators in Geneva placed on the bargaining table a draft treaty on INF.

'...WHAT I INTEND TO DO'

"...by the time you reach my age, you've made plenty of mistakes if you've lived your life properly. So you learn. You put things in perspective. You pull your energies together. You change. You go forward."

(President Reagan,
Address to the Nation, 3/4)

OVAL OFFICE ADDRESS

'IT WAS A MISTAKE,' REAGAN TELLS NATION He Shoulders The Blame In Iran Deal Gone Wrong

President Reagan admitted to the American people Wednesday night that his secret Iran initiative ended up as an attempt to trade arms for hostages and "it was a mistake."

It was the President's first admission of error in the Iran-contra affair. In admitting errors, though, the President said it is time to put the Iran-contra affair into perspective and get on with the business of government. (Bob Dart, Atlanta Constitution, A1)

Reagan Takes Responsibility In Iran Affair

President Reagan said last night that selling arms to Iran was a mistake for which he is to blame, and he pledged to make changes to guarantee nothing like it will happen again.

"What began as a strategic opening to Iran deteriorated in its implementation into trading arms-for-hostages," Reagan said in a nationally televised speech from the Oval Office. "There are reasons for why it happened, but no excuses. It was a mistake," said Reagan.

(Thomas Brazaitis, Cleveland Plain Dealer, A1)

'A Mistake', President Tells Nation

President Reagan, in a long awaited speech designed to erase doubts about his presidency, acknowledged last night his once secret Iranian initiative "deteriorated" into an arms-for-hostages deal.

Noting he had not said much about the affair since November, Reagan said, "I've paid a price for my silence in terms of your trust and confidence, but I had to wait, as have you, for the complete story."

(AP story, Albuquerque Journal, Arizona Republic,
Salt Lake Tribune, The Tennessean, A1)

Iran Policy "A Mistake" Reagan Says

President Reagan told the nation Wednesday night that he accepts the Tower commission findings that "what began as a strategic opening to Iran deteriorated in its implementation into trading arms for hostages," and conceded, "it was a mistake."

Reagan sought, in his speech, to stem the erosion in public and political support caused by the Iran-contra affair declaring, "I take full responsibility" for everything that happened, regardless of whether he knew about it or not. (Carl Leubsdorf, Dallas Morning News, A1)

Reagan Admits Arms Hostage Swap

After almost four months of refusing to do so, President Reagan admitted last night that his Iranian initiative amounted to an arms for hostages swap. But he accepted blame for the scandal only indirectly, and without offering an apology for his actions.

In a dramatic change from some of his early statements, in which he insisted that there had been neither mistakes nor flaws in his policy, the President nevertheless shouldered responsibility, if not blame, for the scandal.
(Walter V. Robinson, Boston Globe, A1)

Reagan Admits Iran Policy Failed

President Reagan said Wednesday night that his policy toward Iran had deteriorated into a trade of arms for hostages and that he accepted full responsibility for the Iran contra affair which has hampered his presidency for three months.

But he did not say, as a special review board said last week, that the original idea of selling arms to the Tehran regime was flawed.

(New York Times wire service story, Kansas City Times,
Minneapolis Star-Tribune, A1)

Reagan: 'It Was A Mistake'

President Reagan took full responsibility for the Iran-contra affair Wednesday night and acknowledged for the first time that the Iran arms sale initiative "deteriorated" into an "arms for hostages" trade.

"It was a mistake," Reagan said, contradicting his previous assertion that arms were not traded for hostages.

Reagan's nationally televised speech -- his first since November -- was a response to criticism in the scathing Tower commission report, which was released last week.
(Beth Frerking, Denver Post, A1)

Reagan: 'It Was A Mistake'

President Reagan admitted for the first time Wednesday night that the Iran arms affair became a misguided, direct swap of U.S. weapons for American hostages. "It was a mistake," said Reagan.

In a nationally televised speech, President Reagan did not directly acknowledge that he made a mistake, but he blamed unnamed aides for carrying out operations without his knowledge and took "full responsibility for my actions and those of my Administration."

(George de Lama, Chicago Tribune, A1)

Reagan: Iran Deal A Mistake

A contrite sounding President Reagan acknowledged for the first time Wednesday night that his secret decision to sell weapons to Iran turned into a trade of arms-for-hostages. "It was a mistake," he admitted.

In an extraordinarily self critical address on the Iran-contra scandal that has engulfed his Administration, President Reagan also blamed his own inattentiveness for letting the scandal occur. But he vowed he had learned his lesson from "this wrenching ordeal" and urged the public to join him in moving on to other matters of greater national concern.

(David Hess, Knight Ridder, Miami Herald, A1)

Reagan Acknowledges Arms-For-Hostages Swap

President Reagan acknowledged last night in a nationally televised speech that he had traded U.S. arms for American hostages and said he accepted the "honest, convincing and highly critical" findings of the Tower special review board that investigated the Iran-contra affair.

The President's speech from the Oval Office contradicted many of his previous statements about the Iran arms deal and came a week after the Tower report faulted both the initiative and Reagan's management.

While Reagan did not directly apologize for what he had done, as a number of his supporters and friends had urged him to do, he did say he took "full responsibility" for what had occurred. He also for the first time acknowledged that the initiative conflicted with his oft-declared policy of not bargaining with terrorists to win the freedom of hostages.

(Lou Cannon, Washington Post, A1)

Reagan Says It: 'It Was A Mistake'

President Reagan last night acknowledged for the first time that his Iranian initiative "deteriorated" into an arms-for-hostages deal and was "a mistake."

On Capitol Hill, Democratic and Republican leaders said the address was a major step toward rebuilding the President's credibility and moving the country forward.

(Jeremiah O'Leary, Washington Times, A1)

Speech Plays Well In President's College Town

EUREKA, Ill. -- Residents of this staunchly Republican town where Ronald Reagan went to college say the President did the right thing by taking responsibility for his advisers' actions in the Iran-contra affair.

"There were mistakes. So what? Who doesn't make mistakes?" Doug Mathews said after watching Reagan's nationally televised speech Wednesday night. "But I like the fact that he accepted, as management should, that if there is a mistake, he made the mistake and he'll correct it," said Mathews, a regional sales manager for a building supplies company.

Jan Myers, 41, who finished her studies at Eureka in 1983 after taking time out to raise three children, said she felt better about Reagan's control of the presidency following the speech. "The Iran arms thing itself is disturbing," said Mrs. Myers, who voted for Reagan in 1980 and 1984. "And it's crossed my mind that he's too old. But he looked to be in control tonight; I believed him."

(Bob Springer, AP)

Governors Praise Reagan's Address

Several governors said President Reagan made a good start in putting the Iran-contra affair behind him Wednesday night with a candid address that some praised as evidence that his mental alertness is well intact.

"I think this speech helps undo some of the damage," said New York Gov. Mario Cuomo. "The principle objective thing he did was admit some fault. The American people are very smart and very forgiving.... If you admit fault to them, they will accept it. The American people, we all want to love Ronald Reagan. He made it a little bit easier tonight."

Indiana Gov. Robert Orr said, "I think there's been some sentiment that maybe Ronald Reagan, at his age, had sort of begun to lose it. I don't think he exhibited that at all. He seemed to me particularly virile. His voice was strong and his eyes were bright."

New Hampshire Gov. John Sununu called the speech "a great start."

Illinois Gov. James Thompson called the speech "brilliant."

"Nobody is better at controlling an audience than Ronald Reagan," Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young said. "He's a master of the media. But that's a long way from controlling foreign policy, a long way from controlling the White House staff."

Louisiana Gov. Edwin Edwards said the speech was "a step in the right direction." (AP)

Apologetic Speech Brings Sigh Of Relief From Republicans

Republican congressional leaders last night breathed a collective sigh of relief after hearing President Reagan's apologetic speech on the Iran-contra affair, while Democrats said they would judge Reagan by actions, not words.

"He's back on track," said Sen. Robert Dole. "This isn't behind him, but it's a start. He has taken the first big step on the comeback trail."

Sen. Robert Byrd said the speech only "went part way."

"The President showed he is in charge," Rep. Robert Michel said. "Mistakes that were made are being corrected. The President is fulfilling his obligations." (Mary Belcher, Washington Times, A10)

Reagan Admits 'Mistake' On Iran Sales But Doesn't Apologize

Taking the near-unanimous advice of friends and political advisers, President Reagan for the first time Wednesday night admitted his Iran policy was a mistake but pointedly did not apologize for it.

Reagan's eagerly awaited, 13-minute let's-get-on-with-business speech televised from the Oval Office was greeted with a sense of relief on Capitol Hill that Reagan overcame his reluctance to admit fault on Iran. The speech was enthusiastically greeted by supporters and more cautiously by critics.

One of Reagan's friends, Sen. Alan Simpson, exclaimed, "The boss is back." House Republican Whip Trent Lott said the speech restored much of Reagan's luster.

Sen. Robert Byrd said he feels better because Reagan said the Iran policy was a mistake, but that a single speech cannot restore the trust of the American people: "He has to show by his actions he is involved in his work." (Ann McFeatters, Scripps Howard)

Reagan Brings In New Team To Restore Credibility

President Reagan announced a series of steps Wednesday to overhaul the national security system and to bring on board new faces in the last two years of his battered Administration.

In a nationally televised address, the President said, "I am taking action in three basic areas -- personnel, national security policy and the process for making sure that the system works."

"I've brought in an accomplished and highly respected new team here at the White House," Reagan said. "They bring new blood, new energy and new credibility and experience." (Helen Thomas, UPI)

President Reagan/Oval Office Address

Former Sen. John Tower, chairman of the commission that delivered the critical judgments that President Reagan accepted, said the speech can reverse his political troubles.

"You don't ordinarily have sitting presidents confess to error like that," Tower told ABC after the speech. "I think a man is never more credible than when he admits a mistake."

Sen. Robert Dole lauded Reagan, saying he "told the American people what they needed to hear: That mistakes were made and he made them.... Coming on the heels of the Howard Baker appointment, tonight's speech caps a comeback week for the President."

But Sen. Robert Byrd said he was disappointed and, "I think the President should have recognized it was his orders that authorized the arms sales to Iran.... It didn't just deteriorate into that."

(Norman Sandler, UPI)

President Reagan/Oval Office Address

In the second major address in six weeks to be described as "the most important speech of his presidency," President Reagan has taken the first agonizing step to restore confidence in his leadership of the nation.

Even with the Iran-contra scandal approaching the dimensions of Watergate, he has two things going for him that Richard Nixon never had: A reservoir of popularity and a national desire for him to succeed.

In admitting he made a mistake in permitting the shipment of arms to Iran, he has crossed what for him was a painful threshold, although he stopped short of apologizing.

What Reagan must do now, in the opinion of friends and critics alike, is to take to heart the shattering criticisms of the Tower report, and take charge of his presidency. (Robert Fichenberg, News Analysis, Newhouse)

In A Spirit Of Contrition

President Reagan spoke to the American people tonight in a spirit of contrition that has not been heard from the White House in a quarter century.

The President did not use the words, "I apologize," or "I'm sorry." He did not say that the whole idea of an overture to the revolutionary regime in Tehran was wrong, as some had urged him to do. But not since John F. Kennedy took the blame for the catastrophic Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 has any president so openly confessed error.

Reagan, a proud man who has known political triumph on the grandest scale, a man who carried 44 states in 1980 and 49 states in 1984, appeared tonight to have concluded that he must swallow his pride to save his presidency. (R. W. Apple, News Analysis, New York Times, A1)

EDITOR'S NOTE: "The Text Of The President's Speech," appears in The Washington Post, A12.

IRAN — NICARAGUA

INDEPENDENT COUNSEL LAW IS DEBATED Meese 'Concerned' On Constitutionality; Stance Draws Bipartisan Criticism

Attorney General Edwin Meese said yesterday that he has "serious concerns" about the constitutionality of the independent counsel law, a position that one Democratic senator said would be "devastating" to Reagan Administration efforts to deal with the Iran-contra affair.

Committee Chairman Joseph Biden said Meese's failure to back the law squarely on constitutional grounds "will seriously undermine the credibility of the department and the independent counsels."

(Howard Kurtz, Washington Post, A17)

CONTRAS' CALERO AGAIN TESTIFIES TO GRAND JURY

Nicaraguan rebel leader Adolfo Calero testified yesterday for the second time before a federal grand jury investigating the Iran-contra affair and its labyrinthine financing.

Calero, who turned over sheafs of bank records involving his rebel army, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, told reporters that they show "absolutely no diversion of funds from anywhere to anywhere." He said he did not want to comment further until later in the week, after independent counsel Lawrence Walsh and his prosecutors complete questioning.

(George Lardner, Washington Post, A18)

UNO DETAILS '86 PAYMENTS RECEIVED BY OFFICE HERE

A Nicaraguan rebel official said yesterday that the Washington office of the United Nicaraguan Opposition -- the contras' umbrella organization -- received about \$75,000 last year through Richard Miller, a key figure in a pro-contra lobbying campaign backed by Oliver North.

Ernesto Palazzo, UNO's Washington representative, said Miller suggested the payments about the time that UNO opened its Washington office last March. Miller told UNO officials that the money -- which was the office's main revenue source last year -- came from unidentified "foreign private contributors," Palazzo said.

(Joe Pichirallo, Washington Post, A18)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

SOVIETS GET U.S. DRAFT TREATY BARRING MISSILES IN EUROPE

GENEVA -- U.S. negotiators today presented their Soviet counterparts with a detailed draft of a treaty providing for sharp cuts in medium-range missile arsenals, and both sides expressed a desire for rapid progress in the talks.

The U.S. proposal, as described by the chief U.S. negotiator for medium-range weapons, Maynard Glitman, did not include any major concessions. It was designed instead to give the negotiators a specific text to discuss in preparing a treaty, U.S. officials said.

(Robert McCartney, Washington Post, A29)

U.S. Draft Treaty Asks Surprise Visits, On-Site Verification

U.S. negotiators in Geneva have offered the Soviet Union a draft treaty on medium-range weapons with tough new verification procedures that include surprise inspections, Administration officials said yesterday.

"We think the Soviets understand these procedures," one official said. "We don't know yet if they will accept them."

(James Dorsey, Washington Times, A1)

POLLARD GETS LIFE TERM FOR SELLING U.S. SECRETS Spy's Wife Sentenced To 5 Years In Prison

A federal judge sentenced Jonathan Jay Pollard yesterday to life in prison for spying for Israel and his wife to five years in prison as an accessory, setting off an emotional courtroom scene in which the woman collapsed before the bench and was then led screaming from the room.

"It is difficult for me, even in the so-called 'year of the spy,'" Secretary Weinberger said in a court affidavit, "to conceive of a greater harm to national security than that caused by the defendant in view of the breadth, the critical importance to the U.S. and the high sensitivity of the information he sold to Israel."

(Nancy Lewis, Washington Post, A1)

CRITICISM OF ISRAEL RISES OVER POLLARD SPY CASE Promotion Of Agent's Alleged 'Handler' Hit

U.S. criticism of the Israeli government's handling of the Jonathan Jay Pollard spy case escalated yesterday, with tough statements from two senior members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and a State Department declaration questioning Israeli cooperation in the case.

The Reagan Administration statement criticized the Israeli government for assigning Col. Aviem Sella -- indicted by the U.S. government Tuesday as Pollard's first "handler" -- to command a large air base near Tel Aviv.

On Capitol Hill, Reps. Dick Cheney and Henry Hyde said yesterday that they didn't believe Israeli government claims that the Pollard case was a "rogue operation" that was unknown to high-level Israeli officials.

(Charles Babcock, Washington Post, A24)

RAID LEFT SCARS ON U.S.-TUNISIA TIES
Many Still See American Role In 1985 Israeli Attack On PLO

TUNIS -- Seventeen months after Israel's bombing raid on the offices in Tunisia of the Palestine Liberation Organization, many Tunisians remain angry at the U.S. because of their conviction that the Reagan Administration helped Israel carry out the strike.

Although Jonathan Pollard has told the court in a presentencing statement that he, on his own, gave Israel vital American intelligence that facilitated the raid, Tunisian public opinion refuses to clear Washington of responsibility. (Jonathan Randal, News Analysis, Washington Post, A24)

POLE APPLAUDS LIFTING OF SANCTIONS
On U.S. Visit, Official Urges More Steps Toward Improving Ties

The highest-ranking Polish official to visit Washington in more than five years said yesterday that President Reagan's recent lifting of U.S. economic sanctions was "a good start," and he called for further U.S. moves toward broad-based improvement in relations.

Jozef Czyrek, ranking foreign affairs official in the Communist Party politburo of Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, indicated that Warsaw is ready for an exchange of ambassadors with Washington to symbolize normalization of political relations. (Don Oberdorder, Washington Post, A30)

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Gifts To White House Decrease," by Sarah Booth Conroy, appears in The Washington Post, B3.

NATIONAL NEWS

REAGAN TO THE DEFENSE

Denounces 'Despicable Fiction' In Reports On The First Lady

President Reagan rose to First Lady Nancy Reagan's defense yesterday, denying as "despicable fiction" reports that she is "a kind of dragon lady" who has overstepped her role to influence policy in his Administration.

"What is Mrs. Reagan's involvement in running the government?" a reporter asked.

"Not the one that has been bandied about in the press," Reagan shot back. "That is fiction, and I think it is despicable fiction. And a lot of people ought to be ashamed of themselves."

(Donnie Radcliffe, Washington Post, B1)

First Husband Calls 'Dragon Lady' Talk 'Despicable Fiction'

President Reagan struck back angrily yesterday at reports depicting his wife, Nancy, as a vindictive "dragon lady" who had Donald Regan fired and meddles in the government.

"You've touched a nerve here," the President, visibly angry, said. He acknowledged he was breaking his own rule against answering impromptu questions at photo opportunities.

"The idea that she's involved in governmental decisions and so forth, and all of this, and being a kind of dragon lady," Reagan said, "there's nothing to that."

(Willis Witter, Washington Times, A1)

HUNT BEGINS FOR NEW FBI CHIEF

Webster Outlines Goals For Central Intelligence Agency To Reagan

The Reagan Administration began yesterday to consider possible replacements for FBI Director William Webster, nominated Tuesday to head the CIA.

Administration sources said last night that although several names have been mentioned, no choices have been made and none of the potential candidates have been contacted.

Webster, FBI director for nine years, spoke to reporters after a brief Oval Office meeting yesterday during which he told President Reagan he intended "to do the best job I can" in restoring CIA morale and imposing tighter supervision on the U.S. intelligence community.

(Mary Thornton & Dusko Doder, Washington Post, A13)

SENATE PANEL TO QUESTION WEBSTER
ON FBI'S HANDLING OF IRAN ARMS DEAL

Congress will grill CIA director-designate William Webster about charges of illegal FBI surveillance and also question him on the way the FBI handled the Iran-contra arms deal probe.

While there are no indications either of these issues would stand in the way of Webster winning confirmation to the CIA post, congressional investigators want to question Webster on several points.

(Lance Gay & Mary Deibal, Scripps Howard)

WRIGHT LAUNCHES PUSH FOR TAX RISE SUPPORT
Democrats Given 'Pep Talk' On Deficit

House Speaker Jim Wright yesterday began the difficult job of building broad Democratic support for making a tax increase part of a fiscal 1988 budget package by assuring House Budget Committee members they will have strong leadership backing for new taxes and by saying he is prepared to battle the White House over the issue.

Wright met privately for an hour with Democrats on the budget panel in a session that committee members characterized as a "pep talk" in which the speaker bolstered their courage for what could be a bruising political fight with the Reagan Administration.

(Tom Kenworthy, Washington Post, A6)

CATASTROPHIC CARE PLANS ASSAILED
Spokesmen For Aged Cite Coverage Gaps

Spokesmen for the aged assailed two major catastrophic-illness insurance proposals yesterday for not covering long-term nursing home care. But Rep. Fortney Stark, author of one of the proposals, said that any additions to his bill will be modest.

The American Association of Retired Persons, the National Council of Senior Citizens and House Rules Committee Chairman Claude Pepper all told a hearing of Stark's subcommittee that the bill sponsored by Stark and Rep. Willis Gradison and legislation proposed by President Reagan don't go nearly far enough in protecting the elderly against catastrophic health costs because they would not pay for maintenance drugs or long-term care in a nursing home -- only for extra-high hospital and doctor bills.

(Spencer Rich, Washington Post, A6)

EFFORT TO REVIVE DEATH PENALTY HIT
Biden Warns U.S. Sentencing Panel To Exclude Capital Punishment

The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee said yesterday that a federal commission rewriting criminal sentencing rules will be "dead" if it votes next week to revive a federal death penalty.

Sen. Joseph Biden said the Senate deliberately excluded the capital punishment issue from the 1984 law that created the U.S. Sentencing Commission. If the commission insists on adopting death-penalty procedures in a vote next week, he said, "I can assure you the Sentencing Commission is going nowhere.... It would be a tragic mistake."
(Howard Kurtz, Washington Post, A8)

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Reagan's Welcome Mat -- The Chief Hosts Congressional Freshmen," by Elizabeth Kastor, appears in The Washington Post, B4.

NETWORK NEWS SUMMARY

(Wednesday Evening, March 4, 1987)

OVAL OFFICE ADDRESS/WHITE HOUSE

NBC's Tom Brokaw: Now it's President Reagan's turn to say what he thinks of the Tower commission report on his handling of the Iran-contra affair. He'll do that with a short, nationally televised speech from the Oval Office tonight.

NBC's Chris Wallace: White sources tell NBC News the President will admit tonight for the first time he made mistakes on the Iran initiative.

(TV coverage: The President giving an Oval Office Address on October 13, 1986.)

Mr. Reagan will not apologize formally, but the sources say he will make these points: He didn't know much of what was happening; while it didn't start that way, the initiative turned into an arms-for-hostages deal; and he will make sure it doesn't happen again.

(TV coverage: Still photo of the President with words beneath.)

Aides say the speech will last only 12 minutes and be very personal. They hope it will help get the President out of the arms scandal. The First Lady's role in the White House also came up today on what is the Reagan's 35th anniversary. Meeting with his nominee to head the CIA, William Webster, Mr. Reagan angrily denounced stories his wife is a power behind the throne.

(The President: "That is fiction, and I think it is despicable fiction. And a lot of people ought to be ashamed of themselves. Being a kind of dragon lady, there is nothing to that.")

A reporter noted it was the new Chief of Staff, Howard Baker, who said that when Mrs. Reagan gets her hackles up she can be a dragon.

(Sen. Baker: "That's not right.")

But the President had much less to say about Oliver North, whom he once called a national hero.

(The President: "I'm not going to comment on that.")

In fact, one of Mr. Reagan's problems now is a series of false statements he made when the scandal broke.

(The President: "The speculation, the commenting and all, on a story that came out of the Middle East and that...." -- "We did not, repeat, did not trade weapons or anything else for hostages." -- "We did not condone and do not condone the shipment of arms from other countries." -- "Oh I'm not going to lie about that. I didn't make a mistake." -- "I believe our policy goals toward Iran were well-founded.")

Even with all the disclosures since, advisers say just a few days ago the President still did not want to admit he made mistakes.

(Sen. Laxalt: "The last time that several of us talked to him he was still of a mind to defend the policy that he thought had every potential for good and didn't work out that way.")

But White House sources say Chief of Staff Baker and the First Lady gently convinced Mr. Reagan his response to the Tower Board report could not be defensive.

Wallace continues:

(TV coverage: Still photos of the President, the First Lady, and Senator Baker.)

No matter what the President says tonight, critics believe the real test will be whether Mr. Reagan takes a more hands-on approach to his job.

(TV coverage: The President walking from the White House to the O.E.O.B.)

(Chris Mathews, political consultant: "Reagan seems to have lost communication. And I don't think you can be a great communicator if you don't listen to your audience.")

In a newspaper interview, former President Jimmy Carter said Mr. Reagan must do more than change his management style. "It is not a style he has assumed as a way to manage a White House staff," he said, "it is a way of life for him. And it is deeply embedded in his basic character." Officials here are laying out a busy schedule to try to show Mr. Reagan means what he says tonight -- that he will get deeply involved in White House business. But still missing from that schedule: a presidential news conference where Mr. Reagan would have to discuss the Iran arms deal without a script.

(NBC-Lead)

ABC's Peter Jennings: There are a great many people who have said almost automatically in the last few days that President Reagan's speech to the nation this evening is going to be the most important of his career. It is at the very least a presidential opportunity: The President's chance to tell us what he thinks of the Tower commission report, which said he was out of touch; a chance to say he messed up in the Iran affair; or a chance to stick by his guns. The speech has been widely analyzed even before it's been given.

ABC's Sam Donaldson: Many observers believe tonight's speech may be crucial to the President's chances of halting the massive erosion in public trust he's been experiencing, a view the President himself seems to share.

(TV Coverage of photo-op with William Webster. Reporter: "Mr. President, what do you think you have to do to restore your credibility?" President: "Ask me that question after the speech tonight.")

The speech is expected to be short, about 12 minutes in length, much of it devoted to upbeat talk of the future. But the crucial passage will come when the President discusses his Iranian arms sale policy and the Tower Board's criticisms of it, and whether he will acknowledge that his policy was a mistake. In November, he didn't think it was.

(President in Nov. 19 news conference: "So, I think that what we did was right, and we're going to continue on this path.")

He certainly didn't think he had made any mistakes.

(President at Nov. 24 photo-op: "I'm not going to lie about that; I didn't make a mistake.")

But soon, as the public pressure mounted, he changed his view.

(President in State of the Union: "We did not achieve what we wished and serious mistakes were made in trying to do so.")

Mistakes in the execution of the policy, but still not the policy itself. Political friends say tonight he must change that.

-more-

Donaldson continues:

(Rep. Cheney: "It's important that he convey that sense that the policy was a mistaken policy.")

(Paul Laxalt: "That it probably was something that shouldn't have been initiated to begin with.")

White House sources said the President tonight will admit he made mistakes, and as it turned out, his policy was flawed. He will admit the need for changes in his managerial style, but he will continue to defend his goals and there will be no direct apology. Mr. Reagan flared today when asked about his wife's role in running government recently.

(President: "That is fiction, and I think it is despicable fiction, and a lot of people ought to be ashamed of themselves. Well, the idea that she's involved in governmental decisions and so forth, and all of this, and being a kind of a dragon lady, there is nothing to that. And no one who knows her well would ever believe it." Reporter: "You know who said dragon lady; your Chief of Staff." (Laughter.) Howard Baker: "That's not right.")

Baker had actually said, "When she gets her hackles up, she can be a dragon." The Reagans will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary at a small White House dinner tonight just before the President goes on television.

(TV Coverage: White House photo of the President and First Lady.)

The President's spokesman said today that tonight's speech was not crucial to the presidency, but he was talking about the office. For Ronald Reagan, it is clearly terribly important. (ABC-Lead)

CBS's Dan Rather: President Ronald Reagan is getting ready to go on television tonight to talk about questions raised by his policy of sending weapons to Iran, questions about the policy itself and the way the President has managed or failed to manage the White House. The answers are widely expected to affect the rest of his presidency.

CBS's Bill Plante: President Reagan, in the midst of a furious effort to regain lost momentum, took time to from preparing for tonight's speech to be photographed with FBI Director William Webster, the President's choice to head the CIA.

(TV coverage: The President sitting in the Oval Office with CIA nominee William Webster.)

But Mr. Reagan reacted angrily to questions suggesting the First Lady has been manipulating both him and his government.

(The President: "That is fiction and I think it is despicable fiction. And a lot of people ought to be ashamed of themselves. The idea that she is involved in governmental decisions and so forth, and all of this, being kind of a dragon lady, there is nothing to that.")

(TV coverage: Still photo of the President and the First Lady.)

For his part, Webster told reporters he believes it's important that the CIA notify Congress of covert actions quickly. He appears headed for quick confirmation on Capitol Hill. The new White House Chief of Staff, former Sen. Howard Baker, went to the Hill for a series of good will visits to his former colleagues in the Congressional leadership and found himself having to deny that he'll be more powerful than the President.

(Sen. Baker: "Well, let me make one thing clear, Ronald Reagan is President of the United States.")

Plante continues: Baker's primary goal: repair damaged White House relations with Congress.

(Sen. Baker: "Well, the name of the whole game, from a political standpoint, is to make it work. And we'll make it work.")

For the President, the most important step toward making it work is tonight's speech to the nation. The address is Mr. Reagan's answer to the tough, embarrassing criticisms of the Tower commission.

(TV coverage: The President in the Cabinet Room with the Tower Board members.)

Friend and foe agree that it's one of the most important of his career.

(Sen. Kennedy: "In many ways the success of the remainder of his presidency, I believe, turns on it.")

For four months now, since the Iran-contra scandal began to unfold, the President has moved slowly from outright denial to a grudging admission that errors by others hurt an otherwise sound policy.

(The President: "The story that came out of the Middle East, to us, has no foundation." -- "I don't see that it has been a fiasco or a great failure of any kind." -- "In one aspect, implementation of that policy was seriously flawed." -- "We did not achieve what we had wished and serious mistakes were made in trying to do so.")

Sources tell CBS that the President will meet his critics halfway tonight. He'll finally admit that he made some of those mistakes, but he won't apologize. Mr. Reagan will also agree with the Tower commission that he wasn't paying much attention to the Iran-contra operation and that in the end it did become an arms-for-hostages swap. (CBS-Lead)

HOWARD BAKER/WILLIAM WEBSTER

ABC's Brit Hume reports Howard Baker made a round of courtesy calls in Congress.

(TV Coverage of Baker calling on Reps. Wright and Michel, Sens. Byrd and Dole.)

When questioned about conservative fears he will get the President to raise taxes, Baker was firm.

(Baker: "Ronald Reagan is President of the United States. I am his Chief of Staff and his program is my program, and I have no plans to offer to him anything except support for those programs and initiatives that he initiates.")

Elsewhere on the Hill, FBI Director Webster was taking bows and acting humble about his CIA nomination. Webster and Baker give the President immediately-improved relations with Congress in two areas where he needed that. That doesn't get the President completely off the defensive here, but it helps. (ABC-2)

ATTORNEY GENERAL MEESE/IRAN AFFAIR

Brokaw: There is new information tonight on how the Administration was attempting to deal with two key points in the Iran arms sale: 1) How could the President justify those sales since they were prohibited by law? And 2) If he did determine that they were necessary, why didn't he inform Congress?

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NBC's Carl Stern: The Attorney General ran into a swarm of Senate critics who wondered how the President could still be denying that arms were swapped for hostages.

(Sen. Kennedy: That's what the whole country thinks, that's what the whole world thinks, it's not just what the Democrats are saying it's what the Tower commission has said.)

But Meese said the President still believes it was not a swap for hostages because those who got the arms were not the same as those who held the hostages.

(Attorney General Meese: "I could understand how it could be perceived as an arms-for-hostages situation because both arms and hostages were involved, but it was not a direct relationship between the arms and the hostages in the sense that arms were given -- or any other ransom were given -- to the captors.")

That was the kind of legal fencing that Meese engaged in. When members of the Senate Judiciary Committee questioned the legality of the Iran arms shipments without the President's written approval, Meese said they were legal but that without written approval he would not have recommended the sales as wise or proper. Those are the kinds of legal positions the Justice Department began trying to work out in the weeks that followed the Iran arms sales disclosure.... Meese faces more questioning tomorrow before the House Judiciary Committee. (NBC-2)

WALSH/NORTH LAWSUIT

Brokaw: The independent counsel...Lawrence Walsh has agreed to accept an appointment in the Justice Department to protect his status. Oliver North is claiming in a lawsuit that the original appointment of Walsh as independent prosecutor is unconstitutional since it came from Congress and not from the Executive Branch. During a meeting today Meese and Walsh discussed the plan which could be announced as early as tomorrow. Walsh agreed to accept the Justice Department protection only as a back-up. If North's suit fails, he'll retain his independent standing. (NBC-3)

IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR/MONEY

Rather: Ever since it was first revealed that money from the sale of weapons to Iran was diverted from other causes, an important question has been where did the money go? Who got the cash? The final answer is not yet in, but Sen. Muskie now says the Tower commission was led to believe that some of the money was kicked right back to Iran in the form of bribes. Counsel McFadden says the Tower commission has no proof, only the suggestion of bribes. (CBS-2)

ARMS CONTROL

ABC's Rick Inderfurth reports from Geneva the draft U.S. treaty on INF was placed on the table. U.S. negotiators believe it will take at least six months to hammer out a medium-range missile accord, and they say how the two sides handle the issue of verification is likely to determine whether President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev will be able to sign their first arms control agreements. (ABC-4)

CBS's Tom Fenton: The envelope the U.S. negotiators placed on the table today represents President Reagan's first major foreign policy move in months.... The draft treaty differs from the Soviet proposal only in small but sensitive details such as verification. What's more, a U.S. negotiator said the U.S. is prepared to go even further and eliminate all medium-range missiles world-wide.... It's an apparent victory for President Reagan, who at the Iceland summit refused to abandon star wars.

(TV coverage: The President sitting with Gorbachev at Hofdi House.) But Gorbachev may have found a better way to stop star wars if an agreement on medium-range missiles is reached at Geneva.... The sudden progress is good news for both leaders. For Mr. Gorbachev, experts say it's a sign of growing strength at home -- a personal victory over the hardliners in the Soviet military. And for Mr. Reagan, it's a welcome headline for the town where the talk has been mostly about Iran-contra bank accounts. (CBS-4)

SOVIET EMIGRATION

Rather: The Soviet Union's new public relations offensive includes regulations which are supposed to make it easier for Soviets who have relatives outside the country to emigrate. That's what it says on paper. But it doesn't always work that way. (CBS-5)

POLLARD SPY CASE

Jennings reports Mrs. Jonathan Pollard was given two five-year prison terms. Mr. Pollard was told he will spend the rest of his life in prison.

ABC's Jeanne Meserve reports on the Pollards' sentencing today for leaking intelligence secrets to Israel. Members of Congress scolded Israel for damaging relations with the U.S.

ABC's Dean Reynolds reports from Tel Aviv that Prime Minister Shamir tried hard to minimize the Pollard affair fallout. But tonight the chairman of a key Israeli committee, Abba Eban, said he will investigate his country's role. Israel is in a very uncomfortable position. Its leaders insist the Pollard affair was an aberration that contradicted their policy, but they so far cannot bring themselves to punish those who helped to pull it off. (ABC-3, CBS-3, NBC-4)

EDITORIALS/COLUMNISTS

OVAL OFFICE ADDRESS

Hear What He Says -- Then See What He Does -- "No matter what President Ronald Reagan says tonight and no matter how well he says it, words are not going to be enough. To save the last two years of his presidency he must demonstrate in the weeks to come that he is willing and able to participate in his own Administration.... Instead of two years of confrontation and stalemate, Reagan can consolidate his legacy by forming a bipartisan coalition. He can defy the conventional wisdom and actually have a productive last two years in office. But he must understand that this will not be accomplished by his words tonight. It can only result from his actions in the days to come." (Newsday, 3/4)

Will There Be a New Reagan? -- "No transmogrification could ever make Mr. Reagan a hands-on president in the Jimmy Carter mold, nor is this desirable. But a 'new Reagan' must have the courage to appoint aides willing to challenge his pet nostrums, present him with conflicting opinions and insist on forthright policy decisions. With tonight's speech he has a critical chance to begin a presidential recovery. If he flubs it, the number of Americans who believe he should quit could rise to the majority status of those who think he is lying." (Baltimore Sun, 3/4)

The President's Speech -- "The Constitution gives the presidency the predominant role in foreign policy, and Ronald Reagan has twice won overwhelming victories. His invasion of Grenada, the bombing of Libya and even his walking away from an arms deal at Reykjavik have all won palpable support from the American people. The consensus among the people is in fact clear enough, but every time it's expressed it comes to the utter astonishment of every courtier in the capital. In court circles the myth persists that the two problems of foreign policy are avoiding another Vietnam and negotiating disarmament with the Russians. The attempt to legislate this agenda by circumscribing the powers of the executive branch flies in the face of the Constitution, the President's platform and the evident will of the electorate. This is what the President urgently needs to explain tonight. If he can succeed, the people will support him again." (Wall Street Journal, 3/4)

WILLIAM WEBSTER/WILLIAM CASEY

Good Choice for the CIA -- "FBI Director William Webster is a good choice to succeed Casey for at least one reason. He's an outsider -- and wasn't a partisan in the internecine warfare that continued to plague the CIA even under William Casey. Judge Webster should also be able to protect the agency on Capitol Hill. And that's crucial -- because there's sure to be an effort to reshackle the CIA, even though the agency wasn't much involved in the Iran affair." (New York Post, 3/4)

FIRST LADY

Whispering in the President's Ear -- "What advice is right for a First Lady -- or anyone else -- to give? Whatever advice a President wants." (New York Times, 3/4)

EDITORIALS & COLUMNISTS (continued)

GATES WITHDRAWAL

Gates Withdrawal Right Move -- "By withdrawing the Gates nomination, President Reagan has indicated he is seriously heeding the recommendations of the Tower commission and moving to shore up his Administration." (Dallas Times Herald, 3/3)

TOWER REPORT

Tower Report's Message is all but Unmistakable -- "The attempt by the Tower panel members to find somebody to share the blame with the President for that state of affairs is understandable. But Ronald Reagan has been President for six years. If the stylistic problems caused by his personality have not been worked out by now, who's fault is that?" (Dayton Daily News, 2/28)

Only Reagan Can Repair Blunders Cited by Panel -- "Despite its respectful tone, the Tower commission has issued a damning indictment not only of President Reagan's blundering initiative of secretly selling arms to extremist Iran but also of his laxity in effectively using his Cabinet and White House staff in formulating and carrying out that policy." (Buffalo News, 2/27)

The Tower Report -- "The objective, hard-hitting report of the Tower Commission confirmed what many suspected ever since the Reagan Administration revealed a secret Iran initiative: The arms sale was more than anything else an attempt to trade weapons for American hostages.... Americans know that all presidents make serious mistakes. They can even understand why a president would want to do anything he could to free American hostages, but they don't care to be conned." (Indianapolis Star, 2/28)

The Tower Report -- "As has been observed recently, it was at about this point in the last two-term presidency, Dwight Eisenhower's, that a number of shocking upsets took place. But Ike bore down to complete the job effectively and, as they say, 'won going away' and retired with the esteem of his contemporaries and an assured place in history. We'd like to see something like that happen again, with a frontal attack on 'what went wrong.' The Tower report is a good starting place. But it's late in the day." (Sarasota Herald-Tribune, 2/27)

The Empty White House -- "Despite all the discussion about how poorly the President has been served by his aides, the Tower Commission's main conclusion is that Ronald Reagan has been goofing off in the most important job in the world.... Reagan is grateful for this judgment. The alternative was the conclusion that he had engineered deeds for which the country would likely not forgive him." (Kansas City Times, 2/27)

OVAL OFFICE ADDRESS

NETWORK COMMENTARY FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

ABC's Peter Jennings: President Reagan, a speech of about 12 minutes, speaking from the Oval Office, his response to the recommendations of the Tower commission report which were issued last week. And how has it played, to put it rather simply, let us go first to Texas, where former Senator John Tower...has been listening to the speech with us. Senator, it was your report the President was responding to. He accepted all your recommendations, as best we can tell. Are you encouraged?

Sen. Tower: Yes, I am. Very much so. You know, I think a man is never more credible than when he admits to a mistake, and this the President has very manfully done tonight and in putting his stamp of approval...on a very critical report, and by taking the actions that he's taken over the past few days and weeks and is expected to take, I think he's turned things around.

Jennings: How much has he turned them around, Senator?

Tower: That remains to be seen, and of course I have no way of knowing what the public reaction to the President's remarks tonight will be. But I am reasonably sure that the public reaction will be favorable.

Jennings: You live outside Washington but you have a keen political sense of not only your own neck of the woods but Washington. How much can you really accomplish with one speech?

Tower: I think you can accomplish a great deal because the fact was that people wanted the President to give some sort of explanation or comment on what had gone on. They were not satisfied, obviously, with the explanations that were given back in November. I think the President has done it in the right way. He's waited until all the facts were in and now he's said that he made a mistake, and I think the American people admire that, especially from a President. You rarely hear presidents of the United States confess mistakes to the extent that Ronald Reagan has.

Jennings: In fact, Senator, we were sitting here wondering whether a sitting president had ever made this kind of speech before. You've got a much longer political memory than most of us. What do you think?

Tower: No, and I think that some presidents that have gone before have made foreign policy mistakes of much greater consequence than the one that Ronald Reagan has made, but usually that's left to the judgement of history. And you don't ordinarily have sitting presidents confess to error like that.

Jennings: I would like you to use a little hindsight if you don't mind. At the very beginning of the speech, the President says the reason he hasn't spoken to us before is because it would have been confusing, that there were sketchy reports or possibly even erroneous statements which would have led to confusion. Isn't it true that back in November particularly, the President made many of those erroneous statements and confusing ones himself?

NETWORK COMMENTARY (cont.)

Tower: I don't think the President said anything that he didn't honestly believe. I believe he might have convinced himself that some things were right that were actually wrong. But in fact I don't think the President willfully misled the American people. And I think he was probably wise to bring in three outsiders to try to get all the facts out. If this had all been done internally in the White House and they'd come out with facts on the Iran-contra affair I don't think it would have been nearly as credible....

Jennings: What else might you liked to hear the President say this evening?

Tower: I think he pretty well said it all. I think he may have even gone beyond what I would have liked to hear him say. And I think it was really a brilliant presentation and I think he said all the right things.

Jennings: ...Joining us now is Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole. Senator Dole, an initial reaction from you as to what you thought of the speech.

Dole: I think the President did a good job with a very, very tough subject.

Jennings: Can you be more specific? How well did he do and how tough a subject does it remain?

Dole: Well, he used the word mistake, saying that he made a mistake about three times. The word "accept responsibility, "accountability," I mean the speech was filled with references to the fact that the President has fully accepted responsibility. It was his mistake in many areas. And that will go a long way. There is another little sentence in there that's going to please Congress, and that's when he said he's going to consult with Congress in letter and in spirit. That will go a long way toward, I think, soothing some of the feelings in Congress in both parties that the President hasn't given us timely notice or consultation....

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CBS's Dan Rather: President Reagan speaking tonight from the Oval Office at the White House...the President responded to the Tower commission report. Mr. Reagan speaking about his arms-for-hostages deal with Iran basically said, "My policy went wrong, my White House team made mistakes and he said he made some mistakes."

The President did not apologize outright for the policy or what he had done. Mr. Reagan said he found little good news in the Tower report; he acknowledged that his silence on the whole Iran-contra money affair has cost him public trust and confidence. Mr. Reagan said he hoped to open new channels to a post-Khomeini government in Iran by supplying the Ayatollah's government with weapons, but in the end he said his overtures turned into an arms-for-hostages swap. He didn't explain why that happened. He didn't say exactly where the money had gone. He said some things took place without his knowledge, including the diversion of money to the contras, if that's where the money went.

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NETWORK COMMENTARY (cont.)

Rather continues: But Mr. Reagan said, and I quote now, "I take full responsibility for my own actions and for those of my administration." And he said near the end, "you take your knocks, you learn your lessons and then you move on."

We move on to Bill Plante. Bill, the President did not apologize or at least he didn't do so straight-forwardly and without some reluctance. He did say that he had made a mistake. Will that make any difference?

CBS's Bill Plante: I think that the White House believes that it will and probably it will help a great deal. If we're to believe what they're telling us here, Mr. Reagan had a very difficult journey from being defensive and feeling that there was really nothing wrong with his policy to what he said tonight, saying yes, alright, mistakes were made and then going beyond to say that, yes, it was a mistake and it did turn out to be a trade of arms-for-hostages.

His aides describe a cathartic process over the last week, while he's read the Tower commission report, saying that he has come to believe that criticisms in the report are genuine and true. He's also had a lot of help. All of his best friends have been pounding on him to come out here and say that he made a mistake, even though he was determined not to apologize.

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NBC's Tom Brokaw: Ronald Reagan, speaking to the American public from the Oval Office tonight in a speech, an address from the Oval Office that was unusually short, unusually candid, almost contrite. And whatever else the Iran-contra affair has done to Ronald Reagan, it has not diminished his capacity to look into a television camera and communicate directly with the American public. The American public and a good portion of the world, of course, have been watching this speech tonight. The Iranian scandal has hit Mr. Reagan where he personally is among his most sensitive: in public opinion polls. Presidential job approval rating is at its lowest or close to it for any of his six years in office now. Mr. Reagan's strength has always been his ability to sell optimism -- to make Americans feel better about themselves and their country. The public knew his limitations but liked him anyway. Is this era of good feeling now over? The Tower commission report pictured him as a detached, unengaged president who didn't know really what was going on within his own White House. Can he shake that image? Has tonight helped him? Questions we want to put now to a number of important and influential Americans across this country. We begin with the Governor of New Hampshire, John Sununu.... What did you think of the President's speech?

Gov. Sununu: It was a good speech. It was very forthright.... I think he capitalized very well on the report of the Tower Board. Obviously he had studied it, he heard its message, he heard the message of the American public, and I think he accepted not only the recommendations of the Board, but his own obligations and responsibilities. I think the speech made it clear that he's willing to learn from what was outlined in the report as the failures and the problems, and I think he has already begun by making changes in people and the system, and made a commitment to be more involved himself in the direct management of foreign affairs.

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NETWORK COMMENTARY (cont.)

Sununu continues: I think Ronald Reagan has shown that he can listen, he can learn, and he can move forward. He said it very well when he said he made a mistake, he has learned from it, and now it's time to get the country going again. I think the speech is a great start.

Willie Brown, California Assembly Speaker: I think the President did not do, frankly, a good job. The President made it very clear that he is only embracing what the Tower report shows to be definitive evidence of mismanagement, of shoddy programs and policies, and of people pretty much operating on their own.... I'm not sure the American people will change their idea on who ought to be managing or the manner in which he is managing this country, just based upon this very short candid, direct speech.

Henry Cisneros, Mayor of San Antonio: I think the President accomplished three things: he accepted responsibility and spoke with seriousness, and that will reach the people. Secondly, I think he spoke to the management style issue. He looked engaged and appeared to be his old self in that sense. And in a substantive way the most important thing I heard was the decision to issue a memorandum that there would be no more covert operations from the National Security Council....

Michael Gartner, Editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal: ...And I think that tonight at least he showed that he's a healthy, clear-thinking 76-year-old, and I think that's very, very, important to the people of the country. But I don't think that anything is going to go away because of this speech.

-End of News Summary-