



Chapter 5

Fawn Hall

Fawn Hall was Lt. Col. Oliver L. North's secretary on the National Security Council staff from February 1983 until North was fired on November 25, 1986. In November 1986, Hall participated with North and other NSC staff members in obstructing official investigations and altering, destroying, and removing official Iran/contra-related documents from the White House.

At a very early point in the investigation, Independent Counsel granted Hall immunity in exchange for truthful testimony about her activities and those of North and others in connection with Iran/contra. Hall provided valuable evidence against both North and former National Security Adviser John M. Poindexter, in whose trials Hall was an important, although reluctant, Government witness.¹

1 Because Hall testified before the Grand Jury in March and April 1987 -- before North and Poindexter testified to Congress under the grant of use immunity -- Hall was able to testify at the trials of both North and Poindexter without serious Kastigar objections from the defense.

As North's secretary, Hall was generally aware of his involvement in the Iran arms sales and in supporting the contras, as well as his correspondence and contacts with numerous individuals involved in both projects.² Hall maintained records of North's meetings and his incoming telephone calls, and she typed memoranda and letters for him. Because of her proximity to North, Hall became aware that North was engaged in financial activities on behalf of the contras.³ Hall did not, however, sit in on North's meetings, listen to his telephone conversations, or discuss North's activities with him, and so, according to her testimony, "I did not know many of the details relevant to the Iran and contra initiatives."⁴

2 For example, Hall knew and provided information about the relationship between North and every person listed in his Rolodex. (Hall, FBI 302, 2/12/87, afternoon session, pp. 1-30.)

3 Hall, Select Committees Testimony, 6/8/87, pp. 242-44. On one or two occasions, Hall saw North writing in a financial ledger in his office, which Hall believed to be related to the contras. (Hall, Select Committees Testimony, 6/8/87, pp. 233-35; Hall, Grand Jury, 4/22/87, pp. 37-45.) In addition, on June 21, 1985, Hall asked to borrow money from North; North produced three \$20 traveler's checks that were drawn on a Central American bank, gave them to Hall, and said, according to Hall, something to the effect of "Make sure you return -- pay back the money. It is not mine." (Hall, Select Committees Testimony, 6/8/87, pp. 237-40.) Moreover, some time in the summer or fall of 1986, an individual involved with the contras called to complain that a certain contra leader had not received a delivery that he was expecting; based on what was said, Hall concluded that the expected delivery was in fact a transfer of funds. (Hall, Select Committees Testimony, 6/8/87, pp. 241-44; Hall, Grand Jury, 4/22/87, pp. 28-32.)

4 Hall, Select Committees Testimony, 6/8/87, p. 186.

Hall's first involvement in the criminal activity of North and others occurred on Friday, November 21, 1986, when North learned that the Department of Justice was conducting a fact-finding inquiry into the Iran arms sales. North retrieved a number of original documents from the NSC's institutional files indicating that he had violated the Boland Amendment by aiding the contras. North marked handwritten revisions on the original documents, changing the text so that it would appear that North had not violated the Boland Amendment. Then he asked Hall to replace the original documents with new, altered documents that contained his changes. Hall did so.⁵

5 Hall, North Trial Testimony, 3/22/89, pp. 5311-16, and 3/23/89, pp. 5373-80, 5385-87; Hall, Poindexter Trial Testimony, 3/14/90, pp. 1598-1600.

Hall, however, did not complete the process of altering the documents given to her by North. She interrupted her work to help North shred documents. Some time in the early evening of November 21, Hall saw that North

opened the five-drawer safe [in his office] and began to pull items from it and I joined him in an effort so that he would not have to -- wasting his time shredding. As he pulled documents from each drawer and placed them on top of the shredder, I inserted them into the shredder.

At the same time, I asked him if I could go ahead and shred the PROFs notes and phone logs. He acknowledged I should go ahead and do that, and I did so.⁶

6 Hall, Select Committees Testimony, 6/8/87, p. 284.

Hall shredded documents in piles of 12-18 pages for between 30 minutes and one hour; she estimated that she shredded approximately one-and-a-half feet of documents.⁷ Although shredding documents was part of the daily routine at the NSC, Hall had never shredded documents in such a large quantity.⁸

7 Hall, Grand Jury, 3/20/87, pp. 72-74.

8 Hall, Select Committees Testimony, 6/8/87, p. 290.

The following Tuesday, November 25, 1986, President Reagan publicly fired North because of his involvement in the Iran/contra diversion. NSC director of information policy, Brenda Reger, then secured suite 302 of the Old Executive Office Building -- a two-floor suite that contained the offices of North, Hall, Lt. Col. Robert L. Earl, Cmdr. Craig P. Coy, and two other staff members -- and refused to allow any removal of documents without her approval.

After Reger secured suite 302, Hall remembered that she had not completed the process of altering and destroying the original NSC documents North had requested on the previous Friday. In addition, Hall observed that documents related to the Iran arms sales and the contras that were similar to the documents that she and North had shredded were still in the suite.⁹ Hall then began concealing these documents in her clothes to remove them from suite 302 without Reger's knowledge. She placed some documents inside her boots and others inside the back of her skirt.¹⁰

9 Hall, North Trial Testimony, 3/22/89, pp. 5354-58; Hall, Poindexter Trial Testimony, 3/14/90, pp. 1654-56.

10 Hall, North Trial Testimony, 3/22/89, pp. 5359-60, 5362; Hall, Poindexter Trial Testimony, 3/14/90, p. 1657. Hall removed about 16 pages of documents from the office. (Hall, North Trial Testimony, 3/23/89, p. 5407.) Hall initially falsely stated to the OIC that she concealed and removed from the NSC only hard-copy print-outs of North's PROFs computer notes. (Hall, FBI 302s, 1/29/87, morning session, p. 7; 2/5/87, pp. 13-14; and 2/8/87, p. 7.) Hall subsequently acknowledged, however, that she also removed unaltered copies of the documents that she had begun altering on November 21 at North's request. (Hall, FBI 302, 2/27/87, p. 6.)

Hall went upstairs in the suite to Earl's office and told him what she was doing. Hall either asked Earl to take the documents out of the suite or he volunteered to do so; Earl then placed the documents in a pocket of his suit coat. A few minutes later, Hall returned to Earl's office, retrieved the documents, and concealed them under her clothes. She asked Earl whether he could see the documents, and Earl responded that he could not.¹¹

11 Hall, Grand Jury, 3/18/87, pp. 201-2; Hall, FBI 302s, 1/29/87 (morning session), pp. 7, 9, 2/5/87, pp. 13-14, 2/8/87, p. 7.

Either before or after she began to hide the documents in her clothes, Hall called North who was out of the office. Because Reger and others were in the suite, Hall spoke in a whisper and tried to convey in vague terms that there was a problem with the documents and that it was important for North to return to the office.¹² North agreed to return and informed Hall that Thomas Green, who was then serving as North's attorney, would accompany him.¹³

¹² Hall, North Trial Testimony, 3/22/89, p. 5361; Hall, Poindexter Trial Testimony, 3/14/90, p. 1657.

¹³ Hall, North Trial Testimony, 3/22/89, p. 5361.

When North and Green arrived in suite 302, North went into his private office to receive a phone call, and Hall followed him. She either stated or indicated that she had documents in the back of her skirt and asked North whether he could see them; North replied that he could not.¹⁴ Hall then carried the concealed documents out of suite 302, accompanied by North and Green.¹⁵

¹⁴ Hall, North Trial Testimony, 3/22/89, pp. 5364-65, and 3/23/89, pp. 5390-91; Hall, Poindexter Trial Testimony, 3/14/90, p. 1658. In one early OIC interview of Hall, she stated that when Green and North entered suite 302, she told both of them that she had some documents in her possession and neither Green nor North advised her that she should not remove the documents from the office. (Hall, FBI 302, 1/29/87, morning session, p. 7.)

¹⁵ Hall, North Trial Testimony, 3/22/89, pp. 5363-65, and 3/23/89, p. 5391; Hall, Poindexter Trial Testimony, 3/14/90, pp. 1658-59.

While Hall, North, and Green were at the elevator bank on the third floor of the Old Executive Office Building, according to Hall

I indicated with a gesture or words that I wanted to give him [North] the documents, and he said -- he turned to me and said, "No, just wait until we get outside," and we went down the elevator, exited the Old Executive Office Building on 17th St., and again I indicated with a word or gesture that I wanted to pass the documents, and Tom Green said, "No, wait until we get inside the car."

We crossed 17th St., got in Tom Green's car on G St., took off, and I started pulling the documents from my boots, pulled them from my back, indicated to Colonel North, I believe at this time, I had not completed the process of replacing the altered documents in the files and that I had started the Xeroxing, but I had, in fact, left the originals in the office.

As we turned the corner, Tom Green was dropping us both off at the parking lot where our cars were parked. Tom Green turned to me and asked me if I was asked about shredding what would I say, and I said, "We shred every day." And he said, "Good." ¹⁶

¹⁶ Hall, Select Committees Testimony, 6/8/87, p. 306. Two days later, when Hall was asked by Jay Stephens of the White House counsel's office about the reports of shredding documents in North's office, Hall said, "I told him that we shred every day, and I led him to believe that there was nothing unusual about what had occurred." (Hall, Grand Jury, 3/20/87, pp. 48-9; Hall, FBI 302, 2/27/87, p. 4.)

Hall's final involvement in illegal activities occurred three days later, on Friday, November 28, 1986. After Hall learned that the FBI had asked to interview her, Earl and Coy over the coming weekend, Hall and Earl spoke together about the events of the previous week. According to Hall, she and Earl agreed that neither would disclose to the FBI that Hall had removed documents from the office on November 25.¹⁷

17 Hall, Grand Jury, 3/20/87, pp. 38-40; Hall, FBI 302, 2/8/87, pp. 1-2.

By granting Hall immunity, Independent Counsel sacrificed the possibility of charging Hall with conspiracy to obstruct justice and illegally destroying, altering, and removing official NSC documents. In return, however, Independent Counsel obtained important evidence of wrongdoing by Hall's superiors, including North and Poindexter.¹⁸

18 Hall was an unindicted co-conspirator in Count One of the March 1988 indictment of North, Poindexter, Secord and Hakim. This count -- which charged the Iran/contra diversion as a conspiracy to defraud the U.S. Government -- was not tried due to classified-information problems.

At the trial of North, Hall was an important Government witness who provided testimony central to obtaining felony convictions for obstructing Congress in November 1986 and for illegally destroying, altering, and removing NSC documents. At Poindexter's trial, Hall provided testimony for the Government to obtain a felony conviction for conspiring to obstruct Congress.