



Chapter 26

Edwin G. Corr

Independent Counsel began his investigation of former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Edwin G. Corr in the fall of 1990, based on new information obtained from U.S. Army Col. James J. Steele that raised questions about the truthfulness of some of Corr's prior testimony. Corr gave voluntary interviews to Independent Counsel in January 1991 before ending his cooperation and invoking his Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination. Independent Counsel subsequently obtained a judicial order compelling Corr's testimony in April 1991 and forcing him to produce documents, under grants of immunity. The Grand Jury's subpoena resulted in production in May 1991 of hundreds of pages of relevant documents previously withheld from Independent Counsel.¹ The grant of immunity did not, however, lead Corr to change his prior false testimony.

¹ An April 1987 request from Independent Counsel to the State Department called for Corr to produce "[a]ll correspondence, memoranda, working papers, telexes, telegrams, cables, telecopies, messages and other documents," however made, which were prepared by, received by, routed through or maintained by Corr on "the provision or coordination of support for persons or entities engaged as military insurgents in armed conflict with the Government of Nicaragua since 1984." Independent Counsel also requested all of Corr's "individual appointment calendars and schedules, card files, diaries, telephone logs, records or evidence of incoming and outgoing telephone calls, indices of correspondence, itineraries and activity reports. . . ." (Letter from Stewart to Kozak, 4/24/87; Letter from Stewart to Kozak, 4/23/87, specifically including handwritten materials in its definition of "documents"). Corr told Independent Counsel in 1991 that he and his secretary were responsible for reviewing his documents for materials demanded by the State Department on behalf of Iran/contra investigators. (Corr, FBI 302, 1/9/91, pp. 1-2.)

When compelled to produce materials in April 1991, Corr delivered 175 pages of new documents to the Grand Jury. Corr first explained that these materials, plus others previously produced to the Select Committees, constituted his relevant Iran/contra documents for July 1985 through July 1987, but he later admitted that he had omitted items demanded by the Grand Jury. (Corr, Grand Jury, 4/26/91, pp. 8-18; ALW 32449-623.) Two weeks later, after Independent Counsel had consulted with Corr's attorney, Corr produced an additional 1,480 pages of new notes and documents to the Grand Jury. (ALW 32671-34196.) Independent Counsel's review of these materials required Corr to appear three more times before the Grand Jury in late May and mid-June 1991.

Because of Corr's continuing and unbelievable assertions in the Grand Jury, after his final Grand Jury appearance in June 1991, Independent Counsel focused more intensely on Corr's false statements in the Grand Jury about an April 20, 1986, meeting that he had with retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard V. Secord and Lt. Col. Oliver L. North of the National Security Council staff at the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador. Independent Counsel's investigation of Corr concluded in January 1992 with a decision not to indict.

This chapter discusses the evidence collected during Independent Counsel's investigation of Corr, his false statements in the Grand Jury, and Independent Counsel's reasons for not prosecuting the ambassador.

Corr and the Private Contra Resupply Effort

Edwin G. Corr joined the U.S. foreign service in 1961. His long career included ambassadorships in Peru and Bolivia, before becoming U.S. ambassador to El Salvador in August 1985. Corr's arrival in El Salvador coincided with a significant change in the nature of covert U.S. Government support to

the Nicaraguan contra rebels. That summer, North had asked Secord to set up a private airlift operation that would carry privately purchased materials, including arms, to the contras. Through the fall of 1985, Secord endeavored to set up this operation, choosing the Ilopango air base just outside of San Salvador to be the locus of his operation's transshipment and local warehousing efforts. Secord and North also worked to establish facilities that would assist in the resupply of contra forces on a resurgent "southern front" on the Costa Rican border with Nicaragua.

Early in his new post, Corr became aware of allegations that North was tied to contra operations. Corr noted in a meeting with four State Department officials prior to leaving for San Salvador that North "is the NSC man for Central America. Allegedly 'man who has run the 'g008contras.'" " 2 North's tie to the contras was reinforced in Corr's mind by events that occurred around the time of a September 1985 State Department chiefs of mission conference held in Panama -- a conference that both North and Corr attended. Before going to the conference, Corr's deputy chief of mission (DCM), David Passage, wrote Corr that he had to alert Elliott Abrams, the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, to three recent approaches by contra officials to Embassy officers and to Col. Steele, the commander of the U.S. Military Group in El Salvador. Passage requested guidance on these contacts, so the Embassy could maintain "squeaky-clean" operations.³

2 Corr Notes, 8/19/85, ALW 0033531 (emphasis in original).

3 Memorandum from DP to AMB, 9/7/85, ALV 001407 (bearing Corr's handwritten notes); Passage, FBI 302, 3/7/91, pp. 3-4.

After receiving Passage's memorandum, Corr made a list of items that he intended to discuss in Panama with Abrams and his deputy, William Walker. The third item on Corr's list spoke directly of Passage's concerns. The fourth and fifth items, checked off by Corr and bracketed with Passage's item, also addressed the contras:

(3) Contras -- 3 contacts; FDN [contra] talk w/ Steele (NO)

(4) Rodriguez.

(5) Ollie North conversation -- S.[Southern] Front 4

4 Corr Notes, ALW 0033600. Corr testified under immunity that he normally checked off items either when he had done them or when he had gone over them with someone else. (Corr, Grand Jury, 5/29/91, pp. 52-53; Corr, Grand Jury, 6/12/91, p. 149.)

On September 20, 1985, North had requested Felix Rodriguez, a U.S. citizen who was assisting the Salvadoran government's counter-insurgency efforts, to intercede with Salvadoran Air Force General Juan Bustillo to allow Enterprise planes to be based at Ilopango air base in El Salvador, as part of an operation to resupply contra forces.⁵ Rodriguez worked in the coming months with Steele and Rafael Quintero, an associate of Secord's, to ensure that North-Secord contra-resupply operations did not run afoul of the Salvadoran military at Ilopango.⁶

5 Letter from North to Rodriguez, 9/20/85, AKW 22740-41. Corr had heard of Rodriguez as early as July 1985 from Corr's predecessor in San Salvador, Thomas G. Pickering. Corr was also aware of Rodriguez's work with the Salvadoran military. (Corr, Select Committees Deposition, 4/30/87, pp. 4-6.)

6 See Underlying Facts, Gregg and Fiers chapters; Secord, Grand Jury, 1/16/91, pp. 38-39.

Smooth relations at Ilopango became critical in late 1985. In October 1985, the Honduran government decided to limit sharply official and unofficial U.S. efforts from that country to provide supplies by air to the contras. After two months of negotiations, the Hondurans agreed to admit

planes carrying U.S. Government-provided non-lethal supplies into the country, on the condition that the planes enter from El Salvador. In late December 1985, Corr met a delegation from Washington that included North, Walker, and the chief of the CIA's Central American Task Force, Alan D. Fiers, Jr., that had flown to Central America to complete work on the new non-lethal contra-supply arrangements, being administered through the State Department's Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office (NHAO). Corr learned that Bustillo gave his approval for U.S. Government-sponsored transshipment operations at Ilopango, allowing large planes to unload their cargo there for transfer onto smaller aircraft making supply drops to the contras.⁷ The NHAO humanitarian-resupply operations at Ilopango gave a major boost to North's own private lethal-resupply efforts in Central America.⁸

7 Corr Notes, 2/9/86, ALV 001399-401 (describing December 1985 meeting); Corr, FBI 302, 1/10/91, p. 5 (adopting notes as accurate record of December meeting).

8 For a fuller description of the mingling of official and unofficial contra aid operations at Ilopango, see Fiers chapter.

The combination of official and unofficial contra aid efforts at Ilopango became too great a strain on base resources and the tolerance of Salvadoran officials. By January 23, 1986, Corr had learned that Bustillo had become alarmed about the visibility of the expanded operations at Ilopango.⁹ During a swing through Washington in early February 1986, Corr attempted to get North and Fiers and his superiors at the State Department to agree to reduce CIA contact with the contra-resupply efforts. Corr wanted to, in his words, "in effect become 'desk officer' " on the "contra question,"¹⁰ referring to NHAO activity. Corr returned to San Salvador only to learn that Rodriguez was interfering in humanitarian-aid efforts, with North's help. Rodriguez's actions prompted Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Walker to phone Corr and tell him that "Ollie and Max [Rodriguez's alias] are to have nothing to do [with] humanitarian assistance deliveries . . ." ¹¹ Walker also instructed Corr to meet with Fiers in El Salvador and "impress on Fiers that we cannot proceed in this [fouled-up manner]." ¹² Corr did as he was told, reminding Fiers in a meeting at Corr's residence that Corr was to be "the coordinator & director of everything on this matter" until Washington determined otherwise.¹³

9 Corr Notes, 1/23/86, ALV 001396 (note of telephone conversation with Walker).

10 Corr Notes, 2/5/86, ALW 0033716. While he could not recall meeting with Corr on this trip, Fiers did recall that Corr wanted to coordinate resupply activities at Ilopango and keep both Steele and CIA officers in the area under his control. (Fiers, FBI 302 morning session, 7/18/91, p. 10.)

11 Corr Notes, 2/8/86, ALV 001398 (notes of telephone conversation with Walker).

12 Corr Notes, 2/8/86, ALV 001397; Corr, FBI 302, 1/10/91, p. 7 (recalling incident).

13 Corr Notes, 2/9/86, ALV 001399; Fiers, FBI 302 morning session, 7/18/91, pp. 12-13 (recalling meeting). For additional background on Fiers' visit to El Salvador, see Fiers chapter.

North and Secord's covert-action business, known as the Enterprise, was having difficulties of its own at Ilopango. Deliveries were behind schedule and over budget. Corr was apprised of some of these problems through Steele. On April 10, 1986, Quintero reported to Secord that "Col. Steele briefed U.S. Ambassador on all ongoing operations. Ambassador is on [sic] total support of our position regarding L-100, 707 and Lopez FDN [contra] attitude." ¹⁴ Nevertheless, by early April 1986, Secord had concluded that a "summit meeting" of the principals at Ilopango -- including the Salvadoran military, the contras, and the Enterprise's operatives -- was needed to speed up deliveries and achieve Enterprise resupply objectives.¹⁵

14 KL-43 Message from Quintero to Secord, 4/10/86; Steele, Grand Jury, 2/6/91, pp. 59-60, 77 (Steele kept Corr informed of important contra details); Ibid., pp. 92-94 (Corr briefed on L-100 flight in April 1986).

15 Secord, Grand Jury, 1/16/91, pp. 90-91, 93-95; KL-43 Message from Secord to North, 4/8/86, AKW 004417.

The April 20, 1986, Meetings

On April 20, 1986, North and Secord flew with Enterprise air operations chief Richard Gadd and others by private jet from Washington, D.C., to Ilopango air base. After important meetings in Salvador -- including one with Corr in his office -- the passengers flew back to Washington, their mission complete.¹⁶

16 On the way back, the Jetstar made an intermediate stop in Miami, where it dropped off some passengers, refueled and cleared United States Customs. (Private Aircraft Inspection Report, 4/23/86, AOT 0000004, Customs form filled out by Jetstar crew, including passenger manifest).

Evidence of these meetings came from a number of sources, many of which were not supplied when the Department of State first directed Corr to provide information to Iran/contra investigators in late 1986. Corr insisted that when he met with Secord in April 1986, North was not present and contra issues were not discussed. Only when key witnesses -- including North, Secord and Steele -- testified did the real story emerge. Backed by circumstantial eyewitness accounts and contemporaneous documents -- some of which were withheld by Corr himself -- these witnesses told a different tale about Corr's April 20, 1986, meeting with the principals of the Enterprise in Central America.

Secord

Secord spoke frankly about his April 1986 trip to El Salvador. He revealed his meeting there with Corr in his earliest testimony.¹⁷ Before Congress in 1987, Secord stated that Corr was one of the U.S. Government officials from whom he had received "moral support, certainly" on the contra-resupply project.¹⁸ When asked to specify this support, Secord testified:

17 See, for example, Secord, OIC Deposition, 4/29/87, p. 65; see also Secord, OIC Deposition, 5/14/87, pp. 371-72 (recounting contra air commander Juan Gomez's criticisms of private benefactor Caribou aircraft at the Ilopango meeting that preceded Secord's meeting with Corr).

18 Secord, Select Committees Testimony, 5/5/87, p. 191.

I can't say that we had anything other than moral support from him. I did speak with him personally during my brief trip to El Salvador in April of '86. I know that he was sympathetic with our operation, and I know that he kept track of it.¹⁹

19 Secord, Select Committees Testimony, 5/6/87, p. 147. The next day's Washington Post, after quoting this testimony, reported that "[a] senior embassy official in El Salvador said yesterday that Corr has previously stated that 'he would not be doing his job if he did not know about' the operation, but the official added that Corr did not play any active role." ("Contra Corruption Said to Worry North," The Washington Post, 5/7/87, p. A30.) Corr told Independent Counsel that he "didn't watch" Secord's testimony about his meeting with Corr. (Corr, FBI 302, 1/9/91, p. 6.)

Secord did not, however, mention North's presence on this trip or in Secord's meeting with Corr. Indeed, at one point Secord gave the impression that no Government officials accompanied him to El Salvador:

Mr. Sarbanes: The help you were getting from the CIA people in Central America or the ambassadors in Central America, do you explain that simply that you came along as a private person doing, wanting to do this project and they were ready to help you, or they perceived that you were carrying out a policy supported by the Administration?

Mr. Secord: The answer is both. We were in touch with them and they perceived that they were carrying out the policy of this Administration.

Mr. Sarbanes: Which is what you perceived?

Mr. Secord: Indeed.²⁰

²⁰ Secord, Select Committees Testimony, 5/8/87, p. 82. Secord gave his brief account of his trip at a time when it was uncertain whether North would receive immunity and testify before Congress.

A more complete account of Secord's trip to El Salvador emerged in his appearance before the Grand Jury in January 1991. According to Secord, after he and North arrived at Ilopango, they met on the base with Salvadoran Air Force General Bustillo; two contra commanders, Enrique Bermudez and Juan Gomez; Steele; Quintero; and Rodriguez.²¹ The topic of this meeting was improving private contra-resupply operations in El Salvador -- or, in Secord's words, a summit meeting, "operationally speaking." ²² After lunch, Secord, North and Steele were flown in a helicopter piloted (poorly) by Rodriguez to a landing zone near the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador.²³ While Rodriguez remained with the helicopter, Secord, North and Steele then had a meeting, which had been scheduled in advance, with Corr in his Embassy office. Secord recalled that Corr had to come in especially for the meeting, which suggested to Secord that the day was a Sunday. Secord testified that Corr "was very interested in how it went with Bustillo because Bustillo was truly vital to our operations as well as the operations in El Salvador." ²⁴ According to Secord, Steele gave a "resume AE1 of the [Bustillo] meeting, and I spoke giving my view of the meeting. North spoke . . . more than any of us." ²⁵ Corr "was very interested, asked detailed questions, was very supportive." ²⁶

²¹ Gadd left the group to meet with Enterprise pilots and was not present in any of the meetings that followed involving North and Secord. (Gadd, FBI 302, 7/6-7/87, pp. 19-21; Rodriguez, Grand Jury, 5/10/91, pp. 14-15; Posada, FBI 302, 2/3/92, p. 10.)

²² Secord, Grand Jury, 1/16/91, pp. 91-95; Secord and Wurts, Honored and Betrayed, p. 273 (John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1992) (hereafter, "Honored"). See also Bustillo, Grand Jury, 5/15/91, pp. 16-18, 34-36, 77-83 (confirming meeting and all attendees except Quintero; topics included problems with maintenance of contra-owned planes and provision of end-user certificates for Chilean Blowpipe missiles; Bustillo authorized Rodriguez to fly the party by a Salvadoran helicopter to downtown San Salvador); Rodriguez, Grand Jury, 5/10/91, pp. 13-15, 20-34 (Rodriguez arranged for Bermudez and Gomez to join Bustillo at the meeting; Rodriguez and Quintero met the Jetstar when it arrived; topics included Blowpipes, unhappiness with contras' airplanes, and training of contra pilots).

²³ Secord, Grand Jury, 1/16/91, pp. 95-98; Secord and Wurts, Honored, p. 273. See also Quintero, FBI 302, 4/9/91, p. 12 (Rodriguez piloted North, Secord, and Steele to San Salvador for a meeting with Corr; Rodriguez reported on meeting in scant detail to Quintero afterwards); Rodriguez, Grand Jury, 5/10/91, pp. 34-38 (same).

²⁴ Secord, Grand Jury, 1/16/91, pp. 102-04; Secord and Wurts, Honored, p. 273. The significance of the Bustillo meeting may have been reinforced further in Corr's mind a few days later, when Rodriguez announced to him that he was leaving El Salvador for good. Rodriguez believed he may have told Corr at that time that the participation in contra-resupply operations of Secord and others whom Rodriguez associated with convicted arms trafficker Edwin Wilson gave Rodriguez "a sixth feeling, . . . a hunch" that he should abandon the operation. (Rodriguez, Grand Jury, 5/10/91, pp. 42-55.)

25 Secord, Grand Jury, 1/16/91, p. 104.

26 Ibid., p. 108. See also Secord, Grand Jury, 1/25/91, p. 81 ("Corr knew who to expect when I met him. He knew who I was.").

After Corr's first compelled Grand Jury appearance, where he adhered to his prior testimony that his meeting with Secord did not involve North or contra-resupply, Independent Counsel reinterviewed Secord. Secord repeated his sworn testimony without equivocation. He also added new detail about the day in El Salvador:

- Bustillo provided the helicopter for the flight from Ilopango into San Salvador, and thus knew they were going to meet with Corr;

- the helicopter had no doors, which made it too noisy to talk during the flight into San Salvador;

- the helicopter was met by an Embassy car, which Steele had arranged, that took North, Secord and Steele to the Embassy;

- the car was driven by an American, and during the ride Steele used a walkie-talkie to tell the Embassy that they were coming;

- during the meeting in Corr's office (which Secord diagrammed), Corr wore slacks and a short-sleeved shirt;

- Corr, North, Secord and Steele were present for the entire meeting;

- Secord spoke less than the others, and Corr did the most talking; "it was his meeting;" 27 and,

27 As mentioned previously, Secord had testified that North was the principal speaker.

- during the meeting, they reviewed the situation in Nicaragua and the importance of the airlift operation; they also talked of the just-concluded Ilopango meeting concerning ways to improve the operation, Secord's plan to put more money into the operation, the need for weather reports and Sandinista order-of-battle information, the military needs of the southern front, the need for the FDN contra faction to share supplies with the southern front, and the Costa Rican airstrip.²⁸

28 Secord, FBI 302, 5/9/91, pp. 3-7.

North

Although North did not testify about any aspect of his April 1986 trip to El Salvador until he was compelled to appear before the Grand Jury in 1990, his notes suggested that he met with Corr on or about April 20, 1986. North's notebook contains no entries for the weekend of April 19-20, 1986, but he wrote this on April 21:

Mtg w/ Ed C

- Debt Relief.²⁹

29 North Notes, 4/21/86, AMX 001074.

North initially called this "a very thrifty note" that "[c]ould well have been" taken the day after a late night trip.³⁰ North stated that the "Ed C" in the note "[c]ould be [Corr], I guess. Debt relief is certainly an issue that the Salvadorans were very concerned about. . . . I just don't remember the conversation." ³¹ Although never confronted with North's note, Corr testified under immunity that debt relief for the Salvadoran government was one of the major issues he dealt with as

ambassador,³² and Corr's notes from this period -- including a list of topics he made for an April 21, 1986, "Core Country Team Meeting" -- refer to debt relief immediately after mentioning his role as "action officer" on contra issues.³³

30 North, Grand Jury, 7/11/90, p. 102.

31 Ibid. North later testified, however, that he "would be inclined to think that's not the same Ed Corr . . . I would be inclined to think that since this [note] is the 21st, that's not it." (Ibid., 1/30/91, p. 20.)

32 Corr, Grand Jury, 5/29/91, p. 125.

33 See Corr Notes, 4/21/86, ALW 0032813, and text below.

North's testimony about the meeting with Corr was evasive and imprecise. Although he remembered traveling on the private jet, North claimed to have great difficulty differentiating that trip from other trips to Central America. Regarding the meeting with Corr, he testified initially as follows:

I think that I may have had a meeting on this trip or it may be another one that I'm confused with with Colonel Steele, and perhaps even the ambassador although I just can't associate which trip was which.

* * *

If I'm remembering the right trip and the right set of meetings associated with the trip, this dealt with aid to the southern front and the military operations along the southern part of Nicaragua, I think.

* * *

Somehow I recall -- whether it was this trip or another one -- General Secord and I going to the embassy itself for a brief meeting with the ambassador, just saying hi. I don't recall whether it was this trip or not.

* * *

I have this recollection of walking through the embassy because it was a very secure compound that had been attacked a number of times by the guerillas and just commenting -- I think it was General Secord -- it might have been Colonel Gadd -- about that kind of thing.³⁴

34 North, Grand Jury, 7/11/90, pp. 88-96, 100-01.

In his next appearance, North testified that he had:

a general recollection of bringing General Secord to the embassy, although not a specific meeting with Ambassador Corr that day other than to introduce General Secord. I remember generally doing that.

I don't recall with anybody saying this is Dick Secord and here's all the things we're doing together . . . other than to say that these are people that have the sanction of what I thought was the President of the United States to do these kinds of activities.

I don't recall a meeting with Ambassador Corr, or even Jim Steele, to say here's the long list of things that General Secord and I are doing together.

* * *

Q: Tell me how it [the President's approval] came up, what context it was that you communicated it to someone like Ambassador Corr.

A: It would come up in the context of, ``This is Dick Secord. He's supporting the Nicaraguan resistance operation. He's not one of these other groups that we're now familiar with that were operating in and out of the Central American region. He has our endorsement," our meaning the U.S. government endorsement, ``for what he's doing. There are going to be airplanes flying in and out of here supporting the resistance." 35

35 Ibid., 7/13/90, pp. 14-15, 17.

North gave this testimony when his criminal case was still pending in the court of appeals. In his Grand Jury appearances after his criminal convictions had been vacated, North testified that he had no specific recollection of meeting with Corr in the Embassy.³⁶

36 Ibid., 1/30/91, p. 21; Ibid., 2/15/91, pp. 85-86.

Steele

In Steele's earliest testimony, which contained numerous false and misleading statements concerning his own activities,³⁷ he revealed the Corr-Secord meeting:

37 See History of the Investigation section.

I met Secord one time in Salvador. . . . It was early '86 is the best I can say. I am not sure what month it was.

* * *

He didn't discuss the purpose of his trip with me. I know that he came in and he was on -- he was there, it appeared, just for a very short period of time. I know he made a courtesy call on the ambassador and he left.

* * *

I am not aware of anybody [else with whom Secord met]. But again, I wasn't with him the whole time he was there. . . .

The only thing that I can remember saying to Secord when he was there was it was a pretty snazzy airplane that he landed in, an executive aircraft.

* * *

But I know he went into the city and then he had a meeting -- I am told he had a meeting there with the ambassador.³⁸

38 Steele, SSCI Testimony, 12/18/86, pp. 26-27.

Steele did not mention, however: North's presence; the meeting with Bustillo, Bermudez and others at Ilopango immediately preceding the Corr meeting; the helicopter ride into San Salvador; or his own involvement in setting up and attending Corr's meeting with Secord.

In his April 1987 Select Committees deposition, Steele suggested the possibility of North's presence during Corr's meeting with Secord, but he disclosed nothing about the substance of the meeting:

[Secord] came through there on a quick trip. He was only on the ground, I would guess, for a very short time. And he met with the Ambassador, kind of a courtesy call thing. I can't remember if North was with him or not. I think he was though. That's my recollection that North was with him and that he met with the Ambassador very short and he was gone.

* * *

No [I never learned that Secord was involved with the private resupply organization]. I had the sense that he was, but I never -- I never pinned -- he certainly didn't say he was, as I recall. And, you know, that was the only time that he came to El Salvador.³⁹

39 Steele, Select Committees Deposition, 4/21/87, pp. 109-10. See also Ibid., pp. 120-21 (misdirecting a question about a North-Secord-Corr meeting at Ilopango to a December 30, 1985, meeting at Ilopango that Secord did not attend).

The next day, in his first interview with Independent Counsel, Steele was more definite, at least about the meeting with Corr. Steele said that Secord came to El Salvador once in early 1986 with North, that the party flew in on a private jet, and that they met with Corr for about one hour before departing.⁴⁰

40 Steele, FBI 302, 4/22/87, p. 2.

Over time, and after many interviews with Independent Counsel, Steele's testimony coalesced on these points:

-- North and Secord came into Ilopango on a private jet;

-- Rodriguez told Steele that one of the things that Secord wanted to do in El Salvador was meet with Corr;

-- contra leaders did come to Ilopango for a meeting, but Steele is not sure whether it was at the same time that North and Secord came there together, and Steele does not recall whether they were in the meeting with the contras;

-- Rodriguez flew North, Secord and Steele by helicopter into San Salvador, and Secord criticized Rodriguez's flying abilities;

-- Steele, Secord and North met with Corr in his Embassy office; and

-- Steele could not recall anything about the substance of that meeting.⁴¹

41 Steele, Grand Jury, 2/6/91, pp. 94-103.

Corr

Apart from a few admissions made in the years following his initial false statements about his meeting with Secord, Corr made two relevant statements after the Iran/contra revelations of late 1986. The first showed Corr's early effort to deny; the second reflected Corr's concern. First, in December 1986, Sen. Christopher Dodd traveled to El Salvador and privately met with Corr at his residence. Dodd told Independent Counsel that in response to questions about contra-resupply activity at Ilopango, Corr basically denied knowing about it and answered "no" to all of Dodd's questions. Corr said he had met with North in El Salvador but said nothing about them working together. Dodd also did not recall Corr saying that he had met in the Embassy with Secord.⁴²

42 Dodd, FBI 302, 2/19/91, p. 2. See also Memorandum from FitzGerald to Abrams, undated, ALW 030446 (reporting Dodd's visit); San Salvador 15919, 12/20/86, ALW 030459-68 (same); Dlouhy,

FBI 302, 5/23/91, p. 7 (recalling that Corr had a "heated meeting" with Dodd, after which Corr was very upset and said that Dodd had asked a lot of questions about contra resupply). Dodd believed, however, that he did not ask Corr directly about his meetings with persons involved in private resupply efforts. (Dodd, FBI 302, 2/19/91, p. 2.)

In January 1987, Jon Wiant, then director of coordination in the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence & Research, traveled to El Salvador as part of a "flying RIG." In two interviews, Wiant described to Independent Counsel a conversation with Corr in the Ambassador's residence. According to Wiant, Corr was "shaky, scared" and asked to speak privately to Wiant as a larger meeting was breaking up and the visitors were about to go to the airport. Wiant recalled the conversation specifically. He reported that Corr said:

Am I in trouble? This stuff has ended up on my door step, they . . . Oliver North and someone else -- have been down here to the Embassy and have done things at Ilopango, I've called and they said its okay -- they meaning either Elliott Abrams or Bill Walker . . .43

43 Wiant, FBI 302, 12/9/91, pp. 6-7. See also Wiant, FBI 302, 9/19/91, pp. 6-7. In the September 1991 interview, the FBI agent's report states that Wiant "remembered being called aside by Corr and discussing a meeting that Corr had had with Richard Secord and Oliver North in April of 1986. Wiant said that Corr was upset because he didn't like the fact that North and Secord as private benefactors, were coming into the Embassy." (Ibid., pp. 6-7.) After reading this report in December 1991, Wiant stated that the only thing he was not "positively sure about" was his statement regarding Secord being at the Embassy with North. (Wiant, FBI 302, 12/9/91, p. 7.)

In response to the Grand Jury's subpoena, Corr produced one contemporaneous document that related to the April 20, 1986, meeting. Corr's handwritten list of items to discuss at a meeting of top Embassy officials on Monday, April 21, 1986, included this item, which Corr had checked off:

[ck] (2) FDR -- help w/in guidelines; monitor -- Repeat my enjoinder that I am g008 "action officer" on this! 44

44 Corr Notes, 4/21/86, ALW 032813 (emphasis in original). Despite Corr's checking off this item, no witness recalled Corr discussing the issue in the April 21, 1986, team meeting.

Corr's former deputy, David B. Dlouhy, identified the acronym "FDR" as referring to the Salvadoran Democratic Revolutionary Front, the civilian wing of the Salvadoran guerrillas,45 "FDR" also was an acronym for the contras -- one that Corr used often.46

45 See, for example, Dlouhy, Grand Jury, 11/1/91, pp. 98, 102.

46 Ibid., p. 99. See, for example, Corr Notes, 2/9/86, ALV 001399 ("3. We also discussed coordination among Front Office, . . . Steele, Felix & UNO/g008FDR"). Corr confirmed this under immunity. (Corr, Grand Jury, 5/29/91, p. 124.)

The Dlouhy Allegations

Independent Counsel obtained what appeared at first to be extremely damaging evidence against Corr in late 1991 from Corr's former deputy chief of mission (DCM) in El Salvador, Dlouhy. From 1985 to mid-1986, Dlouhy was deputy director of the Office of Central American Affairs within the State Department's Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. Dlouhy departed for El Salvador to become DCM in July 1986. During the course of his tour there, Dlouhy developed a close relationship with Corr, one that continued long after Dlouhy's assignment ended.47

47 Dlouhy, FBI 302, 5/23/91, p. 9. Dlouhy called Corr after his first telephone interview with the Independent Counsel. Dlouhy was posted to Luxembourg at the time.

Dlouhy's first interviews with Independent Counsel occurred in May 1991. In the first interview, which was conducted by phone because Dlouhy was overseas, Dlouhy said that he had taken a trip to El Salvador in March or April 1986 and had met with Corr and another Embassy officer. Dlouhy said that no one discussed the contras with him on this trip, which concerned American-Salvadoran cooperation on police matters, but that at some point later he heard that Corr had met with North out at Ilopango when North had stopped briefly there. Dlouhy stated that Corr never told him that Corr had met Secord.⁴⁸ During a second telephone interview with OIC, Dlouhy reported that it became clear to him after early October 1986, from conversations with Corr or Steele, that North had come to Ilopango -- but not San Salvador -- and had visited Bustillo and Rodriguez but not Corr.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Dlouhy, FBI 302, 5/22/91, p. 6. See also Transcript of 5/22/91 Interview, pp. 8-9, 19-20.

⁴⁹ Dlouhy, FBI 302, 5/23/91, pp. 3-4; Transcript of 5/23/91 Interview, pp. 37-38.

During a second round of questioning of Dlouhy in the fall of 1991, subsequent to receiving Corr's notes, Dlouhy recalled a second trip he had made to El Salvador in April 1986. Dlouhy believed that he arrived in El Salvador some time during the week of April 14, 1986, and stayed through Sunday, April 20, 1986 -- the date of the Corr-Secord-North meeting. Dlouhy told Independent Counsel he recalled that:

-- Steele had said that Rodriguez had flown North and Secord to downtown San Salvador, almost hitting a flagpole with his helicopter and killing everyone aboard the aircraft. Dlouhy said that he thought Steele had told him this story shortly after the incident occurred, when Dlouhy was not yet deputy chief of the mission. Dlouhy may have learned of it while talking with Steele and Corr on the terrace of Corr's residence in San Salvador.

-- Dlouhy believed that the purpose of the trip was for the people in the helicopter to go to the Embassy and visit Corr, and that before the flagpole incident, the visitors had met at Ilopango with Bustillo and the contras.

-- Steele told Dlouhy that he, North, and Secord had met in Corr's office, but did not say what was discussed. Dlouhy assumed that the purpose of the meeting was a briefing on what had transpired at Ilopango that day.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Dlouhy, FBI 302, 10/31/91, pp. 14-20.

Dlouhy repeated this story before the Grand Jury on November 1, 1991.⁵¹

⁵¹ Dlouhy, Grand Jury, 11/1/91, pp. 43-96, 100. Dlouhy added a few details during this appearance. He testified that he arrived in El Salvador on April 16, 1986, (Ibid., pp. 43-44); he placed the terrace conversation after Corr had gone to church and had worked, (Ibid., p. 84); while certain that North met with Corr, he was less certain that Steele and Secord were present, (Ibid., p. 93-94); the party discussed with Corr a recent drop of lethal supplies by an Enterprise-leased L-100 aircraft, (Ibid., p. 94); and that the last incident he recalled from the trip was the terrace conversation, (Ibid., p. 100).

Independent Counsel re-interviewed Steele on November 12, 1991, in an attempt to corroborate Dlouhy's story. Steele did not recall Dlouhy being present the weekend of April 19-20, 1986, or discussing any subject with Dlouhy at that time.⁵² Almost two months later, Dlouhy provided Independent Counsel with a photocopy of his expired passport for the 1982-87 period. The passport indicated that Dlouhy arrived in San Salvador on April 16, 1986, and departed on April 20, 1986.⁵³ Independent Counsel also obtained Dlouhy's travel vouchers for the trip, which were ambiguous.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Dlouhy declared in a letter to the Independent Counsel that he wished to "restrict[]" the record of his direct knowledge of events in San Salvador to the period April 16-19, 1986, stating that he may have learned about the events on April 20, 1986, from other sources, or may have confused the event with later ones.⁵⁵

52 Steele, FBI 302, 11/12/91, pp. 9-10.

53 Dlouhy Passport, 3/15/82, ALW 048735.

54 Dlouhy's description of his itinerary stated that he left San Salvador at 9:00 am on April 20, 1986. His travel authorization indicated, however, that Dlouhy planned to return on or about April 21, 1986, and Dlouhy attached an airline receipt indicating that Dlouhy was ticketed on a TACA Airlines flight that left at 9:00 am on April 21, 1986. (Travel Reimbursement Voucher, 4/11/86, ALW 47505-10.) Independent Counsel attempted to confirm Dlouhy's re-entry into the United States through the U.S. Customs Service, but was informed that customs declarations forms filed in the Miami District -- Dlouhy's stated point of re-entry -- had been destroyed. (Letter from Schmitz to SA Buckley, 1/15/92, 018022.)

55 Letter from Dlouhy to Barrett, 1/6/92, 017949.

Corr's False Testimony

Corr consistently took the position, first in response to inquiries from the Department of State and subsequently in sworn testimony, that his only contact with the party that traveled to El Salvador was a brief meeting of no substance with Secord, at which North was not present. On December 3, 1986, in conjunction with an official request from Attorney General Edwin Meese III, the Department of State directed various diplomatic posts, including San Salvador, to search for relevant "materials." 56 On December 13, 1986, San Salvador responded with an artfully worded cable.⁵⁷ In it Corr reported to the Department, and through it to the FBI, that

56 State 374730, 12/12/86, ALV 004986-87.

57 Corr would later testify that, while "every cable that leaves the embassy has the ambassador's name on it," he "probably wrote [this cable]" himself. (Corr, Grand Jury, 5/29/91, pp. 144-45.)

LtCol. Oliver North . . . transited briefly San Salvador enroute to Honduras on December 30, 1985 with an [sic] NHAO official 58 in connection with humanitarian assistance to the Nicaraguan resistance, as well as brief stopovers on one or two other occasions. There was no activity by LtCol. North of which I or anyone else at this Post are aware of in connection with financial aid activities related to Iran or Israel or the Nicaraguan resistance movement. Retired General Richard V. Secord was in San Salvador at least once and made a very brief courtesy call on me on a Saturday [sic] morning at which nothing of substance was discussed. I do not have the dates of LtCol. North's other brief stopovers nor of Secord's courtesy call because my calendars were lost in the October 10, 1986 San Salvador earthquake.⁵⁹

58 This official was Cresencio Arcos, the deputy director of the State Department's Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office, NHAO.

59 San Salvador 15584, 12/13/86, ALV 004119-20 (emphasis added). Corr's reference to the loss of his calendars was inexact. Corr himself produced appointment calendars kept by his secretary for him to the State Department in 1987.

Corr's cabled response revealed that he had met Secord but explicitly denied that the meeting concerned anything of substance. Corr also suggested implicitly, by separating his mentions of Secord and North, that North was not present when Corr met with Secord. Finally, by limiting his statement on lack of awareness of North's contra activity to "financial aid activities," Corr's cable avoided revealing what he knew of North's involvement in the contra-resupply operation based in El Salvador.⁶⁰ At the time Corr wrote his cable, North and Secord had invoked the Fifth Amendment before congressional committees, and their refusals to testify had been widely reported by the media.

60 Almost five months after the December 1986 cable, when explaining his ignorance of the financial arrangements underlying contra-support activities in El Salvador, Corr volunteered that the questions in the ``initial" exchange of cables had focused upon financing:

[At] least from where I sat, things that came, or may have gone through Ilopango, it was something that had been consummated and transacted elsewhere. And at the Ilopango or at the Salvador end, you are really down to materiel . . . In Salvador it was materiel.

I remember concentrating on that very much in the initial questions that came down for us to answer in writing, the stress in the language and the cables was on funding, on funding. For El Salvador, it was boots.

(Corr, Select Committees Deposition, 4/30/87, pp. 83-84.) Indeed, Meese's original request for materials focused on the activities of North and Secord only to the extent that they related to, among other things, ``all financial aid activities involving the Nicaraguan resistance movement which are related to Iran or Israel." (State 374730, 12/12/86, ALV 004987 (emphasis added).) On the other hand, Corr was not disposed in late 1986 to be too helpful to Iran/contra investigators. (See Corr Notes, 11/28/86, ALW 0033747, telling Steele prior to his appearing before a congressional committee in December 1986 ``we have nothing to hide, but we are not anxious to speak. If insists we should do.").

Corr's first recorded contact with Iran/contra investigators occurred on April 1, 1987, when he was interviewed by the FBI at Homestead Air Force Base in Florida.⁶¹ The agents' report of this interview states that Corr said that North came to El Salvador two to four times, twice after Congress approved humanitarian aid to the contras in 1985, each time for a stop of one to four hours.⁶² Corr did not mention Secord or any visit by him to El Salvador. Corr was not asked about documents.⁶³

61 At some point prior to April 30, 1987, Corr was interviewed in San Salvador by Senate Select Committee staff, (See Corr, Select Committees Deposition, 4/30/87, p. 44.) He may have had a second meeting with one staffer prior to his April 30 deposition. (Ibid., pp. 91, 93, 94, 109.) During the deposition, a questioner said that an earlier meeting between them included discussion of Secord's visit to the Embassy. (Ibid., p. 96.) Independent Counsel did not obtain records of these interviews.

Corr also referred occasionally to his responses to Tower Commission inquiries. (See, for example, Corr, FBI 302, 4/1/87, p. 1; Corr, Grand Jury, 5/29/91, p. 151.) Independent Counsel's search of the Commission's records uncovered no trace of these responses.

62 Corr, FBI 302, 4/1/87, p. 3.

63 The FBI Form 302 of the interview suggests that the agents were unaware of Corr's cables regarding Iran/contra, including the December 13, 1986, cable quoted above.

On April 30, 1987, Corr gave a sworn deposition to staff members of the Select Committees. In response to a series of questions about trips to El Salvador by North, by Secord, and by them together, Corr made a number of false statements:

Q: First of all, tell me if you can how many times to your recollection Oliver North actually travelled to El Salvador during the time you have been Ambassador to El Salvador, that you know of.

A: I told you last time, I don't know whether it was three or four. I know it was two. Every time he came, it was with a group of people. . . . I just can't tell you exactly.

Q: What about any times that Oliver North came down where he wasn't a part of a contingent, an official contingency, but was either by himself or with a group of private individuals? Do you know anything about that?

A: No, I don't think so.

* * *

Q: I'm asking for your best recollection. That's all I can get from you.

A: Well, that's the best I can give you. I don't recall it. I certainly don't remember him travelling with private people.

* * *

Q: I asked you last time about General Richard Secord, and you described one time in which General Secord came by I believe your residence.

A: No.

Q: The Embassy? The Embassy. And I believe you described about a half-hour meeting, and you could not recall it.

A: It was a very innocuous meeting. He had either gotten in touch with Jim Steele, but anyway Jim Steele called and said that this guy was in town, did I want to meet with him. If they've got two heads, I meet with them. I said sure, you know, come on in.

And I remember him coming into the office. I remember it being very much a non-meeting, what I call a ``non-meeting." We chatted a little bit about his having been the Deputy Assistant Secretary in ISA, and how are you, and how are you, and that was kind of as I recall the meeting.

Q: Do you know what he was doing in El Salvador?

A: No.

Q: Did he ask you to do anything for him?

A: He did not.

Q: Did he describe in any way his involvement in assisting the contras?

A: No. I think there was -- [Corr interrupted by counsel, who then confers with Corr] -- [o]ne thing that I think that it's important to note is that he was there as a retired military officer, as far as I was concerned, on private business. I don't think I'm capable of saying that I did not think that it might have something to do with contras, but we certainly didn't discuss it.

* * *

Q: Were you aware when you met with General Secord that he had any type of relationship with Oliver North?

A: I don't think so. . . .

* * *

Q: Were you ever aware of a trip to El Salvador by Colonel North in which General Secord accompanied him?

A: I don't think so, no.

* * *

Q: Did any of your meetings. . .with North, or at any time you came in touch with North in Washington, ever deal with private resupply to the contras?

A: I'm sure we talked about private resupply to the contras. I mean, there was private resupply going through Ilopango. There was this general kind of thing that Ollie repeated a lot, you know, that we're going to get through this period; there are very admira[b]l[e] Americans and foreigners who are providing funds, you know, the world will long note what these people have done. But in terms of any details, no.⁶⁴

64 Corr, Select Committees Deposition, 4/30/87, pp. 94, 95, 96-97, 100, 101, 109-10 (emphasis added).

In subsequent interviews, Corr amplified slightly his description of his meeting with Secord in El Salvador. On June 18, 1987, Corr told Independent Counsel "they may have had some general discussions about maintaining pressure on the Sandinistas. The discussion did not last long and Corr could not really remember their conversation." ⁶⁵ On February 15, 1988, Corr stated that Col. Steele also was present for the meeting with Secord; that "they just talked about how bad communists were;" that Corr was "anxious to get Secord in and out because he had things to do;" and that Corr was "pretty certain he knew Secord met Bustillo." ⁶⁶ On January 9, 1991, Corr said that he and Secord "talked about how there was no support for the Contras in the U.S. Congress." ⁶⁷ In these interviews, however, Corr never modified or wavered from his original deposition testimony that North did not accompany Secord to El Salvador.

⁶⁵ Corr, FBI 302, 6/18/87, p. 2. See also Tylicki, Grand Jury, 12/7/87, p. 12 (interviewing agent, reiterating Corr's remarks).

⁶⁶ Corr, FBI 302, 2/15/88, p. 5.

⁶⁷ Corr, FBI 302, 1/9/91, p. 6.

On April 26, 1991 -- after he had claimed the privilege under the Fifth Amendment -- Corr was compelled to give immunized testimony before the Grand Jury. On this occasion, and again during a second Grand Jury appearance on May 29, 1991, Corr repeated his earlier false statements, insisting that only he and Secord (and, briefly, Steele) met in April 1986.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Corr, Grand Jury, 4/26/91, pp. 201-05, 209-11, 213; Ibid., 5/29/91, pp. 6-7, 129, 142-43, 145-46, 153-54.

The Decision Not to Prosecute

By the fall of 1991, Independent Counsel had determined that he could prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Corr's testimony about the April 20, 1986, meeting was false. Although each of the central witnesses (North, Secord and Steele) had an imperfect recollection of the meeting and was subject to impeachment on the basis of his own false statements in prior Iran/contra proceedings, the weight of the evidence compensated for these deficiencies. Independent Counsel also determined that the evidence showed beyond a reasonable doubt that Corr recalled meeting with North and discussing contra-resupply issues on April 20, 1986. Corr's motive for not admitting the meeting with North and Secord was, as he indicated to Wiant, his obvious concern that it showed knowledge of a clear violation of the Boland Amendment, with North on the NSC staff and Secord -- the operating head

of contra resupply -- discussing their activities with a State Department officer. Having lied in 1987, he was constrained not to change his testimony.

In November 1991, Dlouhy's Grand Jury testimony provided additional evidence that Corr's testimony about the April 20 meeting was false. Accordingly, after analyzing the proposed evidence, Independent Counsel decided to propose an indictment of Corr to the Grand Jury.

Shortly thereafter, events caused reconsideration of that decision. First, Independent Counsel located Dlouhy's passport and travel vouchers for his April 1986 trip to El Salvador, which raised doubts that he could have been in San Salvador for the April 20, 1986, conversation with Corr and Steele, to which Dlouhy had testified about in the Grand Jury. With this problematic evidence, Dlouhy recanted his Grand Jury testimony.

In light of these developments, Independent Counsel re-evaluated the other evidence against Corr. North's equivocation and a recent interview with Steele, who did not remember Dlouhy's presence, posed additional uncertainty.

At that time, both Clair George and Duane Clarridge had been indicted and were proceeding toward trial. There was no prospect that Corr would provide evidence that would assist Independent Counsel's investigation significantly. Elliott Abrams, against whom Corr would have been a witness for the Government, had resolved his situation by pleading guilty.

Finally, at this time, Independent Counsel recently had acquired former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's voluminous handwritten notes and highly relevant Department of State notes. Independent Counsel believed that both the Weinberger and State Department investigations presented a more worthwhile use of his resources than a prosecution of Corr.