Iran-Contra Essay, Research Paper

THE IRAN CONTRA AFFAIR The Iran-Contra Affair concerns a secret arrangement to provide $30 million to the Nicaraguan right-wing contra guerrillas from profits gained by selling arms to Iran. Aid to the contras had been strictly prohibited by Congress, as had the sale of arms to a government deemed hostile to the US. Discovery of the arrangement in 1985-1986 shook President Ronald Reagan’s administration. Most directly involved were Adm. John M. Poindexter and Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North, both of the National Security Council. It was deemed “unclear” whether Reagan and then-Vice President George Bush were also involved; though North later claimed Reagan knew of the secret arrangement. The sale of arms to Iran was initiated at the suggestion of the Israeli government with the dual goal of bettering their relations with Iran and of obtaining the release of American hostages held in Lebanon by pro-Iranian terrorists. Reagan told the American people, “We will not negotiate with terrorists,” and the American people believed him. North was instrumental in setting up a covert network for providing support to the guerrillas with a ship, airplanes, an airfield, and secret bank accounts. In November 1986 a Lebanese magazine disclosed that the US government had negotiated an arms deal with Iran. Later that month Atty. General Ed Meese verified the breaking of the Boland Amendment. In February of 1987 a special panel – headed by Senator John Tower of Texas – issued a report castigating President Reagan and his advisors for failing to control their own NSC, uncovered a web of official deception, mismanagement, and illegality. A number of criminal convictions resulted – including those of North and Poindexter in May of 1989 – but they were vacated on appeal for “technical” reasons, despite North’s admission of obstructing Congress and destroying all copies of incriminating government documents.

Former State Department and CIA officials pleaded guilty in 1991 to withholding information from Congress about the aid, and former Secy. of Defense Caspar Weinberger was also charged in 1992 with withholding information. In 1992 now-President Bush pardoned Weinberger and all other government officials who had been indicted or convicted for withholding information on or obstructing the investigation of the “affair.” MY OPINION: I believe that the Iran Contra “affair” was completely blown out of proportion by the liberal media in the United States. Undoubtedly, something covert and perhaps according to the letter of the law, “illegal” occurred, but was it truly wrong? In my opinion no, but I’m sure not many will agree with me. I am a firm believer in the Reagan administration and Reagan’s policies, whether on foreign or domestic affairs. Reagan bashing is really old.