

Israeli report puts Bush in loop



WASHINGTON (AP) — A secret Israeli government report says then-Vice President Bush was clearly told in July 1986 that arms-for-hostages deals with Iran were a joint U.S.-Israeli operation, according to an author writing a book on the Iran-Contra scandal.

Bush has always maintained that the July 29, 1986, briefing only described an Israeli operation.

The March 11, 1987 report — first disclosed on ABC's *Nightline* program Friday night — details Israel's delivery of U.S. weapons to Iran in return for American hostages and includes an account of a July 29, 1986, briefing given to Bush when he visited Israel as vice president.

Bush later used an account of the meeting by his chief of staff, Craig Fuller, to assert that the vice president understood the man who briefed him, Israeli counter-terrorism expert Amiram Nir, to be describing an Israeli operation.

Fuller's written report of the meeting refers repeatedly to Nir discussing the steps "we" took in delivering weapons to Iran.

"The word 'we' that appears in Craig's report throughout refers to the joint Israeli-American team," says the Israeli report, quoting Nir. Nir also "made clear at the outset that he was briefing Bush in the name of the joint team and at the request of (White House aide) Oliver North," the report added. Israeli journalist Ran Edelist — the author of a forthcoming book on the affair — read excerpts of the report to The

Associated Press.

Nir said in his account in the Israeli government report that "it is clear to anyone reading" Fuller's memo that the briefing concerned both countries' roles.

In a 1988 shouting match on national television with CBS anchorman Dan Rather, Bush said he hadn't known the details of the Reagan White House's Iran initiative, even after Nir had described the operation. Bush's stated reason:

"I was told what they (the Israelis) were doing and not what we were doing, and that's the big difference." Bush added that "control" of the operation was "in the hands of a foreign power."

Nir, an aide to Israel's prime minister, was killed in November 1988 in a plane crash in Mexico.

The difference between Nir's recollection of the U.S. role and Bush's is the latest piece of information suggesting Bush may have known more about Iran-Contra than he has acknowledged.

In an article Sunday in *The Washington Post*, White House counsel C. Boyden Gray labeled as "stale hokum" the suggestions by Richard Secord and Howard Teicher that Bush played an active role in the arms-for-hostages deals with Iran.

And Gray said that Bush "does not recall" the strong objections to the Iran arms deals by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Secretary of State George Shultz. In the past, Bush has flatly denied being told of the protests by the two Cabinet secretaries.

Missile restrictions set after accident

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Navy said Saturday night it is placing severe restrictions on the NATO Sea Sparrow missile system while investigators search for the cause of a firing accident that killed five Turkish sailors.

"Until further notice, commanders have been told to place their Sea Sparrow weapon systems in a restricted level of readiness," a Navy statement said. "This action will include removal from the system of certain components needed for missile firing. Operational commanders may elect to keep systems operational on selected units if it is deemed necessary for adequate self defense of the ship."

The statement said Admiral Frank B. Kelso II, chief of naval operations, has ordered a "top-to-bottom review of the entire Sea Sparrow system, to include all hardware components, maintenance and operational procedures, and operator training."

The Navy said the Sea Sparrow has been in operation for 17 years without any incidents similar to the one Thursday in which two missiles were launched accidentally from the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga in the Aegean Sea about 80 miles off Turkey's western coast.

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