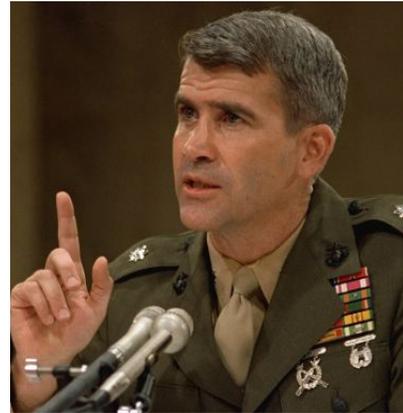




The Iran-Contra Affair



The Tower Commission was named after its chair, former Senator John Tower, and was established by Reagan to investigate the Iran-Contra Affair. Congress established another investigation, which issued its Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran-Contra Affair. Below are summaries of the two reports. The picture on the right is of Oliver North, the director of the operation.

Basic Facts: TOW antitank missiles and HAWK anti-aircraft missiles were sold to Iran. The difference between what the US Government paid for the missiles, and what the Iranians paid for them, was diverted to the Contras. "Contributions appear to have been channeled through a series of nonprofit organizations that LtCol North apparently had a hand in organizing. A diagram found in LtCol North's safe links some of these organizations to bank accounts controlled by Richard Secord and others known to be involved in purchasing and shipping arms to the Contras." *Tower* Ostensibly, this was an arms for hostages deal, although few hostages were released, and the US parties continued to sell arms to Iran even when American hostages were no longer being released.

Illegality: "Congress prohibited Contra aid for the purpose of overthrowing the Sandinista Government in fiscal year 1983, and limited all aid to the Contras in fiscal year 1984 to \$24 million." After the mining of the harbor in Managua in early 1984, Congress "cut off all funds for the Contras' military and paramilitary operations." This was known as the Boland Amendment, and signed by Reagan into law on 12 Oct 1984. "Under the Constitution only Congress can provide funds for the Executive branch. The Framers intended Congress' "power of the purse" to be one of the principal checks on Executive action." *Congressional*

Cover up: North assured Admiral Poindexter that all documents related to the affair were shredded, but a "diversion memorandum" was not shredded, and that was found on 22 November 1986, which tipped off investigators that there was in fact a diversion (of funds from Iran to the Contras). On 25 November 1986, "North's secretary concealed classified documents in her clothing and, with North's knowledge, removed them from the White House." *Congressional*

Did Reagan know? "The central remaining question is the role of the President in the Iran-Contra Affair. On this critical point, the shredding of documents by Poindexter, North, and others, and the death of Casey, leave the record incomplete." *Congressional* "The Board was unable to reach a conclusive judgment about whether the 1985 shipments of arms to Iran were approved in advance by the President. On balance the Board believes that it is plausible to conclude that he did approve them in advance." *Tower*