

RS#13: Iran-Contra Affair Timeline

For reference and background information. Also see

http://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/timelines.php

January 1981	President Ronald Reagan takes office. Iran releases 52 American hostages after 444 days in captivity.
December 1, 1981	President Reagan authorizes the CIA to undertake covert against the Marxist Sandinistas in Nicaragua.
December 21, 1982	The First Boland Amendment, restricting government support of the Contras in Nicaragua, is signed into law.
May 1983	The CIA agrees to take PLO weapons from the Israeli government and supply them to the Contras.
September 19, 1983	President Reagan secretly continues to support the Contras indirectly through Honduras.
March 1984	William F. Buckley, the CIA chief in Beirut, Lebanon, is kidnapped by Muslim extremists. Six more American hostages are taken over the next year.
June 25, 1984	President Reagan, Vice President George H.W. Bush, and top aides discuss how to increase support to the Contras using a third party.
July 1984	The CIA again uses PLO weapons from the Israeli government and supplies them to the Contras.
July 25, 1984	CIA secures Manucher Ghorbanifaras, an Iranian businessman, as a broker between Israel and Iran in the arms-for-hostage deal.
October 10, 1984	The Second Boland Amendment outlaws the use of the CIA or third parties in aiding the Contras in Nicaragua.
February 1985	Fresh from his landslide re-election to a second term, President Reagan articulates what became known as the "Reagan Doctrine" in his State of the Union speech. The doctrine strongly condemned Soviet aggression anywhere in the world and advocated support for "freedom fighters."
March 16, 1985	Lt. Colonel Oliver North, a member of Reagan's National Security Council, proposes using third-party donors like Saudi Arabia to support the Contras, since Congress will not permit direct support.
April 25, 1985	President Reagan calls President Roberto Suazo Córdova of Honduras and pledges U.S. commitment to the Contras, even though Congress will no longer supply financial aid.
September 14, 1985	Israelis send 408 TOW missiles to Iran.
September 15, 1985	Reverend Benjamin Weir, a hostage, is released in Beirut.
November 1985	Israeli-Iranian exchange of HAWK weapons runs afoul.
November 25, 1985	CIA Deputy Director, John N. McMahon, says the agency will not undertake further covert actions without direct authorization from the President.

December 5, 1985	President Reagan signs an order retroactively authorizing the operation.
February 20, 1986	Direct U.S.-Iranian contact to discuss the release of the hostages in return for 3,000 TOW missiles.
March, 1986	Iran demands more weapons the U.S. finds the demands unacceptable.
August 2, 1986	A secret meeting with the Sultan of Brunei takes place to acquire funds for the Contras. The funds are not transferred because an incorrect account number was provided.
September 22, 1986	Oliver North meets with Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega to negotiate assistance to Nicaragua. In exchange, the U.S. will apply less pressure on Noriega's illegal drug operations.
November 5, 1986	Vice President Bush writes he is one of the few people with knowledge of all the details of the arms-for-hostages deal.
November 10, 1986	Oval Office meeting to discuss the covert arms-for-hostages program led by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger.
November 25, 1986	United States Attorney General Edwin Meese discloses to the public that government money had been sent to the Contras. President Reagan fires Oliver North. Fawn Hall, North's secretary, removes documents from his office.
November 26, 1986	Tower Commission, led by former Senator John Tower (Texas), is created by President Reagan to investigate the Iran-Contra affair.
December 19, 1986	At the request of Attorney General Meese, a three-judge panel appoints Lawrence Walsh, a former judge and deputy attorney general in the Eisenhower Administration, to be the independent counsel. Walsh brought criminal charges against 14 Reagan administration officials and staff, including Oliver North, and private individuals.
March 4, 1987	President Reagan addresses the country admitting that his administration took part in the arms-for-hostages program without his knowledge.
August 12, 1987	President Reagan address the nation again, stating that he deserves the blame for the events in Iran and Nicaragua but stresses he was unaware of the events.
November 16, 1987	Iran-Contra Congressional Report is released. The Majority Report did not charge Reagan, but the called the administration's actions unethical. The Minority Report claimed that the actions taken by the President and his administration were within the powers of the executive branch.
February 21, 1989	Trial of Oliver North begins.
May 4, 1989	Oliver North found guilty on three counts. He is sentenced to two years probation, fined \$150,000, and required to perform 1,200 hours of community service.