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# North Trial Bush denies dealing aid for Honduran assistance

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush denied emphatically Thursday that he took part in any scheme to swap U.S. aid for Honduran assistance to the Nicaraguan rebels, saying he wanted an end to "needless, mindless speculation" about his role.

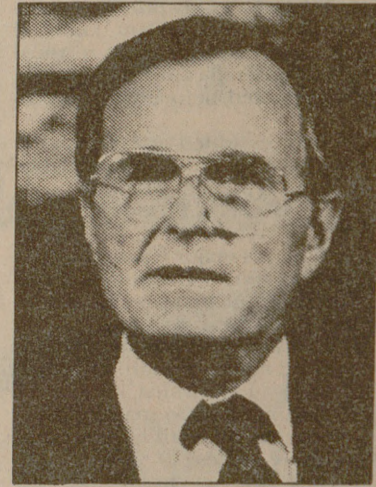
"The word of the president of the United States — George Bush — is, there was no quid pro quo," he declared moments before a federal jury convicted fired White House aide Oliver North on three criminal charges in connection with the Iran-Contra affair.

Speaking of a meeting he had as vice president in the spring of 1985 with then-Honduran President Roberto Suazo, Bush said, "The records of the meeting demonstrate there was no quid pro quo."

Bush had said several times in recent weeks that he would await the conclusion of North's trial before considering a definitive comment on questions that have arisen in connection with that meeting.

But Thursday Bush seemed eager to talk about recently disclosed documents that placed him at a meeting with Suazo, in Honduras, at a time when internal Reagan administration memos suggested a plan to link continuing U.S. aid to Latin American countries to their willingness to help the Contra rebels.

The so-called "findings of fact," a 42-page document presented in the North trial in early April, suggested that Bush as vice president had played a role as an intermediary in assuring Suazo that his country's assistance to the Contras would be rewarded with expedited U.S. finan-



George Bush

cial aid. However, the document did not say directly that Bush discussed the deal with Suazo.

It did say that Bush explained to the Hondurans that they were to receive a great deal more U.S. aid and that that statement was a part of the purported quid pro quo policy of the administration at that time.

The government did not dispute the facts as presented, although State Department officials subsequently said that the document presented a distorted picture of U.S. policy and actions in the region during a period in 1985 and 1986 when the U.S. government was barred from directly or indirectly aiding the rebels.

"Everybody that attended the

meeting says that there was no quid pro quo," Bush said Thursday. "And for those who suggest there was, the onus is on them," he said.

"Thank you for asking that question."

The president declined to answer specifically when asked whether he had discussed Contra aid with Suazo. Asked whether he had known of any quid pro quo arrangements between the U.S. government and Honduras, he replied, "not to my knowledge."

The president complained that "there has been much, needless, mindless, speculation about it now, definitively."

This came a little more than a week after Bush told reporters that "my conscience is clear" on the Iran-Contra affair.

Bush had said last week that he had had no discussions with anyone about a possible pardon for North.

The former National Security Council staff deputy was acquitted on nine charges. Bush last year called North a "national hero," but later refined that to say he was alluding to North's record of heroism in military combat.

## Guilty verdict causes North to lose pension

WASHINGTON (AP) — Oliver North lost his pension as a retired Marine officer when he was convicted Thursday and he won't get it back unless the verdict is overturned on appeal, a Pentagon spokesman said.

North, who retired as a lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps with 20 years of active-duty service, has been drawing an annual military pension of roughly \$23,100 since leaving the corps almost exactly a year ago.

At the time of his retirement, North said he was leaving the service in order to better prepare his defense against charges of misconduct stemming from the Iran-Contra affair.

On Thursday, the former National Security Council aide was convicted on three felony counts and cleared of nine others. The jury found North guilty of shredding documents, accepting an illegal gratuity and one count of aiding and abetting in an obstruction of Congress.

North had been receiving his pension since he retired, said Army Lt. Col. Linda Dumoulin, a Pentagon spokesman.

But once the conviction becomes legally effective — when the secretary of the Navy is formally notified of it and the paperwork is completed — North will lose his pension, she said.

If North wins on appeal, he will get the pension back and will be given pay retroactively, she said.

## Jurors decide case after deliberation, argument, prayer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The jurors in the Oliver North trial did a "lot of bickering and arguing" but finally agreed to convict the former White House aide on three counts after a "strong prayer," one juror said Thursday.

"It was tough to come up with a decision," Earl F. Williams told reporters.

North was convicted of altering and shredding documents and of two other charges in the Iran-Contra affair. He was acquitted on nine other counts.

Most of the jurors declined to discuss the deliberations, saying they were tired and wanted time with their families. The jury had been sequestered since April 20.

Juror Justine Newell Parrish said that reaching a verdict was the hardest decision she ever had to make.

Now, she said, "I just want to be with my family."

"I'm going to take my shower and catch the next flight out of here to Jamaica," juror Jean Johnson said.

Williams, a former security guard, said the jury did not agree on the guilty counts until Thursday, the 12th day of deliberations, although some of the acquittals had been decided earlier.

"The jury was split a while on some of the counts, and in a case such as this there is a lot of bickering and arguing," he said.

"It was tough and go all the way," he said.

"But," he added, "with God's help we prayed a lot and made a decision."

Williams said the breaking point came Thursday when one of the jurors said "a strong prayer, and it seemed to get everybody together and we came to a decision."

The juror said North was a credible witness. "I believed him," he said. "No, I don't think he should go to jail."

North, who was at the center of the secret Reagan administration effort to aid the Nicaraguan Contras, could face up to 10 years in prison on the convictions.



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