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# Webster denies North had pipeline into FBI

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FBI Director William Webster, nominated to become the next head of the CIA, yesterday assured members of the Senate Intelligence Committee that former National Security Council aide Oliver North "had no pipeline into the FBI."

But the assurance was quickly met with skepticism by some senators, who cited documents released yesterday showing that Col. North — once with the assistance of top FBI official Oliver "Buck" Revell — sought twice to interfere with FBI investigations that he thought could jeopardize efforts to assist the Contra rebels.

Yesterday's appearance before the committee was the third for Mr. Webster in his bid to become CIA director. Committee Chairman David Boren, Oklahoma Democrat, said the panel would vote on the nomination today.

In almost four hours of testimony that ended last evening, Mr. Webster said he is "able to conclude that Col. North had no pipeline into the FBI, and agents of the FBI were not giving him information to which he was not entitled."

Documents released by the committee yesterday, however, reveal that Col. North contacted the bureau on at least two occasions — once in 1985 warning that a Houston-based investigation could endanger American hostages in Lebanon, and again in 1986 to complain that a Philadelphia probe threatened to choke off the supply pipeline of private money for the Contras.

The Houston investigation concerned alleged efforts by paramilitary groups to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Of major interest to senators, however, was the time in April 1986 when Col. North telephoned Mr. Revell, executive assistant director and No. 2 man at the bureau, and asked him to postpone an appearance by Richard Miller before a Philadelphia grand jury.

Mr. Miller's name came up in federal court this week when Carl R. Channell, who pled guilty to conspiracy charges to defraud the government in fund-raising efforts for the Contras, named both he and Col. North as fellow conspirators.

Mr. Webster yesterday stressed that it wasn't until earlier this month that he learned of Col. North's involvement in the Philadelphia case, because Mr. Revell had forgotten about the conversation he had with Col. North.

Mr. Revell, in an explanatory letter last week to Mr. Boren, said Col. North advised him that Mr. Miller had received a subpoena from the FBI to testify as a witness before a Philadelphia grand jury and "advised that Miller was concerned that he might be asked questions about his involvement with the gov-

into Miller's involvement with the government... and, if so, if I could obtain a postponement," Mr. Revell said.

Mr. Miller was to be a witness in a criminal investigation in which an Iranian, Mousalreza Zadeh, had posed as a member of the Saudi Arabian royal family and defrauded a Philadelphia bank.

Mr. Webster told the committee he was disturbed that Mr. Revell failed to inform him of his conversation with Col. North and a telephone call to the assistant U.S. attorney in Philadelphia, which he placed to follow up on Col. North's request.

Mr. Revell said in his letter to Mr. Boren, dated April 17, that he "had no immediate recollection of the situation" but later "did recollect that in April 1986 I had received such a telephone call from Col. North."

No request for a delay in Mr. Miller's testimony was ever made, Mr. Revell said, because the U.S. attorney's office had already planned to put off Mr. Miller's appearance.

Mr. Webster acknowledged yesterday that it was "highly unusual" for an FBI official to involve himself in delaying a grand jury appearance set up by a U.S. attorney's office, and added that Mr. Revell had "lost sleep" recently because of his failure to notify the director of his involvement in the matter.

"He should have consulted with me first," Mr. Webster said, calling Mr. Revell's failure to do so "clearly an oversight."

"In all cases that I have found, with the exception of the Revell telephone call... any contact outside [FBI] headquarters with [FBI] agents was promptly and correctly reported to FBI headquarters," Mr. Webster said.

Mr. Webster said Col. North "would have had access to our routine disseminations [but] no official access to our files or to individual contacts with individual agents."

"[Col. North] did, of course, make attempts to contact individual agents from time to time," Mr. Webster said.

It was confirmed in earlier hearings that Col. North also telephoned Mr. Revell last October and sought to delay an FBI investigation of Southern Air Transport, a former CIA-owned airline allegedly involved in both supplying the Contras and in the Reagan administration's secret arms sales to Iran.

Col. North reportedly told Mr. Revell the Southern Air probe should be delayed because the airline was involved in the effort to have U.S. hostages released in Lebanon

The new revelations were uncovered by the bureau in an internal inquiry and turned over to the committee by Mr. Webster. Committee chairman Boren told other members "we can't keep this open for a year and every time there is a new memo start all over again."

Mr. Webster, however, well-liked on Capitol Hill for his nine-year record as FBI director, is expected to be easily confirmed when the entire Senate votes on the nomination, probably next week.

• This article is based in part on wire service reports.