

1987

U.S. Congress

What should we do about the Iran-Contra scandal?

It is 1987. You are a U.S. congressperson. You have just learned that government employees have lied to Congress about U.S. activities in Nicaragua. These government workers say that President Reagan and his advisers told them to break the law. Now you are deciding what to do.

President Reagan does not like the Nicaraguan government. He says that it is a communist government. He supports the Contras, a group of rebels fighting against the Nicaraguan government. He convinced Congress to send over \$100 million to the Contras. In 1982, Congress passed the Boland Amendment, which said that the CIA and other government agencies could not help the Contras anymore. However, some people in the government disagreed with this policy. They still wanted to send money to the Contras, even if it was against the law. They found different ways to raise money for the Contras. First, they convinced some rich governments to give money to the Contras. This was not illegal, but they did not tell the American people about it. Then they allowed Israel to sell U.S. weapons to Iran without telling us. That was illegal. Besides, Iran has been our enemy for about 10 years. Later, the administration itself even sold missiles to Iran!

The U.S. government used the profits from the weapon sales to buy and deliver supplies to the Contras. Once, the Nicaraguan government shot down a Contra supply plane. The only survivor was an American

man who said that the plane was owned by the CIA. This meant that the American CIA was illegally sending supplies to the Contras.

Some people say that the Colombian drug cartels also delivered supplies to the Contras. The U.S. government paid for this help by allowing them to fly Colombian cocaine into the United States.



Reagan's aides were selling weapons to our enemies, and maybe even helping drugs come into America, in order to support the Contras in Nicaragua. They say that they were doing what President Reagan wanted them to do. Some of them say that Reagan did not know about these illegal activities. They say that they did not tell the President what they were doing because they wanted to protect him. President Reagan says that he did not know about the illegal support for the Contras. Some Americans say he is not telling the truth.





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(continued)

Comprehension

1. Who are you in this decision?
2. Why does President Reagan support the Contras?
3. What does the Boland Amendment say?
4. In paragraph 2, what do the words this policy refer to?
5. In paragraph 2, what does the word That refer to?
6. How did some government workers help the Contras after Congress passed the Boland Amendment?
7. How did Reagan's aides break the law?
8. Do you think it is important for a president to know what his/her advisers are doing?
9. For each statement, write *F* for fact or *O* for opinion. Remember that facts are things that can be checked and agreed to by everyone. Opinions are a person's own ideas.
 - (a) The American government broke the law by supporting the Contras.
 - (b) President Reagan told his aides to continue supporting the Contras even after the Boland Amendment.
 - (c) Transporting cocaine into the U.S. is illegal.

Decision

- *What should we do about the Iran-Contra scandal? Choose one or more of the following options:*
 - (a) Nothing. The president has the power to make foreign policy decisions.
 - (b) Nothing. However, we should have a trial and put his aides in jail if they broke the law.
 - (c) Make a new, stronger law to stop the Reagan administration from helping the Contras.
 - (d) Impeach the president.
 - (e) Appoint a panel to investigate whether the president knew about illegal support for the Contras.
 - (f) Other: _____
- *Why did you decide that way? Plan how you will explain your decision to your classmates. Write out your reasoning completely.*

