
JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

Senate hearings link Abscam to Billygate

by Susan Kokinda in Washington

A Senate investigation being led by Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) has opened to public view the contamination of the U.S. Justice Department by showing that the networks which ran the anti-constitutional Abscam operations were identical with those which covered up the 1980 Billygate affair.

As a result of the 18-month Judiciary Committee investigation, the two Senators heard witnesses describe the connections between fugitive financier Robert Vesco, the Libyan government, and various officials and intimates of the Carter administration, with the unmistakable outlines of a Carter/Justice coverup. This operation, like Abscam, was run out of the U.S. Attorney's office of the Southern District of New York, and the same informant was used in both.

The investigation finally bore fruit when two key witnesses, James Feeney and Jimmy Day, were granted immunity to testify before the committee on March 30 and 31. Feeney and Day were both made scapegoats in the ensuing coverup and are serving prison terms. Day, a political wheeler-dealer from Texas, provided the most explosive information when he revealed that James Brewer, an FBI con-man à la Melvin Weinberg, was bringing political figures both into the Abscam net and into the Billygate/Vesco affair. Day, a principal actor in the operation with Vesco to coax the administration into releasing a number of C-130 airplanes to the Libyans in exchange for Libyan favors to Billy Carter and others, was introduced to Vesco by Brewer. Brewer also introduced Day to the Abscam "sheiks," in an unsuccessful effort to draw Day and his acquaintance, Democratic National Committee Chairman John White, into Abscam.

The detailed testimony of James Feeney, a government informant who was "hung out to dry" by the Justice Department, provided a look at previously unrevealed Justice Department machinations taking place at the time the Abscam operation was initiated. Feeney had been introduced to Robert Vesco and his multiple schemes to influence the Carter administration on behalf of the Libyans in January 1979, and had offered his services in sending Vesco to the Southern District of New York in exchange for immunity in another case. Working

as an agent for the Southern District, Feeney learned of Vesco's involvement in the Charter Oil deal involving Billy Carter and the Libyans, and in Vesco's plan to pressure the Carter administration to release planes to the Libyan government. The names of DNC Chairman John White, White House Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and "the big man himself" were actively discussed by Vesco and his associates as being "on board" the operation.

Throughout February and into March, Feeney reported those developments in detail to the Southern District attorneys. In March, word came back from the Justice Department Criminal Division head, Philip Heymann, to steer away from the Vesco investigation and to "go after John White" instead. And so, within the very time frame that Heymann and the Southern District were steering Feeney away from Vesco and his Carter administration friends, they were kicking Abscam into high gear. March 1979 is the precise date of the first meeting between former Senator Williams and the FBI agents masquerading as Abscam sheiks.

At the March 30 hearing, Feeney's lawyer, Daniel J. Sears, reported that Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti issued a memorandum on Sept. 19, 1979 alleging that the Vesco-Carter-Billygate affair was simply a scam on the part of Day and Feeney. Sears revealed that there was no evidence collected and no interviews conducted to substantiate that conclusion on the part of the Attorney General until ten days *after* the September memo was issued.

Former DNC Chairman John White insisted to the committee that, when asked by Jimmy Day to arrange a meeting between the Libyan Ambassador to the United Nations and President Carter, he called Deputy Secretary Christopher at State to warn him of the Day scheme. But, in interviews conducted by the FBI, Christopher and two other State Department officials have sworn that White called each of them to find out how to arrange a meeting between the President and the Libyan ambassador!

Senator DeConcini was constrained from questioning Feeney about Vesco's connection to the "Black Tuna" narcotics trafficking gang in Florida because Feeney felt that his security would be compromised by speaking about this in open session.

As *EIR* has charged, the Justice Department coverup was carried out not simply to protect the President or the President's brother, but to protect the entrenched networks within Justice, the Southern District, the State Department, and elsewhere which collaborate with international terrorist and drug networks. The Senate hearings will continue. The question remains whether this investigation, or any official investigation, will take on the deeper question which has become a national security matter.