

# A bad week for George Bush

by Jeffrey Steinberg

As early as December 1980, Lyndon LaRouche warned the incoming Reagan-Bush administration that they were being lured into a monkey-trap in Central America which would end up involving the United States with drug traffickers. The failure to heed this advice could now cost George Bush his lifelong dream of the presidency.

When *Village Voice* correspondent James Ridgeway picked up on an earlier *EIR* reference to Bush as the “wimp of the war on drugs” in a mid-May edition of the New York City liberal weekly, it was just the beginning of what proved to be one of the most dismal weeks in the vice president’s political career. Before it was over, the *Newsweek* edition of May 23 published heretofore unreported evidence of Bush’s personal role in sponsoring a Central American arms super-market funded in part by cocaine revenues of the Medellín Cartel; “ABC World News Tonight” ran back-to-back segments on May 16-17 featuring an alleged CIA-Mossad operative who said he flew drug flights into Amarillo, Texas while reporting directly to Bush staffer Donald Gregg; and the Public Broadcasting Service ran an hour-long documentary on “Guns, Drugs and the CIA” that included an interview with a leading accountant for the Medellín Cartel who said that he contributed \$10 million to the Contra cause at the request of a CIA official who said he was reporting directly to the vice president.

Adding to the Veep’s woes, several nationwide polls published in the midst of this press barrage showed that Democratic Party presidential hopeful Michael Dukakis would beat Bush by 10 percentage points if elections were to be held today. The key issue? The majority of voters felt that the Democrats would be tougher on drugs than a Bush administration.

## A blend of fact and fiction

*EIR*’s own investigations into the allegations against Bush suggest that the media reports are a blend of fact and fiction. Some of the more fictional elements may in fact be products of the Bush campaign or other pro-Bush circuits seeking to discredit his attackers as pure slanderers out to put Dukakis in the White House. A string of allegations that Bush “knew” about Panama’s Gen. Manuel Noriega’s alleged ties to the Medellín Cartel, for example, were discredited in short order.

Ironically, the key witness to the Medellín Cartel’s underwriting of the Contra war, Ramón Milián Rodríguez, is now serving a 43-year jail sentence as the result of General Noriega’s cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

Milián Rodríguez testified earlier this year before a closed-door session of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Narcotics and Terrorism. Extensive interview clips with the Cuban-American dope accountant were aired in the PBS documentary. In the TV interview with producer Leslie Cockburn, Milián Rodríguez reported that he was approached by CIA official Felix Rodríguez on several occasions and asked to contribute money to the Contras.

Felix Rodríguez, a veteran of the aborted Bay of Pigs invasion, was a fixture in the Miami Cuban community and is a longtime colleague and close personal friend of Bush aide Donald Gregg, himself a former senior CIA official, according to *Newsweek*.

“Felix told me that he was working directly for George Bush,” Milián Rodríguez told PBS. “If he mentioned Oliver North or somebody else who I never heard of, I would have never given the money. It made sense to me, Felix working for his old boss, the former chief of the CIA.”

## Fitzwater’s Brenneke ‘blooper’

*Newsweek*, citing Oregon arms dealer Richard J. Brenneke, implicated the vice president even more directly in the Central America guns-for-drugs fiasco. “The former agent, Richard J. Brenneke, an arms dealer with connections in the Soviet bloc, told the committee that Gregg was actually the Washington contact for the supply operation. He also says the Medellín cocaine cartel put up financing for the operation, used its planes to fly arms to the Contras and then used the same planes to fly some of its drug shipments from Colombia to the United States.

“Brenneke says he flew with one such shipment to Amarillo, Texas, in mid-1985 and then tried to tell Gregg what was going on—only to be told, ‘You do what you were assigned to do. Don’t question the decisions of your betters.’ Gregg denies that he ever talked to Brenneke, picturing him as a shady operator who once tried to get Bush to approve an arms deal with Iran.”

As if the blast of exposés against the vice president were not enough, Bush’s former press aide, now presidential press officer, Marlin Fitzwater, compounded matters when he told the White House press corps that Brenneke’s allegations were disproved in the course of a criminal prosecution of him in New York. Fitzwater was referring to the still-pending prosecution of Israeli General Bar-Am and 16 other defendants on charges they conspired to sell over \$1 billion in arms to Iran in 1986. Brenneke is not a defendant in the case, and the U.S. Attorney’s office in charge of the case told ABC that no such documents exist that disprove the Brenneke allegations. So much for presidential press work.