

Representative Traficant calls for investigation into PanAm 103 disaster

At a packed press conference held at the Cannon House Office Building on Nov. 2, Rep. James Traficant (D-Ohio) charged that there may be a coverup by officials of the United States government on the bombing of PanAm Flight 103. On Dec. 21, 1988, that flight was blown up by a terrorist bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing a total of 270 people. In the intervening year, American, British, and West German security services have carried out extensive investigations into the bombing, attempting to determine who carried out the attack, for what motives, and where the bomb was planted aboard the plane.

Pan American airlines has been sued by relatives of the victims of the bombing who claim that lax security by the air carrier was a key factor in the attack. PanAm stands to pay out over \$300 million in damages if the federal court in Brooklyn, New York finds that it was indeed responsible.

Congressman Traficant has charged that PanAm may have been, in part, a victim of dirty dealings by American and other intelligence services, and that the CIA may have been tipped off at least hours in advance of Flight 103's departure from Frankfurt airport about the danger of a terrorist attack.

At a second Capitol Hill press conference on Nov. 6, Traficant produced a five-page section of a 27-page report prepared by an insurance investigator which detailed the existence of a CIA unit which allegedly was involved in protecting a drug-smuggling ring that emanated from Syria and Bulgaria. The drug-trafficking unit, according to the report, had recruited baggage handlers who worked for PanAm at Frankfurt, who would regularly place suitcases full of drugs aboard the plane. And it was members of that ring who placed the bomb aboard 103. These explosive allegations, made at his second press conference held within the week, caused a firestorm of controversy within the media and the various intelligence agencies responsible for investigating the terrorist operation.

Accompanying Congressman Traficant at the press conference was former CIA official and critic of the CIA's covert activity, Victor Marchetti. Marchetti, co-author of the best-seller *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, stated that he had received the investigative report through contacts in the intelligence community and provided the report to the con-

gressman. He added that the report in terms of its investigation was a "full field based report" and was not only credible but required an in-depth investigation to ferret out the truth about whether the CIA had advance warning about PanAm 103. Marchetti praised the courage of Congressman Traficant, who is one of the few members of the House to go against the "regular channels" for handling these matters, because the chances of a congressional coverup were too high.

The substance and reaction

What Traficant released was five pages of the report. Despite some of the press's initial negative reaction to the limited version, what was released was potentially explosive. One excerpt states, "Ali Racep, a Syrian living in Sofia, Bulgaria . . . reportedly arranged the bomb components and their shipment to West Germany in November 1988."

Furthermore, the report states that a terrorist safehouse in Neuss, West Germany was raided by the West German Criminal Police (BKA) and Intelligence Service (BND), which led to the arrest of 13 terrorists, most of whom were later released. The information for the arrest was given by a Syrian drug runner named Monzer al-Kassar, who not only worked for Syrian intelligence, but apparently was under CIA protection. This CIA protection of Al-Kassar is one of the key factors behind Representative Traficant's charge of a massive coverup.

Although the limited version of the report does not delve into all the terrorist drug- and gun-running operations of the Syrians, it mentions two other critical individuals implicated in the PanAm bombing: Marwan Khreesat and Ghandanfar Dalkamoni. Delkamoni is identified as the second-in-command of the PFLP-General Command. Khreesat was not only a member of the PFLP-GC network in the Frankfurt area; he has been identified as an agent of the West German criminal police, the BKA.

This identification of Khreesat as a BKA informant was publicly corroborated in the Nov. 5 London *Sunday Times* in an article entitled "The Lockerbie Plot Uncovered." The *Sunday Times*, however, goes with a different version of the bombing incident, stating that there was a Maltese Airline connection to the incident. Nevertheless, the investigator's

report states that the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, and the BKA had tipped off the CIA at least two or three days in advance and again 24 hours before, the atrocious slaughter over the skies of Lockerbie, Scotland.

Two drug-terror networks

It identifies two competing terrorist and drug networks which had overlapping networks and interests: the al-Kassar operation and Ahmed Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. Al-Kassar was being used by a CIA unit described in the report as CIA-1. CIA-1 protected al-Kassar even though he was running drugs to support terrorist operations, because al-Kassar was "helping on the hostage question."

Further in the report, the investigator claims that CIA-1 did not want to unmask or "blow" their asset al-Kassar, since he was informing on Jibril's terrorist operations. According to Western intelligence experts, both al-Kassar and Jibril are Syrian agents under the control of Syrian military intelligence chief Ali Duba. Complicating the investigation was the fact that another CIA unit led by agent Gannon and Special Forces Major McKee began investigating al-Kassar and reported to CIA headquarter in Langley, Virginia. Langley did nothing about the report and McKee wound up being killed on PanAm 103.

Representative Traficant called for a full congressional investigation to determine, among other things, the circumstances surrounding the deaths of McKee and other members of his team aboard PanAm 103. The implicit question posed by Traficant was whether the Beirut team had been targeted for assassination because of what they had unearthed about U.S. collusion with Syrian narco-terrorist Al-Kassar.

Variations on a theme

Whether all the information in the report is accurate remains to be determined. Upon the release of the report, CIA spokesman Mark Mansfield called the report "ridiculous" and termed as nonsense the claim of CIA protection of the drug network. Moreover, upon release of the report by Traficant, intelligence community sources began putting out the line that the British investigation into PanAm 103, which apparently contains some glaring key contradictions with the Traficant-released report, was the closer to the truth. Not so coincidentally, after Congressman Traficant is first press conference, CIA director William Webster gave a front-page interview to the *Washington Post* stating that the British had the critical information concerning PanAm 103 and that the BKA was not fully cooperating.

Webster's reaction and the subsequent battle among various intelligence services only underscore the fact that there is a huge discrepancy between what is publicly being stated and what is privately and officially known. The families and relatives of the victims of PanAm 103 have been trying for one year to find out what happened. It was not until Traficant

and Marchetti began to push this report that some movement began toward unearthing the truth.

EIR correspondents in Paris report that French intelligence was tipped off by the Israelis in advance of the terrorist incident. The French could not confirm the CIA protection of the Syrian drug running network, but the essentials of the Jibril and al-Kassar involvement in the terrorist incident were absolutely, they say correct. Now there is a political intelligence war between the British secret services and the West Germans, in which the British are blaming the West Germans for bungling the Khreesat affair. In the meantime, Israeli intelligence is content to report the British theory on the Malta connection. The bomb supposedly was placed on an Air Malta flight headed for Frankfurt, where it was loaded on to the PanAm flight.

Israeli disinformation?

Sources in one faction of U.S. intelligence have told *EIR* that the report issued by Traficant is Israeli disinformation, aimed at disrupting attempts by U.S. intelligence to place on-the-ground operations inside Lebanon and throughout the Middle East. These sources believe that a special unit in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, deployed under the direction of Trade and Industry Minister Ariel Sharon and spymaster Rafi Eytan, are using this report for their own purposes, relating to growing tension between the United States and Israel. These same sources also stated that the tipoff of the CIA by the Mossad was too vague to be acted on.

The political establishment in Washington is trying to run "damage control" on the revelations of Traficant and Marchetti, by announcing that the Presidential Commission on Air Safety will handle the investigation. Senators Alfonse D'Amato (D-N.Y.) and Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) called for the creation of this commission right after the first press conference by Traficant. According to Marchetti, these presidential commissions do nothing but cover up what the establishment does not want to come out, witness the notorious Warren Commission on the JFK assassination, or the Rockefeller Commission on the CIA. One well-founded fear is that this Commission will go even beyond the Tower Commission's whitewash of the Iran-Contra "parallel government" operation that traded arms to the Iranians in exchange for promises to release hostages.

Also at issue is the whole policymaking structure behind the U.S. support for the Syrian butcher, Hafez al-Assad, a Middle East policy which was fashioned by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. This orientation, which has locked U.S. intelligence into a no-win situation, is the underlying cause of the PanAm atrocity. As long as the United States continues to ally with the narco-terrorist Assad, terrorism and drugs will continue to plague the United States; and intrigue, coverup, and murder will surround the intelligence community, engulfing even those operatives who may be patriots.