

Attorney General Thornburgh's immorality exposed by drug scandal

by Steve Komm and Jeff Steinberg

The revelation that Henry Barr, former special assistant and longtime trusted associate of Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, is under investigation for drug use, has touched off a series of scandals that expose the immorality of Thornburgh and his coterie.

The drug scandal, and the fact that high officials close to Thornburgh are trying to sweep it under the rug, have now been joined by a report in the *New York Times* that a false and illegal leak against a Thornburgh political opponent came from Thornburgh's press secretary, a fact also covered up in a months-long Department of Justice investigation.

Cocaine parties with high officials

Barr, who has been a close adviser and aide to Thornburgh for most of the last 21 years, was reportedly implicated in drug use by a former high-level official who served under Barr in the Pennsylvania Attorney General's office, Richard Guida. Guida has been under investigation by a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania federal grand jury since last May for drug use, drug trafficking, and throwing drug cases (see *EIR*, March 25, 1990).

The drug use and cocaine trafficking in question date back to the late 1970s, according to sources familiar with the probe. Federal investigators looking into the Three Mile Island "accident" apparently uncovered a cocaine-trafficking ring servicing welders at the nuclear plant, as well as prominent Harrisburg attorneys. That initial FBI probe was quashed, reportedly through the direct intervention of then-Assistant State Attorney General Guida. A report issued under the signature of then-Governor Thornburgh, and prepared for him by James West, now the U.S. Attorney in Harrisburg, also apparently completely whitewashed the drug angle.

Guida's involvement with cocaine traffickers in the Harrisburg area again came to the attention of federal investigators last year, according to published accounts, and a formal grand jury probe began last spring.

According to reliable sources, Guida was recently told by the prosecutors that he would be indicted on over 100 counts of cocaine use and trafficking, based on the testimony of grand jury witnesses, unless he cooperated. He reportedly chose to cooperate, in return for being allowed, after he testifies against others, to plead guilty to one count of simple drug possession, at which point he will reportedly receive a suspended sentence and lose his license to practice law. (Gui-

da was still representing drug dealers as a lawyer in early April.)

To compound an already thorny scandal, an indictment of Barr, which was scheduled to be voted on by a grand jury in Harrisburg on April 10, was postponed indefinitely when Barr's attorneys met on April 9 with representatives of DoJ Criminal Division chief Edward Dennis, another Pennsylvania Republican who served as U.S. Attorney in Philadelphia during Thornburgh's tenure as governor. Barr and his attorneys, Daniel Shapira and Charles Scarlata, all served as assistant U.S. Attorneys under Thornburgh in Pittsburgh from 1969-75.

Meanwhile, Thornburgh's press spokesman claimed that Thornburgh and his longtime personal aides, including top special assistants Robert S. "Robin" Ross, Jr., David Runkel, and Murray G. Dickman, as well as the U.S. Attorney in Harrisburg, James West, had all recused themselves from the Barr-Guida matter "as soon as they learned of it." No one has yet asked Thornburgh or Barr why Barr suddenly resigned from his position as Thornburgh's special assistant for liaison with law enforcement agencies at exactly the moment that the federal grand jury was convened in Harrisburg to look into the cocaine-trafficking ring last May 12. From August 1988 through May 12, 1989, Barr was a top aide to Thornburgh at the Justice Department.

American political economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche, who is currently in federal prison, a victim of a Thornburgh Justice Department frameup, observed that, while Thornburgh may not be criminally culpable for the actions of Barr, Guida, and others in his coterie, he is certainly morally accountable for the quality of people with whom he surrounded himself throughout his political career.

"They might have hidden their cocaine use from the governor and Attorney General, but they couldn't have hidden their overall morals for that long—for 20 years! What do we know about Thornburgh's morality? Should he be dumped because of this morality? Absolutely," LaRouche said.

The Bill Gray leak

Just days after the Barr scandal hit the Washington press, another scandal hit—again relating to a long-standing close aide who moved into the Attorney General's office when the ex-Pennsylvania governor took over as Attorney General from Edwin Meese in the summer of 1988.

According to a story in the April 19 *New York Times*, Thornburgh's press secretary, David Runkel, was identified in an Office of Professional Responsibility probe as the source of a false leak last year identifying U.S. Rep. William Gray (D-Pa.), now House Majority Whip, as the target of a federal grand jury probing corruption.

Gray denied the allegations and both the House and Senate Judiciary Committees demanded a full investigation into the source of the leak, which was clearly aimed at destroying the powerful Democratic legislator's career.

After a Criminal Division probe that cost taxpayers an estimated \$224,000 and involved 109 interviews and 10 polygraph examinations with DoJ employees and reporters, Thornburgh wrote to Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Joseph Biden (D-Del.) last December that the investigation was being terminated without conclusive results.

"Since the investigation has not produced sufficient evidence to enable me to ascertain that any present employee of the Department of Justice was responsible for the disclosure, I have determined that no termination of employment or other disciplinary action is justified in this matter at this time," Thornburgh wrote.

When lawmakers protested that the Department's Office of Professional Responsibility, the unit specifically created to handle such investigations, had not been brought in on the probe, Thornburgh relented and allowed OPR to carry out a review of the Criminal Division's work.

While that probe has not yet been completed, the *Times* reported that Thornburgh's aide David Runkel had failed a polygraph test prior to Thornburgh's letter to Biden; that Runkel was definitely one of several sources to CBS-TV on the false story on Representative Gray; and that DoJ officials believe that Thornburgh covered up the results of the probe in order to protect Runkel and others.

According to sources interviewed by *EIR*, there is an affidavit from another reporter also identifying Runkel as the source of the same leak.

Thornburgh's brazen effort to bully his way out of an embarrassing political scandal targeted at a Pennsylvania political rival did not fool people in his own backyard, where his reputation as a vicious political back-stabber is well known. Shortly after the Gray scandal broke, on Aug. 3, 1989 the *Pittsburgh Press* wrote an editorial pointing the finger at Thornburgh: "He has been an unswerving advocate of the trial balloon. Over the years, he has developed and refined the trial balloon hoist to the point where it has become his personal style of management.

"He tried one, for instance, earlier this summer, when the Justice Department leaked the story that the FBI was investigating U.S. Rep. William Gray, D-Philadelphia, about some unspecified unlawful activity by some unspecified employee of Rep. Gray.

"The balloon didn't fly and Mr. Thornburgh just hauled it back in a week later, proclaiming that Rep. Gray was not

under investigation and pledging to fire the Justice Department official responsible for the leak."

Kidnapings and theft alleged

As the heat was building in Washington, Thornburgh and what remains of his Pennsylvania "whiz kid" team boarded a flight for Mexico, where he was to participate in an anti-drug conference of Organization of American States justice ministers. No sooner had he landed than a new scandal was waiting to greet him.

Mexican authorities were up in arms over the fact that a Mexican citizen had been apparently kidnaped and delivered across the border to El Paso, Texas where a team of Drug Enforcement Administration agents was waiting to take the man into custody for complicity in the February 1985 kidnaping and murder-by-torture of DEA agent Enrique Camarena (see *Dateline Mexico*, p. 51). Accusations flew that the DEA, which is a DoJ sub-agency, had paid a bounty to Mexican police officials or private investigators to grab the Mexican, a medical doctor, on a phony arrest warrant, and pirate him across the Rio Grande.

Last year, DEA sources tipped *EIR* to the fact that then-Acting Deputy Administrator Terrence Burke was planning precisely such a grab inside Mexico. Last month, Thornburgh appointed Burke as the acting head of the DEA, following the retirement of John Lawn.

The case adds a new, even more sordid chapter to what has been branded the "Thornburgh Doctrine."

Not surprisingly, Thornburgh and his entire entourage disappeared from sight as soon as they arrived at the conference.

And if this swarm of scandals and controversies was not enough, the April 16 issue of *Washington Business Journal* reported that Thornburgh was forced to capitulate to demands by House Judiciary Committee chairman Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) that DoJ officials be ordered to fully cooperate with a congressional probe into the DoJ's role in the bankrupting of a small Washington, D.C.-based computer software firm, Inslaw. While the scheme to drive Inslaw into liquidation and then steal its proprietary criminal justice software package on behalf of a politically "wired" rival firm took place prior to Thornburgh's arrival at the DoJ in August 1989, he placed himself squarely in the center of the controversy by attempting to pressure Representative Brooks into dropping his inquiry into the matter. Senior DoJ officials have said that the Inslaw affair is "bigger than Watergate" and affects the department at every level.

The House Judiciary Committee hearings into Inslaw are scheduled to begin before the summer recess. While those hearings are certain to raise major new scandals, it remains highly speculative whether Thornburgh will still be occupying the top floor offices when Rep. Brooks's gavel opens those hearings.

To be continued.