

Bush floats Irangate crony for drug czar

by Jeffrey Steinberg

In November, following William Bennett's resignation as director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy—the so-called “Drug Czar”—after only 20 months on the job, White House officials floated the name of Florida Gov. Bob Martinez as a possible successor. Martinez, a Republican, had just been defeated on Nov. 6 in his reelection bid by former Sen. Lawton Chiles (D). The Martinez “float” for drug czar should sober up anyone still hoping that President Bush was serious back in September 1989 when he declared the war on drugs his administration's number-one priority. The post is being relegated to the level of consolation prize for GOP losers. More ominously, Martinez, largely through his ties to the President's son, John Ellis “Jeb” Bush, who was Martinez's campaign manager and had served as the Secretary of Commerce in his cabinet from 1987, is in the middle of the Iran-Contra networks active in southern Florida, trading cocaine for weapons while justifying their dirty deeds with the claim that a little bit of dope dealing is a “small price to pay for democracy.”

Jeb Bush, the ADL, and drugs

No member of Bush's family is more closely tied to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), better known as the American Drug Lobby, than Jeb Bush. The most visible links surfaced in 1983 when Alberto Duque, a Colombian businessman living in Miami, was indicted for financial fraud and eventually jailed for his crimes. Duque was at the time a partner of Jeb Bush in a \$30 million Florida real estate development scheme. Duque's father, Luis Duque, is one of Colombia's leading coffee producers and at one time was campaign manager for Alfonso López Michelsen, the former President of Colombia who has been a notorious front man for the Medellín and Cali cocaine cartels.

From 1981 until his incarceration in 1986, Alberto Duque had also been a director of City National Bank of Miami, a bank founded by Max Orovitz, a close associate of organized crime head Meyer Lansky. Orovitz spent years in jail for stock fraud, but not before turning over direction of the bank to Leonard Abess, an honorary vice chairman of the ADL and a director of the ADL Foundation.

Under Abess and Duque, City National Bank hired Donald Beazley as its president. Beazley had been earlier involved in one of the shadiest CIA money-laundering fronts ever conceived, the Australia-based Nugan Hand Bank. Ac-

ording to numerous published accounts, Nugan Hand was set up by “ex”-CIA personnel linked to former CIA operations chief Theodore G. Shackley to help finance a “secret war” in Vietnam following the Paris Peace Accords, largely through the sale of Golden Triangle opium and the theft and resale of hundreds of millions of dollars in American surplus war matériel. When the incoming Reagan administration committed itself to a new “secret war” in Central America, Shackley and his cronies moved back into their old stomping ground in southern Florida where Shackley had been CIA station Chief in Miami during the heyday of the Bay of Pigs and related anti-Castro adventures.

Jeb Bush reportedly became one of the most useful lines of communication between the anti-Sandinista secret warriors and the White House. According to Jack Terrell, a former Contra operator writing in the May 1987 edition of *Progressive* magazine, “Jeb Bush was the conduit to the White House through various Cuban organizations. . . . If they needed to get word to Washington they'd go from Jeb Bush to Don Gregg to George Bush.” Gregg at that time was the national security adviser to Vice President Bush.

During this period, the Cuban exile community in Miami was under close scrutiny by local police who were attempting to crack down on the cocaine flow from Colombia. According to one Miami police report, local authorities, as early as 1982, had identified several leading Cuban anti-Sandinista activists who were funneling illegal narcotics profits to the Contras. In 1985, Jeb Bush was appointed a founding board member of the National Republican Institute for International Affairs (NRI), the GOP's official arm of the National Endowment for Democracy. NED, referenced frequently in Oliver North's notes as “Project Democracy,” was the government agency most involved in the covert illegal support effort for the Contra war in Central America.

Simultaneous to his appointment to the NED, Jeb Bush had carried a letter from a former Guatemalan business associate, Mario Castejón, to his father proposing that Guatemala be funded to run a secret medical support operation for the Contras. According to congressional records, Vice President Bush passed the proposal on to Oliver North.

If the White House appoints Martinez, it will flaunt Bush's lack of an anti-drug agenda. During his tenure, Bennett had been iced out of any effective anti-drug role by the White House and Attorney General Richard Thornburgh. Thornburgh, who is reportedly a target of an ongoing federal grand jury probe into cocaine use by state officials in Pennsylvania during his tenure as governor, had vowed from the outset to sabotage Bennett's efforts, in order to ensure that the Attorney General retained sole authority over the federal anti-crime effort.

According to several Washington sources, Bennett's appointment as Republican National Committee chairman after his resignation, was in part aimed at forestalling his emerging as a public critic of Bush's phony drug war.