

Kimmitt confirmed as ambassador to Germany

by Scott Thompson

Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), who chairs the European subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, ran a blatant coverup in July 29 hearings to rush through Robert Kimmitt's confirmation as U.S. ambassador to Germany. Senator Biden's deliberate bungling of questions that dealt with Kimmitt's involvement with the Iran-Contra affair, and with former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie's perjured testimony to the committee on how war with Iraq had been rigged, set a new low for that Senate committee.

There was no excuse for Senator Biden's waffling, since, as even the senator acknowledged, a lot more documents had been released on Kimmitt's role in Iran-Contra since his last confirmation appearance in 1989, when he was seeking to become undersecretary of state for political affairs. These documents reveal that Kimmitt's actions rivaled those of National Security Council deputy director Robert Gates, whose confirmation hearings for Director of Central Intelligence have been postponed until September by the Senate Intelligence Committee. The new documents detail Kimmitt's collusion with the CIA architect of the "public diplomacy" program, Walter Raymond, to raise private funds for the Contras, despite a congressional ban. This has been a litmus test of Iran-Contra crimes in other cases.

The evidence is ignored

The stench of coverup was there right from the start of Biden's questioning, as the senator quipped that Kimmitt's sponsorship by former Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield meant that "I guess we can close these hearings, and ask for your confirmation now."

On Iran-Contra, Senator Biden said that questions remained on only one set of documents, even though more had surfaced since Kimmitt's 1989 hearings, where he only admitted that as executive secretary of the National Security Council he knew the broad outlines and had seen some of the paperwork relating to that scandal.

Senator Biden focused on a Jan. 22, 1985 request from Kimmitt to White House Counsel Fred Fielding, asking whether it would be all right (despite the congressional ban) to host top corporate executives at the White House, where they would be asked to fund a Nicaraguan Refugee Fund. When Fielding said this would contravene all White House policy, Kimmitt wrote a second request offering a compromise: The briefing would be in the White House, but the fundraising

pitch would be made at a separate event at a hotel. Finally, Fielding agreed.

Under questioning, Kimmitt revealed he had written these memos in consultation with CIA agent Walter Raymond, the architect of the "public diplomacy" effort. Although Kimmitt had just been caught in an attempt to bypass the congressional ban upon funding the Contras, Biden, who should have immediately referred the matter to Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, said it was his view and that of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's general counsel that Kimmitt had merely been a waterboy for Raymond. This, despite the fact that Kimmitt was far higher up in the NSC hierarchy than Raymond.

That was the only question Senator Biden asked Kimmitt about his role in Iran-Contra, despite the fact that one week earlier, *EIR* had given the committee's general counsel, Mike Epstein, a dozen newly declassified NSC documents that implicated Kimmitt in Iran-Contra wrongdoing. These documents ranged from extensive correspondence with Oliver North, to planning "public diplomacy" campaigns to trick European supporters of the Contra policy, to requests for approval from Kimmitt for accelerating shipments of heavy weapons (from active U.S. military stocks if need be) to Honduras.

The most damning of these new documents detailed a joint operation by Kimmitt and North to keep Congress ignorant of illegal Contra support actions during confirmation hearings of then-U.S. Ambassador to Honduras John Negroponte to be an assistant secretary of state. In one Feb. 20, 1985 "secret" memo, North told Kimmitt that "we" must give "protection against unauthorized disclosure" to Congress, and Kimmitt then wrote guidelines for Negroponte's testimony. All of these documents were ignored by Senator Biden.

April Glaspie's lies

Senator Biden also buried the story of Kimmitt's involvement in the now-infamous testimony of April Glaspie, when she denied that she had told Saddam Hussein that the United States would be indifferent if he invaded Kuwait. According to the Jan. 3, 1991 *New York Times*, Kimmitt was Secretary of State James Baker's right-hand man during the Gulf war. During July, the *New Republic* printed a report that Kimmitt had handled Glaspie upon her recall, when she is known to have been placed under virtual State Department house arrest. Although the article predicted an explosion over the Glaspie issue at Kimmitt's hearings, no such thing was allowed to occur. No sooner had Kimmitt admitted having seen early versions of Glaspie's testimony, which were written for her by others, than Biden cut off questions, saying: "There's no need to ask more about this here. It's all been gone through by our general counsel and chief investigator in private questioning of you."

Kimmitt was voted up to be the new ambassador to Germany by the full Senate later that same day.