

More on U.S. payoffs to Noriega witnesses

by Carlos Wesley

As a service to our readers, we update the chart published in the Nov. 1 EIR, on the generous payoffs by the U.S. government to the murderers and drug traffickers who testify against Panama's Manuel Noriega.

Name	Crimes	Current status	Paid by U.S.
Tony Aizprua	Drug pilot. Caught after he landed a drug-laden plane on a Florida highway.	Free.	\$511,000, so far.
José Blandón	Suspected of selling U.S. government property.	Free.	\$169,000, so far.
Ricardo Bilonick	Owned Inair, an airline caught with some 1,000 kilos of cocaine in Miami in 1984. Admits to smuggling at least 15 tons of cocaine into the U.S.	Government dropped most charges against Bilonick, who was facing up to 60 years in prison. He will get out in less than 7 years	Bilonick and his family are getting green cards and assistance from the government to become permanent U.S. residents, and he gets to keep at least \$4 million in drug money, tax free.
Floyd Carlton Caceres	Drug pilot involved in drugs-for-weapons Contra operations. 9 counts of cocaine trafficking, which could have given him life in prison plus 145 years. Instead got 20 years in plea-bargain arrangement.	Released after 4.5 years.	\$211,000 so far.
Stephen Kalish	Faced at least six drug indictments that could have put him in jail for life, plus 285 years without parole. Was sentenced to 20 years without parole in plea bargain, but it was reduced to 10 years when he testified against underlings.	Will be released in next two years.	U.S. government will let him keep up to \$20 million in drug profits.
Carlos Lehder	Drug trafficking, murder, kidnaping. Biggest cocaine kingpin ever to be jailed by the U.S. government. Convicted to a life sentence plus 135 years in prison with no possibility of parole.	Has been moved out from the federal maximum-security prison at Marion, Ill., and given a new identity under the FWPP; conceivably Lehder could already be walking the streets a free man. Eight members of his immediate family have been moved from Colombia, and are being given permanent resident status in the U.S., with all expenses paid for by the government.	Lehder will probably not pay the \$98 million in taxes he owes the U.S., plus he gets to keep at least \$8 million in drug profits.
Max Mermelstein	Admits guilt in 3 murders and is implicated in 2 more. Was charged on 11 drug counts. Admits he smuggled 56 tons of cocaine and 42,000 pounds of marijuana into Florida and that he was a transportation chief for Colombia's Medellín drug cartel before his 1985 arrest. Also admits to tax fraud and gun smuggling. The drug charges alone should have kept him in jail for life.	Free, after spending 2 years in prison. Is in the Federal Witness Protection Program and has been granted immunity on all charges, including the murders.	Has received \$670,245 from the government so far, at least \$250,000 a year. While he was still in jail, the government paid \$900 into his commissary fund so he could purchase snacks.
Daniel Miranda	Drug pilot.	Free on a suspended sentence.	Green cards for himself and his family and assistance from the government to resettle as permanent U.S. residents. He also gets a U.S. commercial pilot's license.
Boris Olarte	Drug pilot.		\$200,000
Ramón Navarro	Drug smuggler.	Deceased.	\$170,000
Roberto Striedinger	Cocaine smuggler.	Free.	Given green cards for himself and family, a Mercedes Benz, a 10-passenger plane, a 40-foot yacht, and a cache of assault weapons.