

Blackout of Noriega keeps Bush's secrets

by Carlos Wesley

Panamanian Gen. Manuel Noriega dropped several bombshells at his sentencing hearing in Miami, Florida on July 10 which, if followed up, could bring to a boil the October Surprise, Iran-Contra—in which both President George Bush and Gov. Bill Clinton are implicated—and other Washington scandals that are yet to be solved. Noriega charged that he was prevented from raising these issues during his trial because Judge William Hoever forbad any testimony about “political matters, issues of the war, or of the invasion” of Panama.

Noriega was able to unveil a number of U.S. covert activities, despite limitations imposed by Hoever. Ironically, while his speech was covered in full by the Panamanian opposition weekly *La Crónica*, by *La Estrella*, as well as by the anti-Noriega daily *La Prensa*, most U.S. media pronounced the speech “rambling,” ran a few quotes, and then imposed total silence.

Weapons-running

Noriega said “the defense was not allowed to present” evidence on:

- “Weapons from Costa Rica, first for the Sandinistas, then for the Contras. And with the Contras, those pilots were allowed to bring drugs from Costa Rica to the United States. In Costa Rica, their base of operation was run by John Hull, [former CIA station chief and business partner of former National Security Council staffer Oliver North, Joseph] Fernández, and others.”

Some of the drug-laden return flights to the United States came through the airport at Mena, Arkansas, reportedly under the protection of officials in Gov. Bill Clinton’s administration.

- “The famous and oft-mentioned César Rodríguez—recruited by the Americans—who since 1980 worked with the intelligence agencies in arms transfers to Central America. . . . All the pilots recruited by Rodríguez were working for U.S. law enforcement agencies. The government knew it and covered it up.”

At trial, prosecutors claimed that Rodríguez, a drug pilot, worked for Noriega. But, as reported in *EIR*’s 1987 Special Report “White Paper on the Panama Crisis,” Rodríguez, a.k.a. “Captain Poison,” not only ran weapons to the Nicara-

guan Contras on behalf of U.S. intelligence agencies, but also ran weapons in exchange for drugs for the narco-terrorist M-19 in Colombia.

Kissinger connection

On March 13, 1986, Rodríguez disappeared during a trip to Medellín, Colombia, along with Rubén Darío Paredes, Jr., the son of Noriega’s predecessor and Henry Kissinger’s protégé, Gen. Rubén Darío Paredes. At the time, Paredes, Sr. denied that his son had been taken hostage by the Medellín cocaine cartel. General Paredes said he had spoken with the cartel’s Ochoa clan, “and they have given me their word” that they didn’t have him. On March 25, 1986, Paredes, Jr. and Rodríguez were found dead in a Medellín cemetery, killed by the mob in a drug deal gone sour.

General Paredes was never indicted. Instead, the U.S. media worked overtime to put the right “spin” on his sleazy connections. Journalist Georgie Anne Geyer, whose “line” often coincides with that of a faction of U.S. intelligence associated with Kissinger, in her column in the May 14, 1986 *Washington Times*, said young Paredes was killed because his business partner, Rodríguez, had criticized Noriega!

Lawrence Eagleburger, former president of Kissinger Associates, Inc. and Bush’s deputy secretary of state, as much as admitted that Paredes was Kissinger’s personal choice for the Panamanian presidency. Noriega got in trouble because he reneged on an agreement “to place the support of the military behind General Paredes’s candidacy for the presidency,” Eagleburger told the Organization of American States.

At Noriega’s trial, General Paredes’s younger son, Amet Paredes, who was also involved in the drug-running fiasco that caused his brother’s death, was let off with a slap on the wrist by Hoever, in exchange for turning state’s evidence. Prosecutor Myles Malman praised the young Paredes as “candid, forthright, honest, and truly remorseful,” and said Amet only became a drug trafficker because Noriega refused to support his father’s presidential bid!

- “The 1984 trip to Washington where the United States picked and backed Barletta as the candidate against Arnulfo Arias.”

Former World Bank Vice President Nicolás Ardito Barletta was imposed as the presidential candidate to replace Paredes. A protégé of Kissinger and Robert McNamara, Barletta is a former student of George Shultz, the Reagan-Bush administration secretary of state and pro-drug advocate “who remembers him well and affectionately.” Barletta’s campaign was financed by the drug cartels, according to testimony presented at Noriega’s trial. But Barletta was never indicted and he remains a favorite of the Bush administration.

EIR’s July 24 issue contained two pages of excerpts of the Noriega speech. However, in view of the blackout by U.S. major media, the editors have decided to publish a full translation of this historic document next week.