

## New drug charges plague Oliver North's campaign

by Edward Spannaus

Detailed charges concerning Virginia senatorial candidate Oliver North's supervision of a large-scale narcotics-smuggling operation are about to hit Virginia and the nation. The accusations are made in an interview with the man who was the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) top agent in El Salvador, Celerino Castillo (see p. 50).

Castillo's charges, which will soon be featured on a state-wide radio and TV advertising campaign, come as North is also being battered by charges made by his former boss, one-time National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane. Interviewed on CBS-News's "60 Minutes" on Sept. 11, McFarlane labelled North a "degenerate liar" who is conning the people of Virginia the same way he conned people in the Reagan administration.

In what was called by some a "preemptive strike," North held a fundraising dinner on Sept. 9 in Norfolk, Virginia, featuring another of North's former bosses, and McFarlane's successor as national security adviser, Rear Adm. John Poindexter. "Ollie was not an unguided missile, as some have written," said Poindexter. "Ollie carried out exactly what he was told to do."

Poindexter is correct, up to that point. Ollie absolutely did carry out orders from others—no question about it. But the most important order-giver was neither McFarlane nor Poindexter, but Vice President George Bush. As *EIR* has previously shown, it was Bush who ran the "secret government" apparatus created from 1981 to 1986, of which Ollie North was merely a staff officer. Bush was the Boss, and he still is. This is the secret behind Ollie North's career, and his current race for the U.S. Senate.

Taken together with other key races around the country, particularly those of Jeb Bush in Florida, George W. Bush in Texas, and William Weld in Massachusetts, the Ollie North

bid in Virginia is part of a national effort to resuscitate the Bush machine after the defeat of 1992.

North—the truest Son-of-a-Bush in the whole lot—is the key to a reassertion of the Bush machine and its secret government networks in U.S. political institutions. Is it any wonder that the majority of North's funds are raised from outside Virginia? (Maybe that's why he calls himself an "outsider.") North's campaign will probably end up being the most lavishly financed in American history. Reports from knowledgeable sources indicate that much of the money for Ollie's campaign is being laundered in through the Bush "secret government" apparatus and its network of freelance spooks, what some people call the "asteroids" or the "satellites."

### North's stable of drug-runners

In the interview that follows, Celerino Castillo documents, from his first-hand, official knowledge, that all of the pilots flying for the Contra supply operation out of Ilopango Air Base in El Salvador were drug-traffickers. Castillo had an informant at Ilopango who actually drew up the flight plans for the pilots flying out of there. And, as Castillo says, these pilots *all* showed up in the DEA's computer files as documented narcotics smugglers.

When Castillo brought this up to Edwin Corr, the U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, he was told to keep away from it, because it was a covert operation run by the White House and Oliver North. In January 1986, Castillo had the opportunity to bring the matter up directly with Bush himself, at a reception at the U.S. Embassy. As Castillo tells it:

"I told him that I was an agent conducting international narcotics investigations, and I told him that there was something funny going on with the Contras at Ilopango airport.

As soon as I said that, he shook my hand, he smiled for the cameraman, and then he just walked away from me without saying a word. I knew then that he knew what I was talking about, about the Contras.”

There’s no doubt that Bush knew. The Ilopango operation was being run directly out of Bush’s White House officer by Felix Rodriguez. Rodriguez, a “former” CIA agent, was a long-time friend of Bush’s national security adviser, Donald Gregg, going back to Southeast Asia in the 1960s. After a meeting with Bush a year earlier, in January 1985, Rodriguez had gone to El Salvador and set up the Contra supply operation at Ilopango military airfield. When North wanted to use Ilopango for the “private” resupply operation being run for him by Maj. Gen. Richard Secord, North had to go to Rodriguez to ask for permission to use Ilopango!

It was at the Ilopango airfield that Castillo’s DEA informant saw drugs and drug money being flown in and out.

Another individual whom Castillo found working out of Ilopango is Wally Grasheim, who is called “William Brasher” in Castillo’s book, *Powder Burns: Cocaine, Contras and the Drug War*. Castillo was told that Grasheim was in charge of money, equipment, and training for the Contras. When he typed Grasheim’s name into the DEA computer, he found that Grasheim was documented in seven separate files for smuggling of narcotics and weapons.

Castillo also learned that Grasheim was operating hand-in-glove with North. On Sept. 1, 1986, DEA agents and Salvadoran police raided Grasheim’s residence, and confiscated a small amount of drugs, and a huge arsenal of illegal weapons, ammunition, explosives, and military equipment. Yet Grasheim was a civilian. In the interview with *EIR*, Castillo tells us that he found that “all his vehicles had U.S. Embassy license plates. We found radios belonging to the U.S. Embassy. We found weapons belonging to the U.S. Embassy.”

### ‘Most investigated man’?

Whenever North is confronted with the charges about his involvement in drug-trafficking, his standard response is to assert that he is “the most investigated man on this planet.” When Castillo was asked about this, he responded that North was *never* investigated on narcotics matters. “He was investigated on everything else,” Castillo said, but not on this. “If Oliver North had been investigated on narcotics trafficking, they would surely have contacted the agents down in Central America—which includes me—who conducted the investigation on him,” the former DEA agent said.

Castillo tells how he got a call from the DEA headquarters in Washington in 1986 or 1987, instructing him not to close the case on the Contras. Castillo says that the “Kerry Committee” (the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee) wanted access to his reports, but the DEA had told them there were no reports. Castillo has stated elsewhere that by keeping the case

files open, DEA could prevent their disclosure on the grounds that they were “open investigations.”

Repeatedly, Castillo has made the point: If somebody were going to conduct a serious investigation on the Contras and narcotics trafficking, they would have contacted the DEA agents in El Salvador. This was never done.

Out of frustration, Castillo made contact through his lawyer with the office of Iran-Contra special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh in 1991, Castillo’s attorney told them that Castillo had substantial evidence regarding Oliver North’s involvement in narcotics trafficking. Castillo then had a meeting with an FBI agent assigned to Walsh’s office, who was shocked to find out that there was a lot of evidence that the Contras and Oliver North had been involved in narcotics trafficking.

As Castillo relates the events, when the FBI agent asked him who in the White House did he think knew about the Contras being involved in narcotics trafficking, “I showed him a picture of George Bush and myself. His mouth dropped. He couldn’t believe what I was telling him. He said, ‘Cele, if we can prove that the Contras and Oliver North were involved heavily in narcotics trafficking, it would be like a grand slam home run!’ ”

But this, as in all of Castillo’s other efforts to get an official investigation of the Contra’s involvements in narcotics-trafficking, came to nothing. Walsh’s office was not interested in pursuing the matter, just as the congressional committee investigating Iran-Contra was not interested in pursuing the matter. For all of his complaints and whining, Ollie North got off easy.

### Responsibility for the drug plague

From the standpoint of his experience in investigating and prosecuting drug traffickers, Castillo says that there is no doubt that the evidence he compiled concerning North and the Contras would be sufficient to get a conviction. “If a U.S. official has knowledge that there’s narcotics trafficking being conducted by somebody, and he does not report it, that’s a violation of the law right there.” Even North’s own notebooks show that he had detailed knowledge that his Contra operatives were involved in narcotics smuggling.

Castillo’s conclusion about Oliver North? “He should be in jail. On his own words, he lied to Congress, he lied to everybody, he’s deceiving the American people right now. I think people do not know the real fact that he was heavily involved in narcotics trafficking—his organization was heavily involved in narcotics trafficking. And he had *knowledge* that these people were involved in narcotics trafficking.”

Castillo, a front-line combatant in the war on drugs, believes that North must also bear the responsibility for what is happening in the streets of the United States today. “Oliver North cannot stand there and say that nobody died of the narcotics that the Contras ran into the United States,” Castillo declares. “He cannot guarantee me that.”