

'CIA' is a dead end in Contra-cocaine scandal

by Edward Spannaus

"That's a loser," was the comment of *EIR* Founding Editor Lyndon LaRouche, when asked recently about the focus by many people on the CIA as being responsible for using the Contras to bring crack cocaine in Los Angeles. LaRouche said that, although the CIA has its own problems, "the key to this operation was that the CIA was *not* in control of the Contras," but rather that *George Bush*, as vice president, had acquired special powers over the National Security Council (NSC), and Bush was running the so-called "Iran-Contra" operation as a private operation under "secret government" control. Bush and his subordinates, such as Donald Gregg (his national security adviser) and Oliver North (Bush's "go-pher" on the NSC staff), were dumping cocaine into the United States as a means of raising money for privatized covert operations.

If we go at this from the standpoint that, "Oh, gee, it was the CIA that ran it," LaRouche warned, "you're going up a dead end, where there are no records, or very few records that could be disclosed. You are avoiding the thing you should face."

In the popular mythology, the CIA is an all-powerful, omnipresent agency that runs the U.S. government, the military, and private networks. In reality, the CIA is a cautious, aging bureaucracy which takes up only a small portion of the U.S. intelligence budget. The take-down of the CIA began during the Carter administration, after the exposures of CIA covert operations through the Church and Pike committees; during the Reagan-Bush administration, the big buildup occurred in the special operations branches of the Defense Department, and in private networks, usually composed of former CIA or military special forces operatives.

This is an apparatus, mostly outside of the CIA itself, which Bush controlled through his accumulation and seizure of special powers from 1981-86, as documented in *EIR's*

recent *Special Report*, "Would a President Bob Dole Prosecute Drug Super-Kingpin George Bush?"

To call Bush's secret government apparatus the "CIA" is a dangerous illusion; to make the CIA the primary focus of demands for investigation of the Contra-cocaine scandal is folly. Some of those who insist on limiting the demands to the CIA are simply being opportunistic, picking an easy target; others, who know better, are deliberately ensuring that any investigation launched today suffers the same fate as every previous investigation, and therefore that our neighborhoods will continue to be flooded with drugs, and hundreds of thousands of Americans will continue to rot in U.S. prisons "doing George Bush's time."

Are there any records?

The most thorough investigation to date of the links between the Contras and drug-trafficking was conducted by the "Kerry Committee," a subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—and even that investigation was obstructed and diverted throughout.

A former counsel to that committee, Jonathan Winer, recently pointed to the problems of trying to determine what happened ten years ago, with such "privatized" operations. In the same discussion, the General Counsel of the CIA acknowledged, for the first time, that records of such activities may not exist, for the same reason: that U.S. government officials may have been involved in privatized, "off-line" secret operations. These comments, which implicitly point to the "off the books" operations being run out of the White House-NSC apparatus supervised by Bush, were made publicly in response to a question posed by this writer during a conference on "Law Enforcement and Intelligence," sponsored by the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Law and National Security, held in Washington on Sept. 20.

Winer, who is now deputy assistant secretary of state for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, commented that “we had a semi-privatization of aspects of our foreign policy in that period,” and he elaborated the risks of this. “One of the things that I hope we all learned from the mid-1980s,” he said, “is that any time you privatize government activities, you create activities which are government-sponsored but not official, you provide funding for governmental activities which are outside the parameters of Congressional oversight, you run the risk of creating activities which it is very difficult to determine if they are, or are not, government-sponsored. You create tremendous difficulties for oversight; you also create activities which will not be recorded in governmental documents. In seeking to determine in the mid-1990s, precisely what happened in the mid-1980s, you’re going to be confined, or constrained, by the fact that there may not have been systematic record-keeping of certain activities, which some government officials may have known about.”

Following up Winer’s comment, CIA General Counsel Jeffrey Smith said that the CIA is determined to get to the bottom of the allegations raised by the *San Jose Mercury News*, but, he said, “it may be difficult because, as Jonathan [Winer] says, there may not be records, some of it may have been done off-line, by people who were not U.S. government employees and who were part of the private operations being run down there” in Central America by Oliver North and the like.

Winer then highlighted the problems involved when U.S. intelligence agencies “deal with certain kinds of people” who provide services and assistance to the U.S. government, and that “they may be engaged in activities at the same time which may be quite pernicious.” Winer cautioned: “And one of the obligations of anybody in the U.S. government is to make sure that pernicious activities are not being condoned or facilitated. To the extent that people are working with the government off-line, that oversight function becomes even more difficult. And I think if you look at the report that was issued ten years ago [by the Kerry Committee], it provides some perspective on those issues.”

Three investigations under way

There are now at least three official investigations under way into the CIA drug-running allegations. On Sept. 4, CIA director John Deutch asked the CIA Inspector General to conduct an internal inquiry and to report within 60 days. On Sept. 20, Justice Department Inspector General Michael Bromwich announced that he was opening an investigation “into allegations that federal agencies helped funnel drug profits to rebels in Nicaragua, known as the Contras, in the 1980s.”

And also on Sept. 20, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) released a letter from House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), in which he said he had asked the House Select Committee on Intelligence to investigate the matter. During a hearing of the Intelligence Committee on Sept. 25, the matter was raised, including that the former chairman of the committee, Rep.

Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), had asked to review records of the committee with respect to the Contras, many of which are still classified. Stokes, a founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, chaired the Intelligence Committee during 1987-88.

EIR has also received indications that some sort of inquiry is also under way in the Department of Defense.

Another potentially significant move in the Congress is a plan to introduce legislation that would establish a Presidential Commission to review, and declassify, files relating to the 1980s Contra operations and other covert actions of the Reagan-Bush period. This would be similar to the “Records Act” that established the Presidential Review Panel on the John F. Kennedy assassination. That panel has unearthed important new documentation about the Kennedy assassination, and has prevented many key records from being either destroyed, or permanently buried under a blanket of bogus national security exemptions.

Ibero-America gets the story first

While almost all of the news media in the United States are treating this as a “CIA” story, a flood of coverage featuring George Bush has broken in Ibero-America, with some also emerging in Europe. Spanish-language NBC-TV, Spanish-language Reuters, and the Mexican news service Notimex all put out extensive news wires on the Bush story, following the press conference held by *EIR* to release its *Special Report* on Sept. 19.

Many of the newspaper stories published mug shots of Bush with their articles, and sported headlines such as “George Bush Involved in Drug Trade to Finance Contra Operations,” and “George Bush, Crack Kingpin?” Stories of varying length have been sighted in Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, and Panama. In addition, an interview with *EIR*’s Carlos Méndez was broadcast throughout the Ibero-American continent, and into Spain and Hispanic sections of the United States.

The U.S. mass media remain almost completely silent on the Bush angle—even after the *EIR* press conference. A certain amount of coverage broadening the issue to “the White House” followed a press conference given by former Drug Enforcement Administration agent Celerino Castillo III in Washington on Sept. 23. Castillo emphasized that the Contra drug-running was “a White House operation,” and he described his own personal confrontation with George Bush over it in 1986.

Senior Washington journalist Sarah McClendon also raised the Bush issue at the White House press briefing on Sept. 23, when she asked why President Clinton doesn’t just come out and say that over “the last two or three days around here there’s been documented evidence that it was George Bush and Oliver North and the CIA that was bringing in the narcotics?”

And the Sept. 30 *Time* magazine, noted, by way of a warning, that Lyndon LaRouche “wants to put George Bush on trial as ‘the crack kingpin of the ’80s.’ ”