

DOJ's Bromwich: Some oppose drug probe

by S. K. Rose and E. Spannaus

In marked contrast to the attitude of the CIA Inspector General, who has already concluded that there is no merit to the *San Jose Mercury News* allegations—even before he completes his investigation—the Justice Department Inspector General, Michael Bromwich, told the Senate Intelligence Committee on Oct. 23 that he is treating the allegations and his investigation very seriously.

"I've reviewed the articles in the *San Jose Mercury* [sic], and it seemed to me that there were enough troubling questions about the points of contact between individuals employed by different components of the Justice Department, and the allegations that drew together the CIA and the Contras in the introduction of crack cocaine into South-Central Los Angeles, that I thought it was very important to launch an investigation," Bromwich testified. "I did so on my own without being directed by anyone, either inside the [Justice] Department or outside the department."

Meetings in Los Angeles

Bromwich said that he has already made two trips to Los Angeles, over the opposition of some inside the Justice Department. On the day that he decided to open the investigation, Bromwich met with Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), who has spearheaded the drive for investigations of the San Jose, California daily's allegations. "I subsequently met with her again," Bromwich said. "She facilitated an introduction to me to Gary Webb, the author of the *San Jose Mercury* articles, and I have talked with Mr. Webb on subsequent occasions." He then met with many of the other members of Congressional Black Caucus who have called for an investigation. Then he went back to Los Angeles again:

"I just returned last night, Senators, from what for me was an extraordinary trip to South-Central Los Angeles. I was invited to do so by Congresswoman Millender-McDonald, to meet with some community leaders so that they would have a chance to meet first-hand with the person who is going to be conducting one of the investigations that touches on these issues. I won't say that that trip was roundly endorsed by others in the department."

At that point, hearing chairman Arlen Specter pressed Bromwich on this point; Bromwich said that, "I prefer not to talk about that in public session," but, he added, "It was op-

posed by some."

Although Bromwich declined to identify who opposed his efforts, it is almost a sure guess that at the top of the list would be Jack Keeney and Mark Richard, the two long time "career professionals" at the top of the Criminal Division. Richard was singled out in the 1988-89 "Kerry Report" as having obstructed the Senate investigation of Contra drug-trafficking.

The DOJ opposition team

At the opening of his testimony, Bromwich told the committee that, "for better or for worse, I'm not a stranger either to issues of narcotics distribution nor to issues relating to Iran-Contra." He was a federal narcotics prosecutor for four years in New York City, focussing on high-level narcotics trafficking, and then he went to work for the Iran-Contra independent counsel, Lawrence Walsh. There, he first obtained guilty pleas from Carl "Spitz" Channell and Richard Miller, for illegal fund-raising on behalf of Oliver North and the Contras. He was part of the team which prosecuted Ollie North. And he headed a team investigating illegalities in the Contra resupply effort, which led to the indictment of Joseph Fernandez, the CIA station chief in Costa Rica. "That case, as you know, was aborted subsequently in the latter stages of 1989 because the Department of Justice . . . refused to release the documents and declassify the documents that our office needed in order to pursue that matter."

"Were you dissatisfied with that?" Specter asked. "Very much so," was Bromwich's reply. Specter asked if Bromwich now has the power "to get into the inside of that." Bromwich said he does.

Bromwich has his work cut out for him. He will no doubt face formidable opposition within his own department, as he goes back into the issues of Justice Department obstruction of the Iran-Contra and drug-trafficking investigations. The Fernandez case is indicative.

According to the Final Report of Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh, the classified information at issue in the Fernandez case involved the location of two CIA stations in Central America, which were already publicly known. Walsh said that the actions by Bush's Attorney General, Dick Thornburgh, "were an unprecedented and unwarranted intrusion into a prosecution of a case conducted by an Independent Counsel."

While Bush and Thornburgh may be gone, a number of those who handled the Fernandez matter are still in the Justice Department; this includes Jack Keeney and Mark Richard, who supervised the DOJ Internal Security Section which was designated as the section with which Walsh was to deal directly. Two other officials who were directly involved with the Fernandez case are also still in the Criminal Division; these are John Martin of the Internal Security Section, and James S. Reynolds, now of the Terrorist and Violent Crimes Section.