

# Noriega exposes Bush as cocaine kingpin on national television

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Jailed former Panamanian Armed Forces head Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega has joined the growing chorus of prominent voices publicly condemning George Bush for his involvement in drug trafficking, murder, and political persecution during his 12-year tenure as Vice President and President of the United States.

In his soon-to-be-released autobiography, and in recent interviews with CBS News's "Sixty Minutes" and the *New York Post*'s Cindy Adams, General Noriega has again detailed his long-standing personal experiences with George Bush, revealing the *real* reasons that, as President, Bush deployed tens of thousands of U.S. troops to Panama to carry out his "arrest," and providing new corroboration that Bush was, as *EIR* has documented, the cocaine kingpin of the 1980s.

These latest Noriega revelations add to the growing volume of evidence that, under the December 1981 Executive Order 12333, and National Security Decision Directive 3, then-Vice President Bush was placed in charge of a clandestine enterprise, headquartered in his White House office, that carried out high crimes and misdemeanors, under the fraudulent protective coloration of "national security."

Among the crimes of the Bush-led enterprise were:

- *The decade-long campaign, launched in the summer of 1982, to destroy the political movement and publishing enterprises of political economist Lyndon LaRouche.* The Bush-led effort, launched at the behest of Henry A. Kissinger and his backers in London, involved the abuse of EO 12333, to conduct a judicial frame-up of LaRouche and a score of his associates, using the corrupt "permanent bureaucracy" of the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI, and a White House-based "public diplomacy" black propaganda unit, which planted thousands of false stories about LaRouche in major U.S. and international media outlets, to brainwash the population into accepting the brutal elimination of "the LaRouche factor."

On Oct. 6, 1986, over 400 heavily armed federal, state, and local law enforcement agents, backed up by special warfare units of the Pentagon, carried out a military-style raid on the offices and residence of LaRouche and his associates in Leesburg, Virginia, in an effort to "judicially" execute LaRouche. When the effort failed, the Bush team resorted to the fallback option of the judicial frameup. Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, in testimony before an inde-

pendent commission on Sept. 1, 1994, described the LaRouche case as the most egregious instance of sustained prosecutorial abuse that he had ever encountered.

- *The facilitating of the illegal drug epidemic of the 1980s.* In his capacity as the actual director of covert warfare, anti-narcotics, anti-terrorism, and continuity of government during the Reagan Presidency, George Bush personally oversaw the Nicaraguan Contra arms-for-cocaine operations, and the even more extensive Afghansi arms-for-heroin operations, which financed the not-so-secret wars in Central America and West Asia. (For the most thorough documentation of Bush's role in the drug epidemic, see *EIR's Special Report*, "Would a President Bob Dole Prosecute Drug Super-Kingpin George Bush?" September 1996.)

- *The delivery of Mexico and Panama to the hands of the Colombian drug cartels.* In the case of Mexico, during the Presidency of Bush's hand-picked stooge, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, nationalist leaders, like oil workers union figure Joaquín Hernández Galicia (known as "La Quina"), who attempted to resist the narco-takeover, were railroaded into prison or silenced through violent means.

## Noriega speaks out

General Noriega is America's only official prisoner of war. Following the Dec. 20, 1989 U.S. military invasion of Panama, ostensibly to serve an arrest warrant on the Panamanian head of state, based on bogus drug-trafficking charges, Noriega was taken to the U.S. and tried in federal court in Miami, Florida and convicted. He was officially classed by the court as a prisoner of war, and, he is, to this day, allowed to wear his Panamanian Defense Forces uniform, as he serves a 40-year sentence, and awaits the next phase of his appeal.

On March 9, 1997, CBS News's "Sixty Minutes" aired a 12-minute interview with General Noriega, on the occasion of the publication of his autobiography, *The Memoirs of Manuel Noriega, America's Prisoner* (with Peter Eisner, New York: Random House, 1997). In the interview, Noriega identified the real reason that he was targeted by George Herbert Walker Bush: On two occasions, he had dared to say "no" to Bush emissaries. The first occasion involved his decision to shut down the School of the Americas, a military counterinsurgency training center in Panama run by the Pentagon. The second instance involved the Nicaraguan Contras.

From the broadcast:

**Morley Safer:** “Noriega says Oliver North, working with Adm. John Poindexter, President Reagan’s national security adviser, tried to get Noriega to help in a secret war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the rebels in El Salvador.”

**Manuel Noriega:** “The second ‘no’ was Poindexter; when Poindexter was saying, ‘We need Panama as a spearhead against Nicaragua.’ So that the United States can go ahead and carry out an invasion. But Noriega said, ‘no.’ Now I became unfriendly. Now, I was considered ugly. . . .”

**Safer:** “Peter Eisner is Noriega’s co-author. He says he has little doubt that the campaign against Noriega had little basis in solid fact. Washington leaked stories about his drug deals, stories with very little foundation. . . . The campaign of vilification, says Noriega, was bought, hook, line, and sinker, by the opposition press in Panama, and by American reporters. The conspiracy, he said, became the obsession of one man.”

**Noriega:** “George Herbert Bush.”

**Safer:** “In early ’88, a 30-page drug indictment was drawn up. It took 25,000 troops and Stealth bombers to bring Noriega to trial.”

Safer then presented some startling evidence: that it was actually Bush and the U.S. Department of Justice—not Noriega—who were caught in bed with the Cali, Colombia drug cartel.

**Safer:** “Carlos Lehder, the drug kingpin who’d never met Noriega, testified against him, and his sentence was reduced. More than half the witnesses were convicted felons. The government’s so-called dynamite witness was a trafficker named Ricardo Bilonick, who simply gave himself up and offered to testify. . . . Frank Rubino, Noriega’s lead attorney, says Bilonick was so important to the case that the government made a real sweetheart deal with him. Instead of facing 20 years, he did 24 months. . . . But there was more. If Bilonick testified against Noriega, the U.S. government would reduce the sentence of one Luis Santa Cruz Echevery, a convicted trafficker and half-brother of a member of the Cali Cartel. But what was in it for Bilonick to give up his freedom in Panama?”

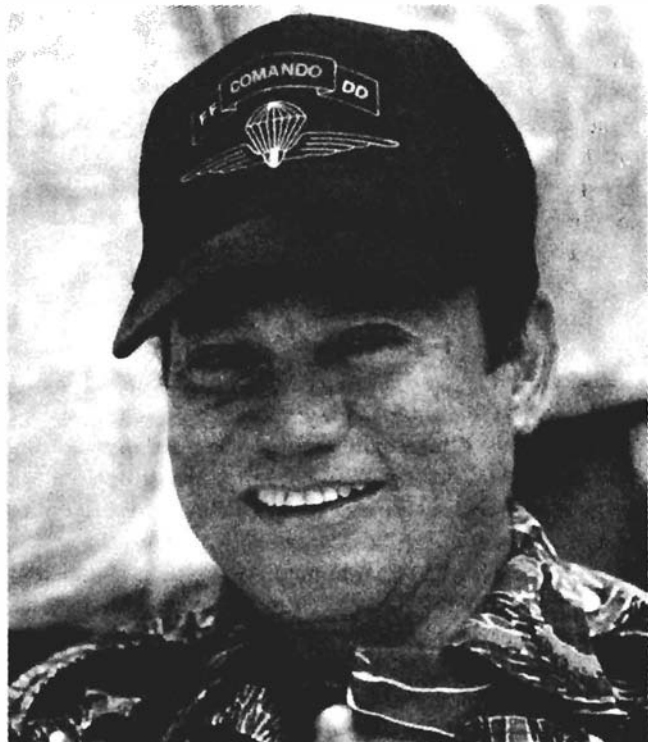
**Frank Rubino:** “Ricardo Bilonick was paid by the Cali Cartel, \$1,250,000, to testify against General Noriega, and was also told that he basically had one of two choices: He could collect the million-and-a-quarter, he could come and testify, or he could be buried here.”

**Safer:** “So, in effect, a cynic would say that the U.S. Justice Department and the Cali Cartel were in cahoots to nail Noriega.”

**Peter Eisner:** “Not only a cynic, but the lawyer for the Cali Cartel said—wrote in a letter—that we must keep this quiet.”

**Safer:** “Because, the letter to the U.S. Justice Department went on to say, ‘the appearance will be that you have made a deal with the Cali Cartel.’ ”

As events proved, following the invasion of Panama and



*Manuel Noriega has written his memoirs, and has taken off the gloves against George Bush, whom he links to narcotics traffickers who were hired to supply arms to the Contras.*

the overthrow of Noriega, it was, ultimately, George Bush who had the deal with the Cali Cartel. The government that Bush handpicked and installed in Panama City was dominated, from President Guillermo Endara, to Attorney General Cruz, to Chief Justice López Tejada, by leading assets of the Cali Cartel.

### **A most damning photograph**

The day after the “Sixty Minutes” interview was aired, the *New York Post* published a column by Cindy Adams, based on a March 8, 1997 telephone interview with Noriega. The article appeared under the banner headline, “Noriega Does Machete Job on Bush—‘Ex-Prez Lied About His CIA-Era Links With Me.’ ” The article featured a photograph of then-Vice President Bush, seated with Noriega at a meeting at the airport in Panama City in 1983. Adams notes that, in 1988, as the drug accusations against Noriega were flying around, Vice President Bush had publicly stated: “I never met General Noriega.”

Noriega told Adams that he had, in fact, held three face-to-face meetings with Bush—all at Bush’s initiative; the first was on Dec. 8, 1976, when Bush was the director of the CIA. At Bush’s behest, Noriega had previously refrained from detailing his personal contacts with the ex-CIA chief. But, asked by Adams whether Bush had played a role in the covert arms deals involving Iran, the Nicaraguan Contras, etc., the general

replied: "Oliver North was in charge of the Contras for Bush. Oliver North was not the architect of the Iran-Contra operation, only the messenger. However, make no mistake, he was the messenger for Bush. Bush recruited Panamanian pilots to provide the Contras with arms. Bush was the one to provide the list of Panamanian pilots who were working with the U.S. government."

And who were the Bush-picked pilots? As Noriega notes in his memoirs, "The pilots included such men as Jorge Canalias, Floyd Carlton Caceres, César Rodríguez and Teofilo Watson, future cocaine traffickers transporting Contra weapons in exchange for cocaine."

*EIR's* September 1996 *Special Report* provided further background on some of these men: "American officials already knew that Carlton had been arrested on a drug flight in Peru during the 1970s. Watson was employed by Diacs, a Miami-based company owned by Carlton and convicted drug-trafficker Alfredo Caballero, who had been contracted to deliver 'humanitarian aid' to the Contras by the State Department's Elliott Abrams. Watson died when his drug-laden plane crashed at the Costa Rica ranch of John Hull, which was a center for the Contra supply effort. . . . Rodríguez was later executed in Medellín, Colombia, in March 1986, in a drug deal gone sour."

Carlton Caceres was one of the witnesses that the Bush Justice Department called to testify against Noriega. Under cross-examination, Watson admitted that he was angry at Noriega because Noriega had cooperated with Costa Rican officials in prosecuting him on drug charges. He also admitted, under oath, that he had delivered arms to the Contras in 1983-84, while smuggling cocaine from Medellín into the United States.

## Case pending

An appeal has been filed on behalf of General Noriega before the U.S. Appeals Court, based on the recent revelations of the Justice Department-Cali Cartel collusion, in obtaining the tainted testimony of Bilonick. In his interview with Adams, Noriega summed up his view of his situation:

"I am optimistic that God is leading me very near to the door of freedom. I am not that ridiculous image of a man waving a machete. These are insane images used by George Bush to soften the public for the carnage that took place when they invaded my country in 1989 and imprisoned me. They created the image of a mad dictator who dared challenge the supremacy of the United States.

"Why, after being the man the U.S. could count on, did I become the enemy? Because I said no to Panama being a staging base for Salvadoran death squads and the Nicaraguan Contras.

"So they found something horrible to call me. A drug dealer. How do you deal with one who defies you? Destroy him. Plus you factor in a gutless man of weak character, a hypocrite, a liar, a George Bush."

# Richard Mellon Scaife: Who is he, really?

by Edward Spannaus

*The following article will be continued in a forthcoming issue.*

He's considered the stupidest member of his extended family, and was kicked out of Yale, not once, but twice. He's a (supposedly recovered) alcoholic, as have been most members of the family. The kindest description of his personality is "dark and mysterious." He is known for never looking his own employees straight in the eye.

He has a long history of using the U.S. Justice Department to target his enemies. He got his own sister's fiancé indicted; after his sister married the poor chap, the man ended up dead within a year—some say suicide, some say murder.

He owns a network of newspapers, but he himself refuses to be interviewed by reporters from other publications. On one occasion, when a reporter for the *Columbia Journalism Review* tried to question him, he berated her as a "f—king Communist c—nt."

He gave a million dollars to Richard Nixon's Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP), and he is the biggest funder of right-wing think-tanks in the United States today.

Meet . . . Richard Mellon Scaife.

His name is hardly a household word, but in the past quarter-century, "Dickie" Scaife has been one the most powerful behind-the-scenes operators in the United States. His power comes purely from his wealth, and specifically, from the way that he has deployed that wealth at the instruction of the Anglo-American banking families that he represents. Dickie is not known for his brains—in fact, he was kicked out of college twice, first expelled as the result of a drunken brawl, and flunked out the second time. His family made him go "local," to Pittsburgh University, which he tried to make up for, by majoring in British history.

Only recently has Richard Mellon Scaife come into public prominence, as a result of the disclosure that he is the bank-roller of a cushy "retirement" position for Whitewater independent counsel Kenneth Starr at Pepperdine University. This raised eyebrows, to put it mildly, because Scaife is the principal funder of a news media propaganda campaign aimed at defaming and discrediting Starr's main target, President William Clinton. Scaife has also bankrolled a nationwide crusade charging that White House aide Vincent Foster did not commit suicide, but was murdered; something which is also the subject of official investigation by the recipient of Scaife's largesse, Kenneth Starr.