### The Weckstein File

# Judge in LaRouche cases tied to Bush drug ring

by Anton Chaitkin

Accumulating evidence that George Bush and his operatives sponsored and protected the Western Hemisphere's cocaine operations of the 1980s, also implicates the Virginia judge who falsely imprisoned associates of Lyndon LaRouche. In the most important narcotics case in Virginia's history, attorney Clifford Weckstein played a hidden "fixer" role to protect a cocaine-trafficking apparatus, which was working in tandem with then-Vice President Bush and Bush employees such as Oliver North. Three years later, with Bush the President and Weckstein a state circuit court judge, Weckstein ran the railroad trials of Michael Billington and other LaRouche political associates who had fought to expose and wreck the Bush-North criminal apparatus.

#### Weckstein and Caballero

On April 4-5, 1986, the Panamanian military, under Gen. Manuel Noriega, working with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, arrested Lucas Gerardo Caballero Salinas (known as Gerardo Caballero) and several other Bolivian drug-traffickers in Panama.

Caballero and his partners had arranged to fly about 700 pounds of cocaine into southern Virginia for sale in the northeastern United States. His indictment in Virginia was important, chiefly because his father-in-law, Roberto Suárez Gómez (known as Roberto Suárez), was the main Bolivian gangster intermediary for Bolivian cocaine producers, who supplied the majority of the raw material to the Colombian cartels trafficking drugs into the United States. Roberto Suárez was also indicted, *in absentia*, in the Virginia Caballero case.

On April 9, 1986, Federal Judge James Turk assigned Weckstein's junior partner, former drug prosecutor William Cleaveland, to be Caballero's attorney. As Cleaveland later told this reporter, the case was managed by the firm, that is, by senior partner Weckstein, rather than by Cleaveland.

Weckstein himself had expert help. The most notorious and flagrantly corrupt U.S. lawyer for the South American cocaine cartels, "Diamond Joel" Hirschhorn of Miami, Florida, was in Roanoke, Virginia, during the globally important Caballero case, strategizing with his co-counsel, Clifford Weckstein. But Weckstein's partnership with the millionaire cartel representative was carefully hidden from the public: Hirschhorn was registered not in the Caballero case, involv-

ing the survival of his gangster sponsors, but only as a second to Weckstein in an unpublicized local trial of two-bit marijuana pusher, Alan Cohen, occurring at precisely the same time before the same judge. Judge Turk acceded to Weckstein's request on April 14, 1986 to admit Hirschhorn as Weckstein's co-counsel.

Weckstein sent his partner, Cleaveland, along with *Roanoke Times and World-News* reporter Douglas Pardue, to Bolivia. Weckstein's men worked with Caballero's family, and Suárez worked with his "Miami lawyers," for an arrangement which was to be carried out in the courtroom and in the news media.

Though honest anti-drug agents were at that time trying to turn members of the Bolivian organization to get at and destroy the structure top-down, this was blocked in the Caballero case. The dirty setup in Bolivia was protected. Gerardo Caballero was jailed for 20 years, and kept his mouth shut. Weckstein officially dropped the case on July 9, before the trial began; his role in organizing the strategy and outcome was covered up.

Pardue, an advocate of drug legalization whose newspaper was co-owned by Weckstein's in-laws, blatantly lied about the Bolivian crime organization. Pardue passed along the Weckstein firm's story that Caballero's father, a Bolivian executive with Gulf Oil, was a respectable "civic leader." He wrote that Caballero had an "aristocratic bearing" and "a heritage to back it up"; that his "grandmother was the British consul in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba"; and that Caballero's father-in-law, Roberto Suárez, was a rancher who had simply switched to the drug-trafficking business when he "discovered how lucrative cocaine could be."

But the Suárez-Caballero dope cartel had in fact organized the 1980 coup for the fascist "Cocaine Colonels," including Interior Minister Luis Arce Gómez, a cousin of Roberto Suárez. They had enslaved Bolivia to cocaine production.

#### **Bush and North exposed**

As the Caballero case hung in the balance, with Bolivian kingpin Roberto Suárez under indictment in Roanoke, George Bush's treacherous role in managing hemispheric cocaine-trafficking began to be exposed.

In the July 28, 1986 New York Post, Niles Lathem wrote about "Operation Blast Furnace," a strange "anti-drug" misdeployment of U.S. troops and helicopters into Bolivia, which had begun earlier in July and would continue into November. Lathem wrote, "Vice President George Bush pressured the Pentagon into agreeing to the operation." U.S. military leaders considered it a Bush publicity stunt, Lathem reported. Bolivian military leaders who were committed to fighting the cocaine cartel, in discussions with EIR at the time, fiercely criticized Bush's "Blast Furnace" as an empty provocation, a sabre-rattling use of U.S. forces in violation of Bolivian sovereignty which netted no significant drug traffickers or their infrastructure.

74 National EIR October 11, 1996





Leaflets circulated by EIR and the Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations in 1990, while Judge Clifford Weckstein was running the political railroad trials of associates of Lyndon LaRouche. They received prison sentences of up to 77 vears.

Lathem reported, in fact, that "cocaine overlord Roberto Suárez" had been "tipped off . . . well in advance," had easily escaped, and had saved almost all of his criminal assets; and that "Pentagon hard-liners and conservatives in Congress are blaming aides to Vice President George Bush" for "leaks to the U.S. press."

As Bush's Operation Blast Furnace continued, two Bolivian biologists and a pilot were murdered when they accidentally discovered what the Bush operation had failed to find, a giant cocaine laboratory in the jungle. A Bolivian parliamentary investigating commission found that Oliver North had come to Bolivia that year and was protecting the traffickers to finance the Nicaraguan Contras. Commission member Edmundo Salazar was murdered; his widow released his notes in 1992, and she was immediately killed.

Commission member Gregorio Lanza said, on Danish Radio in August 1996, "It was proven" that "Oliver North supplied the . . . Contras . . . partly through the . . . drug mafia," and the laboratory which the Bolivian scientific party had stumbled upon in 1986 had possibly been providing the cocaine which North routed onto the streets of the United States.

## Solving Bush's 'LaRouche problem'

On May 3-4, 1986, about the time Weckstein's partner Cleaveland and media stooge Pardue were in Bolivia to protect the cocaine apparatus, North was at the Connecticut estate of Barbara Newington, a financial supporter of North and his Contras. North demanded that she "break contact" with the political movement of Lyndon LaRouche, whose associate Michael Billington had warned her, and many others, that North was a dope-pushing fraud. On May 5, 1986, Iran-Contra figure Richard Secord telegraphed North that their agent had "collected info against LaRouche."

On Oct. 5, 1986, Nicaraguan soldiers shot down a Contra transport plane and captured the only surviving crew member, Eugene Hasenfus, who had parachuted out. Vice President Bush's agent Felix Rodriguez called Bush's aide Sam Watson; Watson notified the White House Situation Room and the National Security Council staff about the missing aircraft. North was dispatched to Central America to prevent publicity over the event. But on Oct. 9, the captured Hasenfus exposed Rodriguez as his boss, at a press conference in Managua, Nicaragua. Bush was thrust into U.S. media headlines as the controller of Rodriguez and the Contras, and the explosive, public phase of the Contra scandal began. Bush's name gradually faded out of public view in what became known as "Iran-Contra." Bush himself later pardoned officials who were indicted.

Meanwhile, the day after the Hasenfus capture, 400 federal and state police, assembled under the Bush-led national security apparatus, raided publishing offices associated with Lyndon LaRouche's political movement in Leesburg, Virginia.

In January 1987, attorney Clifford Weckstein was appointed circuit court judge in Roanoke. Later that year, Sen. John Kerry's (D-Mass.) U.S. Senate subcommittee found that federal law enforcement agencies knew about Felix Rodriguez, Oliver North, and their drug trafficking. But George Bush took office as President in 1989, and stonewalled investigation of the hemispheric cocaine operations that his staff had directly supervised.

In a 1989 kangaroo court trial, Judge Weckstein sentenced Michael Billington to 77 years in prison for his fundraising from Newington and others. Weckstein refused to allow evidence of government misconduct to be presented. In cases which followed, Weckstein railroaded and sentenced four other LaRouche associates-Paul Gallagher, Anita Gallagher, Laurence Hecht, and Donald Phau—to 33, 39, 35, and 25 years in prison, respectively, for their fundraising activities.

These five political leaders had helped obtain support for the 1986 publication of EIR's Dope, Inc., the famous exposé of the global narcotics business and the highest-level government and banking networks behind it.

In the trial of the Gallaghers and Hecht, Weckstein quashed subpoenas for Oliver North and three other Bush lieutenants. Their testimony had been sought to demonstrate the criminal reality of the "Get LaRouche" task force run by the Bush apparatus.

EIR October 11, 1996