

# The indictment of 'drug kingpin' George Bush

by Edward Spannaus

In September 1996, *EIR* drafted a model "drug-kingpin" indictment of George Bush and 10 others for conducting a drug-trafficking "enterprise"; the indictment was published in the *EIR Special Report* "Would a President Bob Dole Prosecute Drug Super-Kingpin George Bush?"

*EIR* explained at the time that the point of publishing the indictment was, first, to demonstrate that the evidence existed, in the public, legal record, to prosecute Bush as a "drug kingpin," and, second, to show that this was an open-and-shut case, by applying the exact same legal standards as have been used to send tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of drug-traffickers to U.S. prisons.

The indictment opened with a racketeering count, charging that the Bush and the other defendants had "utilized the official positions of defendant **George Herbert Walker Bush** in the Government of the United States of America to facilitate the transfer, importation, and distribution of large quantities of illegal narcotics within the United States."

In describing Bush's role in the "Enterprise," the indictment recounted how, as Vice President, Bush had assumed extraordinary powers over U.S. intelligence and covert operations, and how, under the guise of "crisis management," Bush had been designated to chair the Special Situation Group, which, under the authority of National Security Decision Directives 2 and 3, "superseded and preempted the powers of the National Security Council in areas of 'crisis management,' which encompassed covert operations and counter-terrorism."

Bush took over additional positions from which, the indictment charges, he was able to provide protection for international narcotics traffickers and prevent interdiction of narcotics shipments by U.S. law enforcement agencies. These positions included heading the South Florida Task Force on Drugs, the Terrorist Incident Working Group, and "Operation Alliance," an anti-narcotics effort conducted in cooperation with Mexico.

The indictment was patterned after a number of drug-kingpin and racketeering indictments brought by the U.S. Justice Department, including that against former Panamanian Defense Forces head Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega.

## The indictment

Count I of the indictment was a racketeering conspiracy charge under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), 18 U.S.C. 1962(d)—standard in prosecu-

tions of major drug-traffickers. The model Bush indictment included a description of the "Enterprise," its purposes and objectives (financing the Contras, protecting narcotics shipments and traffickers, and preventing discovery of the illegal activities of the Enterprise), and a listing of 80 overt acts committed in furtherance of the conspiracy.

Count II was a standard conspiracy count, charging a conspiracy to import marijuana and cocaine, in violation of 21 U.S.C. 952, 959, and 963.

Count III was the "kingpin" count, charging that Bush administered, organized, and led a Continuing Criminal Enterprise (CCE), in violation of 21 U.S.C. 848. The sentence for a first conviction under this section is a mandatory minimum of ten years, up to life imprisonment.

Count IV charged a conspiracy to obstruct justice, in order to prevent U.S. law enforcement agencies from investigating and prosecuting the Enterprise, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 1503.

Count V charged a conspiracy to obstruct Congress, by obstructing and impeding investigations by Congressional committees, in particular the Kerry Committee, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 1505.

## The evidence

The evidence compiled against George Bush in the *EIR Special Report*, and chronicled in the indictment, was far greater than exists in most conspiracy cases. And, astonishingly, all of it was from the public record—not from confidential informants or wiretaps which prosecutors often have available to them. The two major sources for the evidence in the indictment are the "Kerry Committee" report, and the Final Report of the Independent Counsel for Iran/Contra Matters.

1. The "Kerry Committee" was the popular name for the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and Foreign Operations, chaired by John Kerry (D-Mass.), which held hearings on "Drugs, Law Enforcement and Foreign Policy" during 1987 and 1988. The subcommittee began its investigation in early 1986, but its work was overshadowed by the media feeding frenzy around "Iran-Contra" and Oliver North, which began in late 1986. The Kerry Committee took testimony from 47 witnesses in all. Many witnesses, some who were convicted drug-traffickers, testified in great detail about the drug links to the Contra operations. Some were eyewitnesses or direct participants in guns-for-drugs shipments to Contra bases in Central America.

2. The Final Report of the Independent Counsel for Iran/Contra Matters (Lawrence Walsh), issued Aug. 4, 1993, contains a wealth of detail about the central role of George Bush and the Office of the Vice President in the Contra supply operations. The most important material is in the chapter on Donald Gregg, the 30-year CIA veteran who became Bush's National Security Adviser in 1982. Gregg had a decades-long friendship and association with former CIA operative Felix Rodriguez, and it was Bush's office which deployed Rodriguez to Central America and made arrangements for him to

operate out of Ilopango military air base in El Salvador. The Gregg chapter documents numerous meetings and communications among Bush, Gregg, and Rodriguez, and also between them and Oliver North, Richard Secord, and Contra leaders. Elsewhere in the Walsh report is evidence concerning the relationship between North, his “courier” Robert Owen, Owen’s deployment to the ranch of U.S. national John Hull in Costa Rica, and their dealings with Contra leaders such as Adolfo Calero and Col. Enrique Bermúdez.

Putting the two reports together, and adding in some of the court documents from the Los Angeles Contra-cocaine ring, all of the evidence was there to put George Bush and his confederates away for a long, long time.

## How the conspiracy worked

The Kerry Report, plus the court documents in the Danilo Blandón and Norwin Meneses cases (the Los Angeles crack-cocaine cases) give abundant evidence of drug trafficking by and for the Contras, centered at Ilopango Air Base in El Salvador, and at the John Hull Ranch in Costa Rica. A number of those charged in the model indictment were directly involved in this drug trafficking, including Meneses, Blandón, John Hull, Felix Rodriguez, and the late co-conspirator Enrique Bermúdez.

Working “up the ladder,” as prosecutors like to do, we find that Meneses and Blandón were set up in the drug business by Contra leader Bermúdez, and we find from the Walsh report that North, Bermúdez, and Calero often met, and that Robert Owen worked with Calero at North’s request. We find Felix Rodriguez and Owen meeting at a hotel in Arlington, Virginia in January 1985, and then Rodriguez meeting with Bush and Gregg on Jan. 22, 1985.

We have a December 1984 meeting of Calero, Bermúdez, Owen, and Hull; a June 28, 1985 meeting of North, Secord, Calero, and Bermúdez; and an April 20, 1986 meeting of Rodriguez, North, Secord, and Bermúdez, at Ilopango Air Base. In North’s notebooks, we find frequent references to Owen and Hull, and to drug-smuggling, particularly in connection with Hull.

Felix Rodriguez is a frequent link between the top levels of the conspiracy (Bush and Gregg), and the lower-level drug pilots and smugglers at Ilopango. The Walsh Report documents that Bush and Gregg facilitated Rodriguez being set up to operate at Ilopango, and it documents at least three face-to-face meetings of Rodriguez and George Bush. In one instance, ten days after the Rodriguez meeting with North, Secord, and Bermúdez at Ilopango, Rodriguez went to Washington and met Bush.

On Jan. 14, 1986, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) country agent in Costa Rica, Celerino Castillo, met Bush at a reception in the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala, and tried to tell him that there was something funny going on at Ilopango. Bush turned away and refused to talk to Castillo, but five days later, Bush’s Deputy National Security Adviser flew to Ilopango and met with Rodriguez.

## The CIA Inspector General’s report

Over a year after *EIR* published its *Special Report* with the draft indictment of Bush, the CIA’s outgoing Inspector General released the first part of a two-volume report reviewing allegations of CIA involvement in drug trafficking. Issued in January 1998, the first part was entitled “Allegations of Connections Between CIA and the Contras in Cocaine Trafficking to the United States—Volume I: The California Story.” As expected, the report cleared the CIA of any role in the guns-for-drugs trafficking to support the Contras, but it contained a number of new revelations linking several big-time California and Central America cocaine traffickers to the Contras (see *EIR*, Feb. 13, 1998, p. 28).

For example, the IG report confirmed that:

- Both Meneses and Blandón gave cash and other material support to the Contras, using their cocaine profits. During a several-year period, Blandón allowed Contra leader Eden Pastora, the head of the “southern front” operations in Costa Rica, to live, free of charge, in a home he owned there. He also gave substantial cash to Pastora. Pastora also admitted to IG investigators that he received funds from two other cocaine traffickers.

- Blandón was part of a Contra support network in Los Angeles that met with Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN) military commander Col. Enrique Bermúdez in 1981. In 1982, he and Meneses travelled to Bolivia to consolidate a large cocaine shipment, then stopped, en route back to the United States, to meet with Bermúdez in Honduras. Blandón held two subsequent meetings with Bermúdez in 1983. The final meeting took place during a Ft. Lauderdale, Florida “unity summit” of the five top Contra leaders, which Blandón attended.

In October 1998, the second part of the IG’s report was issued, dealing with the broader issue of the Contras as a whole. It provided a devastating road map of Contra links to major Colombian drug-trafficking organizations, and it thoroughly vindicated *EIR*’s 1996 *Special Report* and the proposed Bush indictment. It also showed the crucial role played by the 1981 Executive Order No. 12333 in facilitating the cover-up of drug trafficking by persons acting for, or on behalf of, U.S. intelligence agencies (see *EIR*, Oct. 23, 1998).

The second part of the IG report established that every component of the Contra program was penetrated and heavily contaminated by the cocaine cartels. For example:

- The Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) operated on the “southern front,” out of bases in Costa Rica. The CIA received credible evidence that five leading officials of ARDE were “engaged in a drug-trafficking conspiracy with a known narcotics trafficker, Jorge Morales.” The CIA also received credible information that 16 other individuals, involved in support activities for ARDE, were linked to drug cartels.

- The 15th of September Legion was the military arm of the Nicaraguan Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ADREN), one of the first of the “Contra” organizations, founded

by Enrique Bermúdez in 1980. ADREN merged into the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) in September 1981. At the time, according to CIA records, ADREN “decided to engage in drug trafficking to the United States to raise funds for its activities.” The 15th of September Legion eventually split off as a separate military operation, which, according to CIA field reports, continued to be financed by drug trafficking into the United States, kidnapping, extortion, and robbery.

- FDN remained the principal Contra organization, operating on the “northern front” out of bases in Honduras. According to the IG, the CIA received information and/or allegations that nine Contra figures in the northern front operations were linked to drug trafficking. An additional five people were identified in CIA reports as drug linked, who were involved in northern front support operations.

- Ilopango Air Base in El Salvador was a major supply center for Contra units backed by the CIA, and by what the IG report referred to as the “Private Benefactor Program,” the White House-based covert support operation, linked to Oliver North, George Bush, and Felix Rodriguez. According to the IG, the CIA received information in 1985, 1986, and 1989 that drug traffickers were using hangars 4 and 5 at the base. These hangars were staging areas, supply depots, and parking areas for the Contra supply programs of both the CIA and the Private Benefactor Program.

- CIA received information that 14 pilots involved in supply runs for the Contras were linked to drug trafficking; and three companies “that were used to support Contra activities from 1984 until at least 1988” were also tied to Colombian narcotics-trafficking organizations.

The report contained much more detail as to each of these organizations, and as to many individuals who were part of the Bush-North Contra operation, and individuals who were flying in and out of Ilopango Air Base. Two such examples:

- A CIA officer was interviewed by investigators from the IG office about DEA allegations concerning drug trafficking at Ilopango. According to the IG report, this officer acknowledged that “another entity conducted operations from Hangar 4. He says he is not certain about the nature or affiliation of that entity, but surmises it may have been associated either with Oliver North, the Private Benefactors, or the Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office (NHAO).”

- Moisés Nuñez was another associate of ARDE suspected by the CIA of drug trafficking. Nuñez was a part owner and/or senior manager of a number of companies employed by the State Department’s NHAO to channel humanitarian aid to the Contras in the mid-1980s. The companies, including Productos Del Atlántico, Ocean Hunter/Mr. Shrimp, and Frigoríficos De Puntarenas, were the subject of investigation by the Kerry subcommittee. The IG report states:

“On March 25, 1987, CIA questioned Nuñez about narcotics trafficking allegations against him. Nuñez revealed that since 1985, he had engaged in a clandestine relationship with the National Security Council (NSC). Nuñez refused to elaborate on the nature of these actions, but indicated it was difficult

to answer questions relating to his involvement in narcotics trafficking because of the specific tasks he had performed at the direction of the NSC. Nuñez refused to identify the NSC officials with whom he had been involved.”

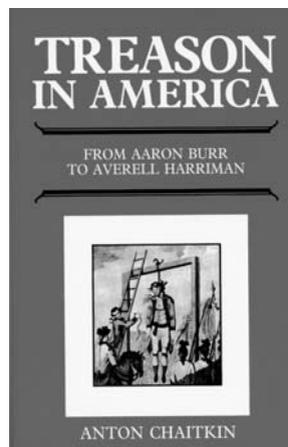
Later, in response to written questions from the Office of Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh about Nuñez, CIA official Alan Fiers wrote, “My recollection is that because of the NSC connection and the possibility that this could be somehow connected to the Private Benefactor program (otherwise known as the Iran Contra affair) a decision was made not to pursue this matter, but rather to turn it over to Judge Walsh.”

Walsh himself viewed the drug-trafficking allegations as outside of his mandate, and the matter was not further pursued, letting Bush off the hook (see “Why Was George Bush Never Impeached?” *EIR*, Oct. 16, 1998).

As *EIR* commented in the Sept. 27, 1996 issue: “There are probably 400-500,000 people in U.S. prisons and jails for drug offenses. About 30% of state prisoners were committed on drug charges, and about 60% of Federal prisoners. . . . But while 1-2,000 ‘kingpins,’ and hundreds of thousands of lesser drug offenders, sit in U.S. prisons, the biggest kingpin of them all, George Bush, is still loose. The model indictment presented by *EIR* demonstrates what should have been done a long time ago. There are enough other people doing George Bush’s time; now let’s have him do his own.”

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