



# Civiletti and the terrorists

by Scott Thompson

High-level U.S. intelligence sources, exiled Iranian political leaders, and officers of a Washington, D.C. police intelligence unit have each independently charged Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti with covering up for the assassins of Ali Akbar Tabatabai, the head of the anti-Khomeini Islamic Freedom Foundation, who was murdered July 22.

This obstruction of justice by a U.S. Attorney General was allegedly committed to protect a political "deal," whereby Iran would release the 51 American hostages. In exchange, the Carter administration would give Iranian intelligence (Savama) a license to kill any opponents of the tottering Khomeini regime on U.S. territory or elsewhere. The hostage release would be made at a timely moment for Carter's political fortunes.

Underscoring this "deal" has been repeated Justice Department intervention to stop local police from arresting Washington, D.C.-based Savama station chief Bahram Nahidian, who has been repeatedly named as the field operative in charge of the Tabatabai assassination. Nahidian, whose personal bodyguard David Belfield (a. . . a. Daoud Sallahuddin) allegedly murdered Tabatabai by shooting him three times in the chest at point-blank range, has been identified by U.S. intelligence sources as the courier between the Carter administration and Ayatollah Beheshti in arranging this deal. If Nahidian is arrested, these sources report, the deal is off.

## A brief exchange

Word of this Justice Department coverup leaked out when the Attorney General was making headlines for offering President Carter another political deal. In a meeting on June 17, a full month before Carter stated he knew his brother was under investigation for failure to register as an agent of Libya, Civiletti advised the President that his brother Billy "ought to register" and that if he did, "his previous failure to register would not be prosecutable."

Civiletti publicly denied that any such discussion had occurred until White House general counsel Lloyd Cutler informed him that Carter had written a memo

on the subject. Caught in a potential Watergate trap, Civiletti sought to explain his earlier denial in a press conference on July 25 with the statement: "I . . . have been interpreting 'discussions' of the investigation as distinct from this exchange of two or three sentences in a conversation."

Such semantic tricks led the Americans for Democratic Action to issue a statement calling for Civiletti's immediate resignation. Members of Sen. Birch Bayh's staff, who will chair the subcommittee investigating Billygate, have announced that Civiletti will be the first Carter administration official subpoenaed, while the Justice Department's own Office of Professional Responsibility has named Michael Shaheen to investigate the Attorney General.

## A man of record

Civiletti's first act as Attorney General was to launch an investigation of "police brutality" in Philadelphia, where a member of the terrorist MOVE cult had been roughed up after opening fire on police with automatic weapons. Since then, he has set a record by releasing over 20 terrorists, including members of the Weather-underground, the Republic of New Africa, and four Puerto Rican terrorists. Through the Community Relations Service of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, Civiletti has had Department of Justice personnel work directly with leading race riot provocateurs such as Imamu Baraka and Stokely Carmichael. Persons controlled by the Department of Justice's Community Relations Service have also been implicated in triggering the recent race riots in Miami, Florida and elsewhere in the United States.

When dealing with terrorists and rioters, Civiletti has rigorously upheld the "Levi Guidelines," which make it illegal for law enforcement to take preventive measures or gather intelligence until after a crime has been committed. Yet in his dealings with respectable labor leaders and politicians who pose a threat to Jimmy Carter's renomination, Civiletti's Abscam and Brilab operations employed the worst tactics of Cointelpro, the FBI counterintelligence program condemned as grossly illegal by Congress in the mid-1970s.

Entrapment, witness coercion, sweeping wiretaps, trial-by-press leaks, and political blackmail are among the tactics revealed as the basis for the Justice Department's Abscam and Brilab, now that these "sting" cases have entered public trial. Defense attorneys for political leaders indicted in Abscam in Philadelphia charged at a press conference last month that victims were selected as targets from a "hit list" drafted by Civiletti and Carter campaign staff members. They note many cases where Justice Department officials stopped the FBI from pursuing opportunities to similarly entrap supporters of President Carter.