

# The Project on Military Procurement targets Pentagon's 'black' programs

by Our Special Correspondent

On July 28 of this year, the *Washington Post* published a "hot" exclusive story alleging that ex-Navy Secretary John Lehman and his research chief, Melvyn Paisley, had bypassed standard procurement procedures in their purchase of three "drone" unmanned reconnaissance planes from an Israeli manufacturer for \$7.5 million. Coming six weeks after the FBI raided the Pentagon and scores of major defense companies in the opening public salvo of what came to be instantly known as "Pentagate," the *Post* story, by staff writer Joe Pichirallo, was based almost exclusively on a classified Navy Department document obtained from a little-known Washington, D.C. tax-exempt public interest research group called the Project on Military Procurement.

If the Justice Department does go forward, as U.S. Attorney Henry Hudson has vowed, with a rash of indictments against Pentagon brass and the nation's top defense industrialists—thereby wildly jeopardizing America's national security—much of the responsibility for that tragic bit of treason will lie with the handful of self-described "cheap hawks" who man the Project's offices at 422 C Street NE.

The Project on Military Procurement lies at the very center of a well-funded private network of think tanks, public interest law firms, and lobbying groups that has set out since no later than President Reagan's March 23, 1983 speech announcing the Strategic Defense Initiative, to cripple and eventually shut down America's "black box" programs, the most sensitive and top secret of all the military research and development programs.

## Closet patriots or fifth column?

According to an undated letter published by the Project under the title "Who We Are, What We Do, Why We Do It," since 1981, PMP has operated as a clearinghouse for "leaks" from disgruntled Pentagon and defense industry employees, which are then disseminated to a targeted list of liberal "investigative reporters" and government investigators.

"Our efforts," the letter said, "are geared to collecting the information of 'closet patriots' who are employed in the Department of Defense or the defense industry. these individuals have witnessed waste, fraud, and contracting abuses

which over time have reached such proportions that the individual can no longer tolerate them. As an act of conscience, they then individually come forward with their story."

Citing the Project's recent accomplishments, the letter goes on to pinpoint among its principal targets the Stealth bomber program and, of course, the SDI:

"The Project has worked to inform the public about the increasingly large 'black' defense budget, now estimated at between \$30-60 billion. Programs in this category, such as the Stealth bomber and many military satellite programs, are known as Sensitive Compartmentalized Information (SCI) programs and are so secret that even most members of Congress are unaware of their mission or even their budget amount. In 1987, legislation sponsored by Rep. Barbara Boxer and Sen. Lowell Weicher was passed which requires submission to the Armed Services Committees of total spending and basic purpose of each SCI program. In addition, the Project has contributed to several journalistic projects focusing on the black budget.

"We are also working on an arrangement for several of our sources in SCI programs to assist government agencies and congressional committees in investigating massive security violations that are plaguing many black programs. The goal of these exposés is not to strengthen the much-abused black security classification, but to show that access to these programs is controlled by a double standard. Access to these programs is highly restricted for groups that would have oversight over them, such as congressional and DoD investigative units, but is wide open for contractor employees, even those without the necessary clearances. Our investigations, if successful, will show the Congress and the public that this ever-growing classification of black programs could be used as a facade of security designed to prevent oversight."

While claiming that its network of "closet patriots" turned whistleblowers are motivated by "conscience," the Project letter goes on to boast that the group was behind a successful effort to introduce a major financial incentive for informants to come forward.

"In 1986, legislation sponsored by Sen. Charles Grassley was passed amending the False Claims Act. The changes to

the Act make it more practical for citizens to bring suit on behalf of the government on charges of fraud and corruption. In the past, if a citizen brought charges under the Act, the Department of Justice could take the case from the citizen's hands and then decide to drop the charges. Even if the government pursued the case, there would often be no reward for the citizen in the end. Most important about the new law is that the citizen is awarded 10-30% of the recovery should the suit be successful. No longer will whistleblowers be faced with losing their jobs in a bureaucracy which refuses to reform itself, and ending up none the richer for their efforts to make the industry accountable to the citizenry. The Project is presently assisting in the execution of several False Claims suits. The Project will gain valuable information in these investigations and plans to release information to the press, public, and Congress."

Through these combined "accomplishments," PMP effectively helped establish a network of turncoats and bounty-hunters inside the nation's most sensitive weapons laboratories and Pentagon research centers. It is no wonder that in December of last year, Dina Rasor, the founder and director of the Project on Military Procurement, was chosen as one of the 10 outstanding female military experts by the Center for Defense Information, an Institute for Policy Studies-linked disarmament lobby.

### **The building of a cover**

Fundamental to the Project's active role in the ongoing Pentagate assault against America's defense structure is its self-description as a "reform" group that is fundamentally in favor of a strong national defense—merely one devoid of the corruption and waste. Thus, the self-labeling as "cheap hawks."

A careful review of the history of the Project and its founder belies those claims.

According to a series of media profiles reviewed by *EIR*, Dina Rasor arrived in Washington, D.C. shortly after her 1978 graduation from the University of California at Berkeley. After briefly working for ABC radio and for the President's Commission on Coal, she wound up on the staff of the National Taxpayers Union, one of the major lobbies pushing Congress to enact a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. At the NTU, Rasor, by her own description, was recruited by A. Ernest Fitzgerald, a Pentagon whistleblower who was bounced out of a job with the Air Force in 1969 over his leaking of information about the Lockheed C5A military transport plane. Fitzgerald became the *cause célèbre* of the New Left and the focus of a decade-long public interest legal battle that eventually saw him reinstated to a sensitive Air Force systems analysis job.

In September 1982, Rasor told the *National Journal* that Fitzgerald "came to me and said they needed somebody who could be a front" for their mounting assault against America's defense budget. With Fitzgerald's backing, Rasor moved

over to a separate public interest front, the National Taxpayers Legal Fund, an organization heavily funded by the Libertarian Party, and chaired by ex-Sen. Eugene McCarthy. Top Libertarians, Edward H. Crane III and Jule R. Herbert, Jr.—both linked to the Libertarian think tank, the Cato Institute—initially sponsored Rasor's creation of the Project on Military Procurement. However, the Libertarian Party's opposition to any national defense budget (they advocate a total "privatization" of the military) did little to encourage confidence in the Project among the army of whistleblowers and leakers inside the military the Project sought to recruit from the outset.

So, in March 1982, Rasor and Fitzgerald were bounced out of the taxpayers fund by arch-libertarian Herbert and publicly accused of "being too effective in challenging wasteful military programs. Her efforts had . . . attempted to increase the efficiency of our fighting machine." Crane, in a widely circulated memo explaining the firing, stated, "The Project on Military Procurement is attempting to increase the efficiency of our fighting machine. From my perspective, it is already grossly too efficient."

Now free to lay claim to a "more bang for the buck" agenda, Rasor and Fitzgerald joined forces with one of the gurus of the Washington world federalist establishment, Stewart Mott, whose Fund for Constitutional Government soon picked up the tab for the Project's ongoing work. Founded in 1974, in the heat of the Watergate affair, the Fund serves principally as a funding conduit for a string of "projects" all aimed at the military-intelligence complex. Among the board members serving with Mott on the Fund are: Americans for Democratic Action founder Joseph Rauh, Jr., retired Carter administration ambassador Robert White, former Sen. James Abourezk, *Progressive* magazine editor Sam Smith, and Fitzgerald.

While so far remaining closed-mouth about their direct relationship to the Justice Department and the FBI, Rasor and her associates, Paul Hoven and Joe Burniece, have been rather brazen in identifying a network of so-called investigative journalists and congressional staffers who constitute preferred conduits for Project leaks.

Among the most-leaked-to reporters: James Coates of the *Chicago Tribune*; Fred Kaplan, a freelance writer who formerly worked for Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.); Morton Mintz of the *Washington Post*; Bruce Ingersoll of the *Chicago Sun Times*; Bob Adams of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*; Frank Greve of the Knight-Ridder chain; Charles Mohr of the *New York Times*; and James Fallow, a frequent contributor to *Saturday Review* (its publisher, Norman Cousins, a longtime crony of world federalist Lord Bertrand Russell, is another mentor of Rasor, according to defense industry sources).

On Capitol Hill, the Project's best allies include: Bernie Ward, an aide to Rep. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.); Kris Kolesnik, staffer for Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa); and Richard Kaufman, staff director of the Joint Economic Committee.