

# Poindexter sentenced; will Bush be next?

by Herbert Quinde

Admiral John Poindexter was sentenced to six months in prison on June 11 for his role in the coverup of the Iranamok fiasco. Although the sentence is ridiculously lenient, this makes Poindexter the only person given prison time of the seven convicted of Iran-Contra crimes. His was the last major case pursued by the special prosecutor from the initial grand jury empaneled to look into the case.

Former National Security Adviser Poindexter, the highest-ranking member of the Reagan administration to face trial in the scandal, was convicted of five felonies on April 7: two counts of lying to Congress, two counts of obstructing congressional investigators, and one of conspiring to cover up the sales of arms to Iran and the diversion of profits to Nicaragua's Contras. The maximum sentence for the crimes of which he stood convicted was 25 years in prison and \$1.25 million in fines.

In imposing the sentence, Judge Harold Greene said that white-collar criminals and public officials of Poindexter's former high stature must not be allowed to believe that the law does not apply to them.

Poindexter never took the stand in his own defense, leading some to speculate that the defense had been led to believe that if he kept his mouth shut and let the "buck stop here," as he had previously told Congress it did, he would not get jail time. Sources close to the defense team say that the admiral was being scapegoated, and, with no pardon expected from President Bush, this could lead to Poindexter's greater cooperation with a new grand jury looking into the culpability of both Presidents.

## Cracks in the coverup

President Bush should be worried. The bipartisan wall of conspiracy to protect the President from the implications of the worst foreign policy disaster of the Reagan era, is developing cracks.

Sensing blood in the water, the liberal *Washington Post* opened its editorial page on June 10 to Tom Blanton, the deputy director of the National Security Archive and editor of *The Iran-Contra Affair: The Making of a Scandal*, a compendium and chronology of the affair.

"Bush played a major role in Iran-Contra from the beginning," wrote Blanton, based on reviewing several thousand pages of Oliver North's diaries that were recently declassified and obtained by the Archive and Public Citizen, a public interest group. Blanton's signed commentary, titled "Where

was George?" is a useful report detailing all of the lies told to protect the now-exposed President.

Blanton reported how the many investigations concerning Iran-Contra never were interested in finding out about Bush's role, despite the fact that, for example, the Tower Commission report "placed Bush at more than a dozen key meetings or briefings on the arms-for-hostages deals." Strangely enough, "in the end the Tower interpretation reserved all its slings and arrows for former White House chief of staff Donald Regan along with McFarlane, Poindexter, and North."

"None of the official investigations of Iran-Contra implicated Bush . . . but new material from Oliver North's diaries combines with previous evidence to paint a different picture of Bush's role," wrote Blanton. "North's detailed and often cryptic notations—names, meetings, phone calls, action lists—fill in many gaps in the official record and provide added context to the thousands of pages of previously declassified documents. . . . [Bush] passed up repeated opportunities to cut the transactions . . . NSC advisers McFarlane and Poindexter and their busy aide Oliver North went to Bush over and over, and every time, Bush watched the deal go forward without objection. While the secretaries of state and defense were both cut out of the arms-for-hostages deals after objecting to it, Bush attended almost every key meeting. And in the summer of 1986, at a time when the arms-for-hostages deals were collapsing of their own failure, a Bush meeting with a key Israeli official in Jerusalem seems to have provided the official blessing Oliver North needed to keep dealing. On the day he returned from Israel, Bush met with North—a meeting never acknowledged until the diaries were released last month."

Blanton also touched on the issue of impeachment. Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), chairman of the congressional panel that probed the affair, when asked why Bush's role was not investigated, "explained that the committees cared only about Reagan's knowledge of the [funds] diversion. If Reagan knew, the committees would have moved quickly to an impeachment resolution." What will happen now, if it turned out that President Bush not only knew, but directed, much of the diversion?

## Durenberger targeted

Meanwhile, some are suggesting that the watergating of Sen. David Durenberger (R-Minn.) on trivial ethics charges may be related to the coverup. It seems that in the early phases of the Iran-Contra investigation, Durenberger told the press, "I trust Elliott Abrams as far as I can throw Ollie North." Durenberger had also criticized the administration's "public diplomacy" in support of the Contras as racist. He said it was wrong to scare up backing for the Nicaraguan rebels by saying that failure to do such would result in hundreds of thousands of brown-skinned refugees spilling across the Mexican border.