

New scandals close in on Thornburgh

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Steven Komm

On Aug. 22, Henry G. Barr, the former executive assistant to Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, entered a not guilty plea before a federal judge in Scranton, Pennsylvania to a four-count indictment that charges him with cocaine use and perjury. A 20-year associate of Thornburgh, Barr is the highest ranking federal government official ever to be indicted on drug charges.

Barr was indicted in August on the day that a federal judge in Los Angeles delivered what should be a death blow to the "Thornburgh Doctrine," when he ruled that a Justice Department (DoJ)-financed foreign kidnaping of an indicted conspirator was a violation of the national sovereignty of Mexico. In April, Thornburgh had personally authorized the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to pay a team of current and former Mexican police officials over \$50,000 to kidnap Dr. Alvarez Machain from his Guadalajara, Mexico office and transport him across the border to El Paso, Texas, where the doctor was turned over to DEA agents and whisked off to Los Angeles to stand trial for the kidnaping-murder of DEA agent Enrique Camarena.

A hallmark of Thornburgh's reign has been his insistence that American police and military personnel have the right to grab foreign nationals under indictment in the U.S. without obtaining the permission or cooperation of the governments in the countries where the kidnapings are to occur. The federal court has now ruled that Thornburgh's cowboy doctrine is illegal.

In earlier periods of American history, either of these scandals would have resulted in the Attorney General's resignation and disappearance from public life. But Richard Thornburgh has refused to step down and has apparently taken draconian measures to hold on to power in the face of drug and corruption scandals that have hit a half dozen of his top aides in the past six months.

EIR has learned that one of the keys to Thornburgh's staying power in Washington may be his ability to keep the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), at bay. Documents obtained from the Federal Election Commission (FEC) show that Thornburgh's law firm, Kirkpatrick and Lockhart, made a \$2,000 contribution to Biden's reelection campaign on June 27, 1990. Since 1959, Thornburgh has been a partner in the Pittsburgh office of the Washington, D.C.-headquartered firm, and has returned to the firm each time he completed government service.

Pennsylvania GOP sources have told *EIR* that Thornburgh has privately urged his friends in the state Republican

hierarchy to contribute to Biden's campaign chest, despite the fact that the Republican National Committee has mounted a serious challenge to him. One Pennsylvania politico reports that Biden was the recipient of a \$100,000 payoff from a prominent Johnstown businessman and GOP moneybag during his presidential bid in 1988. Thornburgh, according to the source, "has the goods" on Biden's under-the-table financing. Biden has been strikingly silent since Thornburgh's troubles began and has apparently blocked the appointment of a special prosecutor.

Drug allegations hit Thornburgh family

In a televised interview following the Barr arraignment, Thornburgh attempted to distance himself from the scandal by pontificating about the administration assault against "recreational drug users." Yet, just days earlier, a DoJ press spokesman had launched into a tirade when reporters asked about allegations that Thornburgh's own son William was a target of the same grand jury probe that indicted Barr, and led to the recent conviction of another former top prosecutor under then-Governor Thornburgh, Richard Guida, as a drug dealer.

In a July letter to Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), Don Bailey, a former congressman and Pennsylvania state auditor general, charged that a number of prominent Harrisburg businessmen and state officials were caught up in the cocaine-trafficking ring, but were being protected by state and federal officials. Bailey named two individuals who had allegedly used cocaine with the Attorney General's son. Bailey's information comes in part from the fact that he is currently the attorney for a Harrisburg drug dealer who had supplied some of the grand jury targets with drugs before being prosecuted and agreeing to cooperate with the federal probe.

Dan Eramian, Thornburgh's spokesman, told Associated Press: "For a number of years, Mr. Bailey has engaged in personal, vicious, reckless and unfounded allegations against a number of persons with whom he has been at odds on a personal and political basis, including Governor Thornburgh. But to spread a reckless story about a person's child is beyond all bounds of decency." Eramian did admit that the FBI probe of the William Thornburgh cocaine allegations was completed in less than 24 hours and no attempt was made to interview Bailey.

While Thornburgh and his closest advisers claim no knowledge of Barr's alleged drug use, even the pro-Thornburgh *Washington Post* admitted that Barr, while Thornburgh's liaison to all federal drug prosecutors, had shared a house with Murray Dickman, Richard Weatherbee, and Barry Stern—all Thornburgh aides caught up in scandals. Weatherbee was Governor Thornburgh's chief drug enforcement officer in Pennsylvania and is now his liaison to the DEA. And, in Harrisburg, Barr had lived with now-acting U.S. Attorney James West during the period he is accused of frequent cocaine use.