

## **EIR**Feature

# George Bush: crack kingpin of the 1980s

by Jeffrey Steinberg

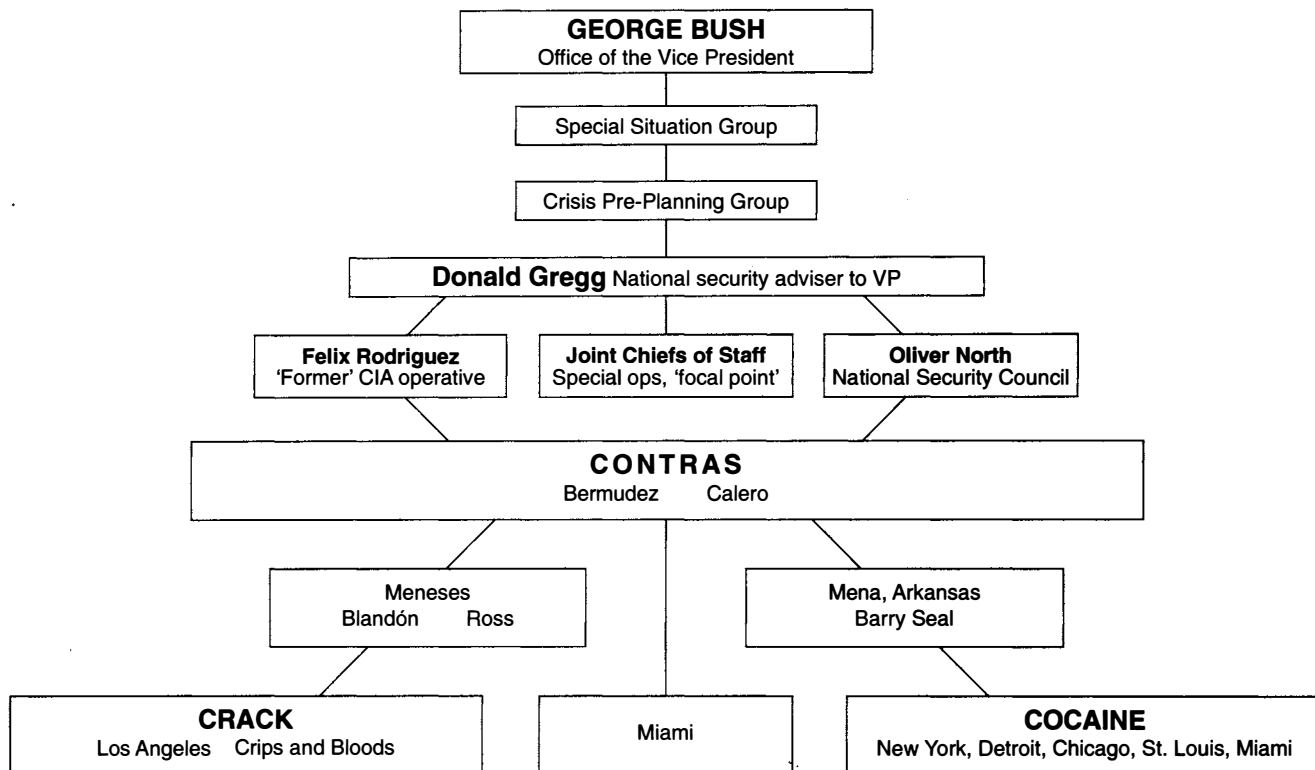
Former President George Bush, while serving as vice president in the Ronald Reagan administration in 1981-89, presided over a Nicaraguan Contra apparatus that was responsible for flooding the streets of Los Angeles' South Central district with crack cocaine, and fueling a murderous cycle of gang violence. This is the most startling conclusion to be drawn from a three-part series of articles published in California's *San Jose Mercury* on Aug. 18-20, 1996.

Based on a review of court records, recently declassified federal government documents, and eyewitness reports, *Mercury* reporter Gary Webb provided a detailed account of how the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN, the Contras) financed their 1980s war against the Sandinista regime in Managua, through a cocaine pipeline that went from Colombia, to the San Francisco Bay area, to the streets of Los Angeles, placing crack cocaine and guns into the hands of the Crips and the Bloods urban gangs. All the time that this crack epidemic was being unleashed by the Contras, Vice President Bush was the man in charge of the Reagan administration's Central America program, overseeing all of the activities of the CIA, the Pentagon, and every other government intelligence agency. Some of Bush's most immediate subordinates, including his National Security Adviser Donald Gregg, National Security Council staffer Lt. Col. Oliver North, and "ex"-CIA officer Felix Rodriguez, were major players in the day-to-day cocaine-Contra operations.

Speaking to 1,000 people at the annual Labor Day conference of the Schiller Institute, in Reston, Virginia on Aug. 31, Lyndon LaRouche asked: "How many thousands of federal prisoners are doing former Vice President George Bush's prison-time?"

LaRouche told the audience that he intends to make the Bush crack cocaine issue a centerpiece of the 1996 Presidential race between President Bill Clinton and his Republican challenger, Bob Dole. "Would a President Bob Dole, or a President Bill Clinton crack down on the greatest U.S. drug-trafficking kingpin of

## 'The Bush Cartel'



the 1980s?" LaRouche asked.

The answer may be forthcoming far quicker than either Dole or Bush would care to think. Already, as the result of wide public exposure of the *San Jose Mercury* charges, U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) have called for a full federal investigation of the Contra-crack connections. Senator Boxer, on Aug. 28, wrote to CIA head John Deutch, asking him to investigate the *Mercury* allegations, which emphasized the role of the CIA, in directing the FDN. On Sept. 4, Deutch wrote Boxer, that he had ordered the Agency's Inspector General to conduct an internal review of the allegations, and report back to him within 60 days—i.e., before the Nov. 5 national elections.

The Webb stories, while revealing devastating new documentation about the filthy underbelly of the 1980s covert wars in Central America, failed to complete the picture by tracing the command of the Central America program all the way to the top—to the Office of the Vice President. What you are about to read redresses that flaw, in an otherwise critical new contribution to the mounting body of evidence that it was George Bush who presided over the most devastating drug epidemic to beset any nation since the British Opium Wars against China during the last century.

The new evidence of the Bush Contra apparatus role in unleashing the crack epidemic and the accompanying urban

gang wars, is but the latest piece, of a far bigger picture of Bush sponsorship of a global series of covert wars and other clandestine programs—all funded by government-protected illegal narcotics sales.

Prior to the *Mercury* series, there was already massive evidence that the Bush-North Contra apparatus was involved in flooding the United States with cocaine, through Mena, Arkansas and other locations, and repeated efforts by Congressional committees and honest agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration and other law enforcement agencies to investigate, were systematically suppressed for "national security" reasons.

The afghansi mujahideen, for example, the nominally Islamic army deployed in a decade-long war against the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan, was financed, to a great extent, by the buildup of a massive opium and heroin trade from the Golden Crescent. At points during the height of the afghansi operations in the mid-1980s, over 50% of the heroin sold illegally on the streets of the United States and Europe, came from Afghanistan.

In Mexico, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, a Bush clone, was responsible for a drug cartel near-takeover of Mexico; and President Bush personally ordered the overthrow of Gen. Manuel Noriega in Panama, in order to turn control over that country, especially its banking system, to the Cali Cartel.

In recent weeks, Bob Dole has accused President Clinton of abandoning the war on drugs of the Republican administrations in the 1980s. Considering that Dole is running as the candidate of the George Bush-dominated Republican Party, these attacks are the height of hypocrisy. This *EIR* report sets the record straight.

# The Contras and the crack epidemic

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On Aug. 18-20, the *San Jose Mercury* published a series of articles documenting, for the first time, the role of the George Bush-led Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), the Contras, in creating the crack cocaine epidemic during the mid-1980s. According to the *Mercury* stories, which were based on a series of recent federal narcotics prosecutions and newly declassified FBI files, during 1981-86, this Bush-Contra apparatus flooded the ghetto streets of Los Angeles with tons of cocaine per year, generating hundreds of millions of dollars in profits, that were plowed back into the Contra rebels in Central America. Today, as the result of this Bush treachery, hundreds of thousands of African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and others are sitting in state and federal prisons, in effect, doing George Bush's jail time, while the kingpin of the effort roams free, enjoying the celebrity and financial rewards attached to his former posts as vice president and President of the United States.

No city in the United States has been unaffected by the crack epidemic. The Los Angeles street gangs, the Crips and the Bloods, that were the primary recipients of tons of cheap, high-grade cocaine, courtesy of the Bush-Contra apparatus, turned South Central Los Angeles, nearby Compton, California, and, eventually, hundreds of cities and towns all across America, into war zones. The casualties from this urban crack cocaine war, are already into the tens of thousands of deaths, and millions of walking wounded.

The *San Jose Mercury* series, written by Sacramento-based reporter Gary Webb, failed to mention Vice President Bush, or his role as "commander in chief" of the secret war in Central America, and focused instead on the CIA as the principal culprit. But by the end of 1981, through a series of Executive Orders and National Security Decision Directives, many of which have been declassified, Vice President George Bush was placed in charge of all Reagan administration intelligence operations (see article, p. 15). All of the covert operations carried out by officers of the CIA, the Pentagon, and every other federal agency, along with a rogue army of "aster-

oid" former intelligence operatives and foreign agents, were commanded by Vice President Bush. In an interview with this writer, Webb acknowledged that he simply had not traced the command structure over the Contras up into the White House, although he had gotten some indications that the operation was not just CIA.

## A devastating picture

What Webb did pinpoint, however, is devastating. From the very beginning of the Reagan administration, the United States was actively engaged in a surrogate war against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, which had come into power in 1979 by overthrowing the government of Anastasio Somoza—ironically, with the backing of the Jimmy Carter administration. And, from the very beginning of the Reagan administration, the "surrogate force," the Contras, was heavily bankrolled through the trafficking in cocaine on the streets of California, and elsewhere in the United States.

The FDN apparatus in the San Francisco Bay Area, which controlled the cocaine pipeline into Los Angeles, was well known to, and tightly controlled by, the George Bush-led Contra hierarchy. Adolfo Calero, a former Coca Cola executive in Managua, Nicaragua who was the handpicked head of the FDN "government in exile," was on the Bush-North payroll throughout the 1980s. According to court documents obtained by the *Mercury*, and now also in the possession of *EIR*, Calero made frequent trips to the Bay Area throughout the early 1980s, and was photographed with the head of the cocaine ring, Juan Norwin Meneses Cantarero, at at least one Contra fundraising event. Meneses was officially the head of "intelligence and security" of the FDN for California, and he was present at all public and private Calero events, including at least one meeting with Oliver North White House assistant (and former Dan Quayle senatorial staffer) Rob Owen. In memos to North, later unearthed during the investigation of Iran-Contra special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, Owen freely acknowledged that he was aware that the Contras were being financed by big-time cocaine traffickers.

At the same time, Meneses was a target of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which had been tracking him as a major international drug trafficker as far back as 1974, when he was known as "El Rey de Drogas" ("The King of Drugs") in Managua. (In 1984, the DEA obtained a sealed indictment against Meneses for cocaine smuggling, but the indictment, and the attached no-bail arrest warrant, were never unsealed. By the late 1980s, Meneses would be a target of 45 separate DEA narcotics probes.)

## Launching the 'crack' epidemic

According to testimony in the March 1996 San Diego federal trial of Los Angeles crack dealer Ricky Donnell Ross, the FDN cocaine pipeline was opened in 1981—even before the first FDN "troops" entered Nicaragua. Oscar Danilo Blandón Reyes, one of the key government witnesses against Ross, had been a central player in the FDN cocaine ring. He