

EIR report exposes Bush as 'crack' kingpin of the '80s

by Jeffrey Steinberg

At a crowded Washington, D. C. press conference on Sept. 19, 1996, *EIR* Washington bureau chief Bill Jones, Law Editor Edward Spannaus, Counterintelligence Editor Jeffrey Steinberg, and *EIR* analyst Gail Billington, released a 120-page special multi-client report, "Would a President Bob Dole Prosecute Drug Super-Kingpin George Bush?" which documents the role of the former Vice President and President, in overseeing the biggest cocaine-smuggling operations of the 1980s. The report was prepared as a crash effort, by a team of *EIR* researchers, in order to amplify upon, and correct some dangerous flaws, in the otherwise valuable *San Jose Mercury News* exposé, by Gary Webb, of the role of the Reagan-Bush administration-backed Nicaraguan Contras in flooding the streets of Los Angeles with crack cocaine during 1983-87. The Webb series appeared over Aug. 18-20, 1996, and has triggered calls for Congressional investigations, and other probes, into the role of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Contras' crack trafficking.

At the press conference, Steinberg began with a warning, that anyone who focuses solely on the CIA involvement in the Contra cocaine-smuggling operation of the 1980s, is walking into a trap that will likely lead to a cover-up of the truth. Already, CIA director John Deutch has written to Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), explaining that a thorough search of CIA files occurred in 1988, and no evidence linking the Agency to the two accused Contra cocaine dealers, Norwin Meneses and Danilo Blandón, was turned up. Deutch, however, told Waters that he had ordered CIA Inspector General Frederick Hites to conduct a thorough probe of the allegations, and report the results to him by early November.

Steinberg reviewed a string of Reagan Presidential Executive Orders and National Security Decision Directives, many of them now declassified, that placed Vice President Bush—

not the CIA—directly in charge of the Contra operation. Although active and former CIA personnel were involved in the Contra supply operations, Steinberg documented that it was senior Bush aides, including ex-CIA official Donald Gregg, ex-CIA officer Felix Rodriguez, and Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North, who administered the secret program from one day to the next, and had first-hand knowledge of the illegal drug trafficking by Contra pilots and "humanitarian aid" assets.

Steinberg also catalogued a series of official government investigations, including the 1986-89 Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations ("Kerry Committee") probe, and the Iran-Contra probe of Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh, which detailed numerous other instances of Contra involvement in large-scale cocaine trafficking into the United States, with the knowledge and complicity of U.S. government agencies.

"The evidence is overwhelming," Steinberg concluded, "that the Contras were flooding the United States with illegal drugs, to finance the war in Central America; and that Vice President George Bush sat on top of a command structure that supervised and protected this effort."

Edward Spannaus followed Steinberg's remarks by presenting the details of a model "kingpin" criminal bill of indictment, against Bush and others, for racketeering, conspiracy to import cocaine, obstruction of justice, obstruction of Congress, and continuing criminal enterprise. Spannaus pointed out that the draft indictment of Bush is based upon legal standards that are used in federal courts to send people to jail every day, and that the evidence used in the indictment is all in the public record. "The level of evidence against Bush, Gregg, Rodriguez, North, and others, in this indictment, is far more than exists in most cases," Spannaus said (see accompa-



Edward Spannaus presents EIR's new report on "drug super-kingpin George Bush," at a press conference in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 19.

nying article).

In the concluding formal remarks, Gail Billington recounted the role of her husband, Michael Billington, in leading LaRouche campaign fundraising efforts during the 1980s, that placed him squarely in the Bush-North target zone. Michael Billington is now in state prison in Virginia, serving an outrageous 77-year sentence for so-called securities violations. Billington was earlier a target of two federal indictments, in Boston and in Alexandria, Virginia—based on the same bogus financial fraud charges—and served two years in federal prison in the latter case.

Gail Billington detailed the case of Barbara Newington, a wealthy Connecticut conservative socialite, who funded several important LaRouche political initiatives during the mid-1980s, until she was personally pressured by Oliver North and one of his underlings, Carl "Spitz" Channell, into breaking off all ties to LaRouche. Within days of a May 1986 face-to-face meeting between North, Channell, and Mrs. Newington, the Bush-North White House secret team launched an illegal surveillance and dirty tricks campaign, targeting LaRouche, Billington, and others. This was part of a broader effort, run under several Bush-led White House special units, to target opponents of the Contra program.

The story breaks internationally

By Sept. 20, the story of the release of the *EIR Special Report* had broken internationally, and George Bush was al-

ready being contacted by reporters and asked to comment on the charges that he was the biggest crack cocaine kingpin of the 1980s.

In Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia, a number of prominent newspapers and television news shows aired the *EIR* allegations. Reuters, which sent a reporter to the Washington press conference, issued a Spanish-language wire story. The story was published in *El Impulso*, in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, under the headline, "Bush Supercapo del Crack?" The article began, "George Bush, the aristocratic ex-President of the U.S. a super-capo of drug trafficking? For the editors of the controversial weekly magazine, *Executive Intelligence Review (EIR)*, Bush should already be serving a life sentence in jail for promoting the epidemic of cocaine that hit the United States during the last decade." Reuters contacted Bush about the allegations, which he denied. The Reuters story cited the model indictment and quoted Spannaus that "the majority of drug traffickers now imprisoned in the United States were convicted on the basis of less evidence than that which we have accumulated" against Bush.

NBC filmed the entire news conference, and released a news item on its Spanish-language all-news broadcast. The NBC segment featured an interview with *EIR* reporter Carlos Méndez, which aired in Mexico. The Mexican wire service Notimex, and Agence France Presse, both released lengthy wires on the report, which also found their way into several Ibero-American daily newspapers.

Not surprisingly, there are reports already coming to light of pressure on African-American newspaper editors and radio and TV news directors to black out the Bush dimension of the Contra-crack story, and focus exclusively on the "CIA" allegations. Several Washington area news shows that had scheduled coverage of the Bush charges, abruptly cancelled the stories. In short, a behind-the-scenes war has broken out, precisely along the lines that Lyndon LaRouche had forecasted, when he first commissioned the report at the beginning of the month.

McCaffrey endorses investigation

Even before the report's release in Washington, the media silence on the original *San Jose Mercury News* story had been decisively broken. On Sept. 14, speaking at an Operation PUSH event in Chicago, President Clinton's White House drug policy adviser, Gen. Barry McCaffrey, had publicly endorsed the call by the Congressional Black Caucus for a thorough probe of the allegations that the CIA and the Contras had flooded the streets of South Central Los Angeles with crack. McCaffrey told reporters that he had initiated his own probe into the Contra crack story. "I have talked to Deutch, and he says there's nothing to it. But until the American public is fully satisfied, there must be a full and thorough investigation."

McCaffrey's remarks were widely read as a green light from President Clinton himself for a serious probe of the 1980s Contra cocaine-trafficking allegations. This prompted a spate of news coverage of the story. In Italy's *Corriere della Sera*, in Denmark's *Jyllandsposten*, and Brazil's *O Globo*, front-page coverage was devoted to McCaffrey's comments, and to the original *Mercury News* story.

On Sept. 15, the *Chicago Tribune* editorial headline asked, "Another Contra-Inspired Horror?" "It is a breathtaking allegation and one that ought to be investigated by Congress, in its oversight role, and by appropriate prosecutorial authorities. It may be that no one can be held legally accountable at this late date, but the American people deserve an honest investigation, if only so history may not be distorted. . . . Attorney General Janet Reno ought to look into this matter immediately. And members of Congress concerned with drug abuse ought not rest until complete hearings on these allegations are authorized and held."

Two days later, the *Chicago Sun Times* seconded the call for a probe, citing McCaffrey's comments at Operation PUSH. "On Saturday, Gen. Barry McCaffrey . . . told an Operation PUSH gathering here that CIA director John Deutch has denied the allegations. Still, considering initial denials of the Iran-Contra affair and the Reagan administration's almost maniacal opposition to the Sandinista government, the air must be cleared. Was the operation to sell crack cocaine indeed designed and operated officially by the CIA and other agencies to finance Contra operations? Or was it done by a group of rogue agents fulfilling what it perceived to be the

wishes of higher-ups? And did officials look the other way to protect those involved? We must know."

The *Philadelphia Daily News*, in a Sept. 19 editorial, assailed Republican Presidential candidate Bob Dole and the national media for burying the story: "Why haven't you heard about this? The nation's press—preoccupied with Clinton's medical record, Dole's war record, Tupac Shakur's rap records—has not paid attention yet. But the pot is boiling, Clinton's drug czar, Gen. Barry McCaffrey, has called for a full investigation. . . . Don't tell Dole. We don't want reality to interfere with his campaign."

Rev. Benjamin Chavis, the chairman of the National African-American Leadership Summit (NAALS), which will be holding a national convention in St. Louis on Sept. 27, recently told the *Chicago Defender* that the Contra cocaine investigation will be one of the top priorities of the gathering.

Pending court actions

The Bush-Contra-cocaine scandal also is moving once again through the federal courts in California. Ricky Donnell Ross, the South Central Los Angeles crack dealer, and confederate of the Crips and the Bloods gangs, is awaiting sentencing on cocaine-trafficking charges that could carry a life sentence. Ross was the local distributor for the Blandón-Meneses ring, selling upwards of \$2 million a month in cocaine, provided from the Bush-Contra pipeline during 1981-87. As reported first in the *San Jose Mercury News*, on March 2, 1995, Ross was arrested via a sting operation, set up by his former supplier, Blandón, who was put on the U.S. Justice Department's payroll in September 1994. The details of Blandón's links to the Contras and to U.S. government agencies were withheld from Ross's defense attorneys during pre-trial discovery.

When the *San Jose Mercury News* broke the story of the Blandón-Contra-CIA links on Aug. 18 this year, Ross's defense attorney, Alan Fenster moved to have his sentencing delayed.

In a three-hour hearing in early September, in San Diego, U.S. District Court Judge Marilyn Huff agreed to allow Fenster to file papers demanding that the conviction of Ross be overturned, as the result of outrageous government misconduct. Assistant U.S. Attorney L.J. O'Neale, who arranged to get Blandón released from jail and placed on the government payroll, admitted to the court that "when Blandón says he sold cocaine for the Contras, yes, he did. . . . We never have found his credibility to be lacking." Nevertheless, O'Neale denied that the *San Jose Mercury News* stories about government collusion in the Contra cocaine trafficking were accurate.

Judge Huff also granted Fenster the right to file papers under the Classified Information Procedures Act (CIPA), that could force the government to either turn over secret documents related to the Contra cocaine business to the defense, or drop the case against Ross altogether.