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## The Weckstein File

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# Judge in LaRouche cases tied to Bush drug ring

by Anton Chaitkin

Accumulating evidence that George Bush and his operatives sponsored and protected the Western Hemisphere's cocaine operations of the 1980s, also implicates the Virginia judge who falsely imprisoned associates of Lyndon LaRouche. In the most important narcotics case in Virginia's history, attorney Clifford Weckstein played a hidden "fixer" role to protect a cocaine-trafficking apparatus, which was working in tandem with then-Vice President Bush and Bush employees such as Oliver North. Three years later, with Bush the President and Weckstein a state circuit court judge, Weckstein ran the railroad trials of Michael Billington and other LaRouche political associates who had fought to expose and wreck the Bush-North criminal apparatus.

### Weckstein and Caballero

On April 4-5, 1986, the Panamanian military, under Gen. Manuel Noriega, working with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, arrested Lucas Gerardo Caballero Salinas (known as Gerardo Caballero) and several other Bolivian drug-traffickers in Panama.

Caballero and his partners had arranged to fly about 700 pounds of cocaine into southern Virginia for sale in the northeastern United States. His indictment in Virginia was important, chiefly because his father-in-law, Roberto Suárez Gómez (known as Roberto Suárez), was the main Bolivian gangster intermediary for Bolivian cocaine producers, who supplied the majority of the raw material to the Colombian cartels trafficking drugs into the United States. Roberto Suárez was also indicted, *in absentia*, in the Virginia Caballero case.

On April 9, 1986, Federal Judge James Turk assigned Weckstein's junior partner, former drug prosecutor William Cleaveland, to be Caballero's attorney. As Cleaveland later told this reporter, the case was managed by the firm, that is, by senior partner Weckstein, rather than by Cleaveland.

Weckstein himself had expert help. The most notorious and flagrantly corrupt U.S. lawyer for the South American cocaine cartels, "Diamond Joel" Hirschhorn of Miami, Florida, was in Roanoke, Virginia, during the globally important Caballero case, strategizing with his co-counsel, Clifford Weckstein. But Weckstein's partnership with the millionaire cartel representative was carefully hidden from the public: Hirschhorn was registered not in the Caballero case, involv-

ing the survival of his gangster sponsors, but only as a second to Weckstein in an unpublicized local trial of two-bit marijuana pusher, Alan Cohen, occurring at precisely the same time before the same judge. Judge Turk acceded to Weckstein's request on April 14, 1986 to admit Hirschhorn as Weckstein's co-counsel.

Weckstein sent his partner, Cleaveland, along with *Roanoke Times and World-News* reporter Douglas Pardue, to Bolivia. Weckstein's men worked with Caballero's family, and Suárez worked with his "Miami lawyers," for an arrangement which was to be carried out in the courtroom and in the news media.

Though honest anti-drug agents were at that time trying to turn members of the Bolivian organization to get at and destroy the structure top-down, this was blocked in the Caballero case. The dirty setup in Bolivia was protected. Gerardo Caballero was jailed for 20 years, and kept his mouth shut. Weckstein officially dropped the case on July 9, before the trial began; his role in organizing the strategy and outcome was covered up.

Pardue, an advocate of drug legalization whose newspaper was co-owned by Weckstein's in-laws, blatantly lied about the Bolivian crime organization. Pardue passed along the Weckstein firm's story that Caballero's father, a Bolivian executive with Gulf Oil, was a respectable "civic leader." He wrote that Caballero had an "aristocratic bearing" and "a heritage to back it up"; that his "grandmother was the British consul in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba"; and that Caballero's father-in-law, Roberto Suárez, was a rancher who had simply switched to the drug-trafficking business when he "discovered how lucrative cocaine could be."

But the Suárez-Caballero dope cartel had in fact organized the 1980 coup for the fascist "Cocaine Colonels," including Interior Minister Luis Arce Gómez, a cousin of Roberto Suárez. They had enslaved Bolivia to cocaine production.

### Bush and North exposed

As the Caballero case hung in the balance, with Bolivian kingpin Roberto Suárez under indictment in Roanoke, George Bush's treacherous role in managing hemispheric cocaine-trafficking began to be exposed.

In the July 28, 1986 *New York Post*, Niles Latham wrote about "Operation Blast Furnace," a strange "anti-drug" misdeployment of U.S. troops and helicopters into Bolivia, which had begun earlier in July and would continue into November. Latham wrote, "Vice President George Bush pressured the Pentagon into agreeing to the operation." U.S. military leaders considered it a Bush publicity stunt, Latham reported. Bolivian military leaders who were committed to fighting the cocaine cartel, in discussions with *EIR* at the time, fiercely criticized Bush's "Blast Furnace" as an empty provocation, a sabre-rattling use of U.S. forces in violation of Bolivian sovereignty which netted no significant drug traffickers or their infrastructure.

