

Who's behind the Ron Brown 'bullet hole' campaign?

by Edward Spannaus

Among right-wing Clinton-haters, on the talk shows and on the Internet, one of the hottest "underground" topics is the story that the late Commerce Secretary Ron Brown may have died from a bullet in the head, rather than from the plane crash which occurred in Croatia in April 1996.

A number of black activists and political leaders have also been drawn into the controversy, and are now asking for an investigation of the spurious "bullet hole" story.

How did this story get started? What has given rise to this bizarre, de facto coalition between groups which were on opposite sides during the "CIA crack-cocaine" controversy? How is it that many of the same people who were accusing Ron Brown of criminality, and even treason, in life, are now suddenly his biggest defenders in death? And why is a wealthy scion of the Mellon banking family, Richard Mellon Scaife, who was trained 25 years ago by British Intelligence and the CIA in news-media manipulation, spearheading the "bullet hole" campaign? And how has Scaife duped prominent African-American activists, even the head of the Congressional Black Caucus, into climbing on board this sinister endeavor?

These are some of the questions which will be explored in this article and those that accompany it.

How the story started

Ron Brown, a longtime friend of Bill Clinton, a former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and an architect of the Clinton administration's export strategy, died in a plane crash in Croatia on April 3, 1996, along with 35 others. As U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Brown was leading a trade mission, involving over a dozen major U.S. corpora-

tions, mapping out the post-war reconstruction of Bosnia and Croatia; strategically, this was a direct challenge to the long-standing Anglo-French policy of keeping the Balkans enmeshed in bloody religious and ethnic turmoil.

Within days and weeks, many theories were floating around that Brown was the victim of an assassination plot. One of the most elaborated scenarios was that circulated by Nick Guarino, a convicted fraudster, and fugitive, who publishes the mysterious *Wall Street Underground* newsletter which regularly accuses Clinton of carrying out treason with China, while promoting Guarino's trademark pamphlet, "How to Survive and Profit from the Clinton Crash." Guarino's imaginative scenario had White House agents using a false beacon signal to send Brown's plane crashing into a mountain and then burning, for the reason that Brown was about to go to jail, and had threatened to take Clinton down with him.

In Guarino's fantasy, Brown was, like Vincent Foster, a man who "knew too much." "More than any man in Washington," Guarino wrote, "he knew where all the money went for the payoffs, bribes, scams, money-laundering, cover-ups, participation fees, hush money, and side deals—all the way from one-man operations to vast multinational trade treaty fixes."

But it wasn't con-man Guarino who provoked the current contretemps. This role fell to Richard Mellon Scaife, publisher of the Greensburg, Pennsylvania *Tribune-Review* (which also publishes under name *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*); Scaife has, since 1994, bankrolled much of the propaganda claiming that White House aide Vincent Foster was

murdered. Scaife's hired scribe Christopher Ruddy—who went onto Scaife's payroll after his Vincent Foster obsession became too much for even the *New York Post*—launched the Ron Brown “bullet hole” tale in a Dec. 3 story. Ruddy based his account on information provided by a deputy medical examiner at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, who cited a circular hole at the top of Brown's skull, discovered during the post-mortem examination, which was roughly the size of a .45 caliber slug. The medical examiner, Air Force Lt. Col. Steve Cogswell, referred to the hole as “an apparent gunshot wound.”

Cogswell never actually examined Brown's corpse, but based his theory on photos and X-rays. USAF Col. William Gormley, who did the examination, said the head wound was not caused by a gunshot, because it didn't completely penetrate the skull, and there was no exit wound. After seeing the skull wound, Gormley ordered full head and body X-rays, which showed no bullet, no fragments of either bone or of a bullet, and no bullet pathway. Gormley determined that the cause of death was “multiple blunt force injuries” resulting from the plane crash.

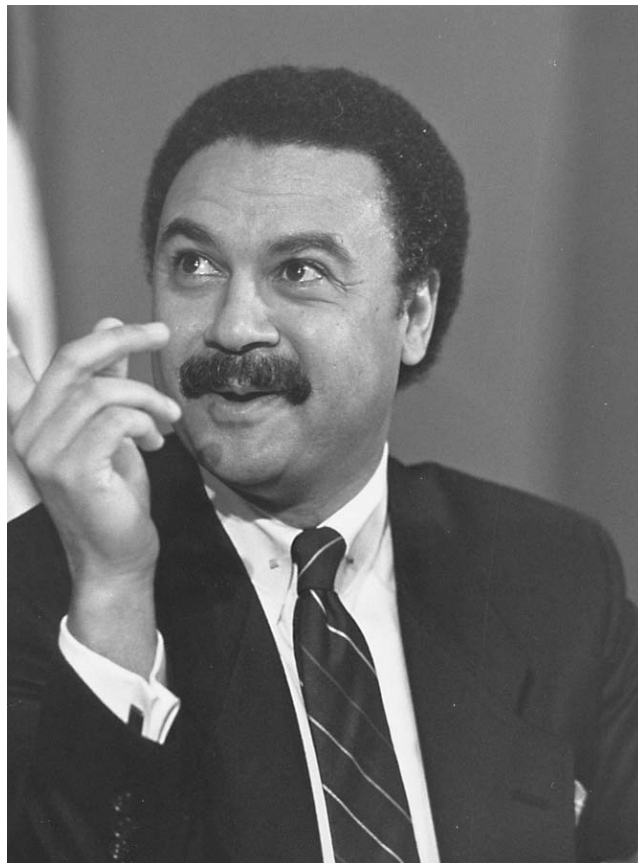
(Ruddy's fans have made much of the appearance of what they term a “lead snowstorm” on one of the X-rays, which give the appearance of being metal fragments in the brain. However, the Air Force has concluded that this resulted from a defect on the reusable X-ray film cassette, and that the same feature appears on other X-rays, not pertaining to Brown.)

Ruddy's Dec. 3 article, and his follow-up pieces, took the talk show circuit and the Internet talk-groups by storm. While Ruddy was careful not to directly accuse President Clinton of murder, those who repeated and embellished the story were not so cautious.

One of the first publicists to pick up and retail Ruddy's story was Joseph Farah, of the Western Journalism Center—another Mellon Scaife-bankrolled outfit which has distinguished itself in recent years by taking out full-page ads in many newspapers reprinting Ruddy's articles on Vincent Foster from the *Tribune-Review*. “Counting Vincent Foster, this is the second death of a high-ranking administration official under suspicious circumstances in Clinton's first term,” Farah wrote in his daily Internet newspaper. “Both figures were intimately involved in key administration scandals—Foster in Whitewater and Travelgate, and Brown in the fund-raising and kickback controversies. Coincidence? Or is this one of the ways the lid is kept on administration scandals?”

Who were Brown's enemies?

The so-called “donorgate” and “Chinagate” scandals, which were the subject of many Congressional hearings last year, have their origin in 1993-94, when the “Judicial Watch” organization, headed by former Justice Department attorney Larry Klayman, began targeting Ron Brown and the Clinton



The late Commerce Secretary Ron Brown. Look behind the latest anti-Clinton conspiracy theories about him, and you'll find conservative moneybags Richard Mellon Scaife.

Commerce Department. In September 1994, shortly after Brown's trade mission to China, Judicial Watch filed a Freedom of Information Act request to find out who was on each of five trade missions, how they were selected, etc. In January 1995, Klayman filed a lawsuit, and a year later, in February 1996, Klayman subpoenaed Ron Brown himself to give testimony.

Now, Judicial Watch is attacking Attorney General Janet Reno for refusing to investigate the Ron Brown death. In a Jan. 9 press release, Judicial Watch and Klayman stated: “At the time of Brown's death, he was scheduled to be deposed by Judicial Watch in its landmark case against the Clinton Commerce Department. . . . This case uncovered John Huang . . . and sparked the current campaign finance scandal.”

Judicial Watch also claims that Brown was about to be indicted by an independent counsel, and that he was about to “cut a plea and turn state's evidence against Clinton”—a slightly milder version of Nick Guarino's preposterous allegations. “Judicial Watch will now become involved to take steps to determine whether or not Brown's death was accidental,” the press release continued. “If not, his death could be part of an obstruction of justice and witness tampering, given

his likely indictment, his status as a material witness against the Clintons, and Judicial Watch's case against the Clinton Commerce Department."

Other sections of the "Get Clinton" gang were also quick to jump on the Scaife-Ruddy bandwagon. For example, take the so-called Clinton Investigative Commission (CIC). It has a front group called The Committee to Impeach the President, which is not only campaigning for President Clinton's impeachment, but has now added the accusation that the Clinton White House is covering up the murder of Ron Brown. A press release by this Committee to Impeach the President states that the new "evidence" (i.e., that circulated by Scaife's newspaper) "adds further proof to reports that Brown's plan crash was a 'planned' accident, and that Brown — along with the entire crew — were targeted for elimination."

On its Internet homepage, the CIC also features a page on Clinton's alleged "treason," which contains an article by one Jack Wheeler (a close collaborator of Lord William Rees-Mogg and James Dale Davidson in their *Strategic Investment* newsletter) which insists that Clinton should be impeached for treason as well as for other crimes.

Wheeler argues that Clinton and the Democrats sold "classified military secrets to the Chinese government in exchange for donations to the Democratic National Committee." Right in the middle of Wheeler's portrayal of this alleg-

edly treasonous conspiracy is, of course, John Huang, who has worked under Ron Brown at the Commerce Department.

Some black leaders dive in

Into this treacherous mix, then jumped a number of African-American leaders, who should know better; the most visible of these have been Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), and comedian Dick Gregory. Both Waters and Gregory, along with others such as NAACP head Kweisi Mfume, have asked for an investigation of the Scaife-Ruddy allegations.

The "Impeach Clinton" crew at the Clinton Investigative Commission cynically took advantage of this opening to declare their support for the Waters-Gregory call for a Justice Department investigation. The CIC claimed to have collected 100,000 signatures in support of the Waters-Gregory call, which they attempted to deliver to Waters's Congressional office on Jan. 15. In an earlier press release, CIC declared: "We are asking both the Congressional supporters of Rep. Waters and Congressional backers of Rep. [Bob] Barr's impeachment inquiry of President Clinton to join together as an effective way to stop the apparent obstruction of justice on the part of the White House."

It is indeed ironic that Representative Waters — who has attacked the CIA for running crack cocaine into Los Angeles — is now following the lead of someone like Scaife

A one-dimensional bullet that came from nowhere

A review of Ron Brown's post-mortem X-rays and photographs, as displayed by Christopher Ruddy on his Internet web site [www.ruddynews.com], discloses the following:

The photographs reveal a circular defect in the midparietal skull approximately 10 mm in diameter. Underlying brain is seen in the depth of the defect. The skin is retracted away from the defect and the area of skin which would overlie the defect is not seen, unless the skin was in that position when the body was found. If so, the skin defect is inconsistent with a gunshot wound. There is no evidence of fouling of the skull by powder residue.

On the antero-posterior skull X-ray there is a faint pattern of material which appears to form a track leading from immediately to the right of the midline further laterally toward the base of the skull. This faint material is not seen on the lateral film. There appears to be no gross defect of the base of the skull on the right or left, where a bullet

might have exited. The lateral film shows an indriven bone fragment of approximately the diameter of the inwardly beveled skull defect.

Comment: The defect on the X-ray is a depressed skull fracture with an indriven bone fragment. The indriven fragment is inconsistent with an inshoot wound of the skull. In an inshoot wound, the bullet would have drilled through the skull, fragmenting the underlying bone and not producing the large single fragment seen here. The inward beveling of the defect indicates that force was applied to the skull from the outside inward. The so-called "lead snowstorm" is more like a light flurry, and is not seen on the lateral film. There is no evidence of an exit defect on the X-ray and no residual slug within the skull. The material seen on the antero-posterior film is awfully light for metal fragments, its density being more consistent with bone or dense tissue, rather than metal, especially lead. I would suspect that sharp contact with a round, rod-like object produced this defect and that the material on the antero-posterior X-ray is an artifact. Obviously an autopsy would settle this issue, but from reviewing the material at hand, I can understand, though not necessarily concur with, the judgment not to perform one.

— John Grauerholz, MD, FCAP

on the Ron Brown matter. Scaife-financed operations, such as Accuracy in Media (AIM), were among the biggest defenders of the CIA and the drug-running Contras, and they ridiculed the *San Jose Mercury News* series on the CIA's links to the crack-cocaine epidemic. (AIM is now also dutifully retailing the Ron Brown "bullet hole" stories.)

Representative Waters's behavior in this matter is not surprising. Earlier, she willfully ignored the evidence that it was George Bush's "secret government" apparatus, operating out of the White House and National Security Council, which actually ran the Contra guns-for-drugs operation in the 1980s; Waters, Gregory, and many other black leaders preferred to focus on the easier and more "politically correct" target of the CIA—even after being warned that this would be a dead end, and that it would protect the real perpetrators around the Bush apparatus.

EIR's documentation on the Bush "secret government" apparatus is well-known within the African-American community. To counter this, what surfaced in late 1996 was a network of self-styled "community activists" who mobilized to stop the spread of *EIR*'s proofs; an investigation showed that those leading that mobilization were in fact tied to Bush-linked "charitable" foundations and networks. Many of these were also targeting Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farrakhan, and were attempting particularly to drive a wedge between Farrakhan and Lyndon LaRouche. (LaRouche's recent comments on Waters et al. follow in a later section.)

The policy issues

During his tenure as Commerce Secretary, Ron Brown had played a crucial role in laying the groundwork for what is now emerging as a U.S.-China strategic partnership, which coalesced around the Clinton-Jiang Zemin summit in November. Brown's strategy was to shift U.S. investment in China into major infrastructure projects, and to promote high-technology exports such as heavy capital goods.

Brown emphatically rejected the British free-trade approach, and the idea of leaving everything to the private sector, which was the dominant U.S. policy during the Reagan-Bush years.

Given Brown's critical role in the Clinton administration's global strategy, and the bitter British geopolitical opposition to Clinton's policies toward China, in the Balkans, and elsewhere, the possibility certainly cannot be excluded that Brown's plane crash in Croatia was the result of foul play. The deaths of Brown and the corporate leaders who died with him on the plane were unquestionably a serious setback to the cause of peace and reconstruction in Bosnia, following years of British-fomented ethnic and religious conflict. And it should not be overlooked that President Clinton himself was the target of a number of actual or simulated assassination attempts, particularly in the first two years of his Presidency.

If Ron Brown was targetted for assassination, the ultimate

target would have been President Clinton and his efforts to establish a strategic alliance with China, and to bring to a halt British-instigated genocide in Bosnia. The disinformation campaign now being conducted around Ron Brown's death, with the effort to blame it on the "Clintonistas" in the White House, can only be seen as a transparent effort to lay a false trail to protect those who did want Ron Brown out of the way, and who wanted his policy initiatives stopped. That African-American leaders have lent themselves to this cynical effort is nothing short of shameful, and an insult to the memory of Ron Brown himself.

Richard Mellon Scaife: bankers' propaganda czar

by Edward Spannaus

Not the least of the ironies of the current frenzy of bashing the Federal government and its intelligence and law enforcement agencies, is that most of today's "conservative," anti-government activists, are getting their information from Richard Mellon Scaife.

Richard Mellon Scaife is not just "an eccentric multimillionaire": He is one of the most powerful behind-the-scenes operators in the United States.¹ His network of foundations and think-tanks provided the blueprints and much of the personnel for the "secret government" machinery set up in the early years of the Reagan-Bush administration. Did you ever hear of Executive Order 12333, the 1981 policy directive which "unleashed" the intelligence agencies from the restrictions of the Carter years, and which allowed covert operations to be conducted outside of the CIA, either by other Executive branch agencies, or by private contractors? Executive Order 12333 was a product of seminars and think-tanks all funded by Scaife.

Scaife is also a primary funder of a network of "conservative" social policy think-tanks which provided the "intellectual" justification for both the 1980s "Reagan Revolution," and the 1990s "Conservative Revolution" of Newt Gingrich and Phil Gramm.

Moreover, Scaife has also bankrolled many of the most virulent attacks on Clinton for almost as long as Clinton has been in office—financing, among other things, the *American Spectator*'s "Troopergate" article in late 1993. Scaife has also been the primary funder of the widely circulated accusations that White House aide Vincent Foster, who was found dead

1. See *EIR*'s three-part series on Scaife, March 21, April 4, and April 11, 1997.