

# National News

---

## Ohio governor says to close private prison

Ohio Gov. George V. Voinovich (R) called on July 27 for closing the Corrections Corp. of America (CCA) private prison in Youngstown, after six prisoners had escaped several days previously. The prisoners had been moved to Ohio from the District of Columbia's prison facility in Lorton, Virginia. Five of the six were re-captured, and the last prisoner was believed to be heading back to the Washington area, where he lives.

Voinovich, a big advocate of private prisons, apparently has had a change of heart; the prison had been plagued by scandal, with 20 stabbings and two murders, since it started accepting Washington, D.C. inmates in May 1997. Voinovich said that the escapes have "justifiably increased the concerns of local citizens," and he asked the Ohio Attorney General to review state laws and advise him on what steps can be taken to shut down the prison.

The D.C. Department of Corrections signed a one-year contract last year with CCA, with an option to renew for up to four years. The five-year contract would have been worth \$182 million. It looks, however, like CCA won't be making off with as much blood-money as it had earlier expected.

---

## FBI's 'Fruehmenschen' road show taken to Chicago

The FBI's political war against African-American officials has struck Chicago, with the targeting of 19 of the city's aldermen under a sting operation that was launched in April 1996, known as "Silver Shovel."

The Bureau's top confederate, as usual, is a convicted felon enrolled in the Federal Witness Protection Program. The sting involved con-man John Christopher, a former trucking firm owner who allegedly paid officials to win lucrative contracts and to illegally dump construction debris. Christopher's 1,000 hours of tape recordings of his sting meetings, are being used by Federal prosecutors to threaten some 40 public offi-

cial and union leaders with indictments, as well as 23 sitting and former Aldermen, and others.

Among the targets is Alderman Virgil E. Jones, who is set to go to trial in September 1998. On July 7, 1998, Jones introduced a resolution into the Chicago City Council, in support of the McDade-Murtha "Citizens Protection Act," which would outlaw precisely such Justice Department/FBI abuses.

FBI targetting of Chicago's African-American political figures dates back to "Operation Incubator" in 1985, aimed at the late Mayor Harold Washington. In 1986, Mayor Washington, the first African-American elected Mayor in Chicago's history, reminded voters that he had served on the U.S. House Judiciary Committee during its 1980 investigation into the FBI's Abscam sting operation, and that the FBI plotted the set-ups involved in Operation Incubator.

---

## Pennsylvania's James endorses Milton bid

Representative Harold James, currently seeking his sixth term in the Pennsylvania State Legislature, endorsed LaRouche Democrat María Elena Milton for Congress, during a visit to Phoenix on July 25-28.

Milton upset the political establishment in 1996, when she won the Democratic primary for Congress in Arizona's 4th Congressional District, in her first run for elected office. She campaigned against Gingrich Republican incumbent John Shadegg, who is general chairman of Newt Gingrich's GOPAC slush fund. Now, she is challenging Shadegg again.

"This time," James said in his endorsement speech, "I hope that the Democrats of Arizona will reject all . . . prejudice, bigotry, and divisiveness, and work together with María Elena Milton to drive John Shadegg, and all the other Gingrich Republicans, out of Congress."

James met privately with Democratic Party and labor officials, and both he and Milton addressed a town meeting, organized by the Schiller Institute in Phoenix on July 25, on the theme of "Stop Human Rights Violations in the U.S.A." The institute is holding such meetings throughout the coun-

try, to document the most outrageous Justice Department political vendettas, which the Citizens Protection Act of 1998 (the McDade-Murtha bill) is designed to stop.

James reported that he and Milton were both members of a Schiller Institute fact-finding delegation to Sudan in February 1997. "This issue of Sudan," James said, "is important for exposing the hypocrisy of some American politicians, who cry crocodile tears about alleged 'human rights violations' in other countries, but turn a blind eye to gross human rights violations occurring right here in America."

---

## Former DOJ lawyer guilty in Colombia cartel trial

Michael Abbell, the former head of the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of International Affairs, was convicted in a Miami courtroom on July 20, of conspiring with the Cali, Colombia cocaine cartel, conveying death threats to potential witnesses against cartel members, and making hush-money payoffs. A second attorney, William Moran, who was also convicted, disappeared on July 17, prompting an international arrest warrant to be issued for him.

Abbell was a DOJ official for 17 years, serving as a top deputy to Criminal Division Deputy Assistant Attorney General Mark Richard, and eventually becoming the head of the office responsible for all international extradition cases. In 1984, Abbell left the Department to become a top attorney for the Colombian drug cartels. His first big case involved blocking the extradition to the United States of the Medellín and Cali cartel kingpins Pablo Escobar and Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, who had been arrested together in Spain.

In the Miami case against him, Abbell and Moran, along with several other attorneys and a dozen top figures in the Cali Cartel, were all indicted on racketeering, conspiracy, and drug-trafficking charges. The Cali Cartel was accused, in the indictment, of trafficking 80% of the cocaine that arrived in the United States during the 1980s; it was during this period that crack cocaine flooded the country and drug-related gang violence dramatically increased.

Given that Abbell parlayed his experience in the DOJ Criminal Division into becoming a top-level insider in the Cali Cartel, at a time when the George Bush-Oliver North Contra resupply operation was bringing crack cocaine from Colombia into California, it has always been open to speculation whether Abbell may have been somehow involved in the Bush "secret parallel government."

## Commission 'assesses' rogue missile threat

The Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States, led by former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, released its classified report to the Congress on July 15, and briefed reporters on an unclassified version released to the media.

The Commission members, six appointed by the Republicans, and three by the Democrats, include Reagan-Bush has-beens, such as former CIA director Jim Woolsey, former Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, former Reagan science adviser and acting NASA Administrator William Graham, as well as the New York Council on Foreign Relations' Richard Garwin, a onetime crusader against the Strategic Defense Initiative.

The substance of the findings is that the United States' best protection against a ballistic missile threat from "several emerging powers" is to deny poorer nations anything that might smack of so-called "dual technologies." The report focusses on North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, and concludes that such technology, in the "relaxed post-Cold War period" of "liberalized export controls, of increased international exchange of students and scientific personnel, leaks of classified information, [and] active espionage . . . helps countries to more successfully evade detection."

Asked repeatedly if this meant that the commission was recommending that U.S. ballistic missile defense programs be accelerated, Rumsfeld punted: "That is not a subject that we addressed. Our charter did not go to the subject of how the United States ought to respond to this threat. . . . I think

you'd get different opinions from the different folks here." Even House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) would not answer the question of how to respond to this new threat assessment. "Let's not jump to the answer," Gingrich said. "We ought to spend the next eight, or 10, or 12 months really having a nationally led bipartisan, serious effort to talk [it] through."

## Virginia mental hospitals exposed as 'new Bedlam'

A series in Norfolk's *Virginian-Pilot* over June and July has published an investigation showing that Virginia's mental hospitals, at best, provide superficial treatment and, at worst, kill their patients.

In 1982, according to the *Pilot*, following charges that the mental hospital system endangered patients, Central State Hospital declared that "use of restraint and seclusion has dropped 90%, . . . restraints have been removed entirely and approximately 80% of staff time is now spent in treatment of patients." Yet, last year, the U.S. Justice Department found that patients in Central State were being restrained "almost on a daily basis." One patient was tied down for 1,727 hours over an eight-month period. Psychiatric treatment was characterized as "superficial evaluations, with inadequate follow-ups and a lack of cogent treatment planning." In 1996, one patient, Gloria Huntly, died at Central State, while bound by her wrists and ankles. She had been restrained in this manner, as a means of punishment, for 558 hours over the last two months of her life.

Other state facilities have equally dismal records: One patient at Western State died from injuries sustained after being sodomized with a broom handle, while in solitary confinement. In July 1997, also at Western State, patient Maura Pattan died after calling her family to inform them that she was dying and no one would help her. In June 1998, Skander Najar at Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute died after his blood sugar rose sharply.

In its July 24 editorial, the *Virginian-Pilot* attributed the state's callousness to its preoccupation with budget-cutting.

**WORKFARE** in California is being fuelled by the "vibrant economy," according to the *Los Angeles Times* on July 26. Over the last 10 months, the number of California families on welfare has dropped by 100,000, or 12%. One-third of this decline occurred in Los Angeles County, where 10.9% were eliminated from the rolls (out of the 250,000 families in the County receiving public assistance).

**NASA** plans to award \$400,000 in grants next year to 16 two-person teams of Russian and American scientists working in planetary science, astrophysics, astrobiology, and space physics. The grants will support the Russian scientists' salaries, allow them to travel to international conferences, and to upgrade their laboratory equipment.

**THE WHITE HOUSE** has announced that President Bill Clinton will visit Northern Ireland in early September. First Lady Hillary Clinton has already been scheduled to give a speech there at that time.

**STATE DEPARTMENT** spokesman James Rubin said on July 27 that the United States is "deeply concerned about the increased fighting that has taken place [in Kosovo]. . . . We are concerned in particular about the increased involvement in the fighting by the Serb army. . . . We urge both sides, in the strongest possible terms, to cease the fighting and work toward a negotiated settlement."

**UNITED PARCEL SERVICE** is renegeing on its promise to create 2,000 full-time jobs this year, which it made following last year's strike by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, according to the AFL-CIO *Work in Progress* publication. The Teamsters have planned protest rallies for July 31, and are charging UPS with imposing speed-up that forces many drivers to work longer hours and through meal breaks.