

One of his aides came on later, and said, we will send you a fax inviting you to come down here. . . . I responded and I said, okay, number one, I do not recommend that the general come to the United States on any kind of safe-conduct because I do not think that that word will be kept. My suggestion was that if he wanted to I could try to arrange for the committee to go to a neutral place, perhaps Costa Rica, and if he would appear there with sufficient protection so that his safety could be assured, and he would do all this. . . .

After speaking with the general briefly and exchanging faxes, I submitted a proposal. . . . I said I would like to arrange for a meeting on neutral ground in Costa Rica and try to persuade the Senate Committee to go there and give General Noriega a hearing. . . . In response to his direct invitation, I said yes, I will come to Panama but I would like to bring down a team of people. One of them would be a security person, because I was warned that there was considerable personal risk involved in going down there, which seemed pretty logical. I wanted a translator, a good interpreter, since I do not speak Spanish, and I wanted a bilingual attorney, who is associated with me, to come with me. . . . And I proposed a certain amount of money that it would take to bring this down.

I then received a phone call from a Greek gentleman, . . . an associate of General Noriega's. . . . He said "Well, we don't want to spend the amount of money here, we'll send you a plane ticket." And I said, "Thank you, I don't go to Panama and stick my neck out for a plane ticket. . . ."

. . . So more faxes went back and forth, and the next thing I knew I received another call, and a fax saying "We have changed our mind, we don't need your services any more. We have made a deal with Reagan-Bush, that President Reagan and his successor [presumably George Bush] will take the pressure off General Noriega and there will be no more problems between them and there is no need to do anything." And I said: "If General Noriega buys this, he is a real fool, because obviously, right now, Bush needs him, because Bush does not want, on the eve of the election, a disclosure of his role—which I was assured was a real one—in arranging, orchestrating, and directing this two-way drug and money traffic between Panama, Colombia, and the United States. Now it would be devastating to him. Once he is safely elected, what reason does he have to keep his word?"

. . . I thought this was very valuable information. And while I was certainly not an admirer of Gov. Michael Dukakis, I thought, well, the election is coming up, and these people ought to have access to this information. So I called Governor Dukakis's man in San Diego, named Larry Lawrence . . . and I told him the story. And he said, I will immediately put you in touch with the Dukakis headquarters. About an hour later I received a call from some arrogant woman in Boston . . . and she said, "We don't want to have anything to do with this." And I said, "Well, go ahead. Lose the elections. See if I give a darn." And that was the end.

Syrian drug-traffic connection indicted

by Thierry Lalevée

A little-noted trial which ended on Jan. 5 in the western French city of Brest has resulted in the conviction of two agents of the Syrian government, Mohammed Partoussi and Ahmed Ali, on drug trafficking charges, and their sentencing to eight years in jail and a fine of 96 million French francs. This alone might give many cause to reconsider the backing which the Bush administration has given to Syria in its effort to crush the sovereign nation of Lebanon. But the convictions themselves are of minor importance compared to what was revealed at the trial, and introduced into the court record on the initiative of Judge Fahet. Namely, for the first time ever in any court, the role of the Syrian government in international drug trafficking, as repeatedly exposed in this publication, and the activities of its intelligence agents, were tried, convicted, and sentenced.

As noted by reporters, it was the first time ever that a French judge decided to incorporate into the legal record of the prosecution, a thick intelligence report written by a non-French intelligence agency, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The report was nothing less than a thorough compilation, detailing how the Syrian government has been involved in protecting, growing, and exporting hashish and heroin out of the Lebanese Bekaa Valley, since as early as 1976.

The bare facts of the case are as follows: On Nov. 11, 1988, French customs officials seized the ship *Cleopatra Sky*, arresting Partoussi, Ali, and seven other crewmen of Syrian, Egyptian, and other nationalities. Aboard the ship they found a mere 25 kilograms of marijuana. Yet, the seizure was not at random, but was done on the initiative of British customs which, it was revealed later, had an informant in the network, one Paul Cryne. An investigation showed that *Cleopatra Sky*, owned by a Lebanese-Syrian named "Hijazi," had left the northern Lebanese port of Tripoli in mid-October with no less than four tons of hashish. Its meeting and delivery point was just off the coast of the British port of Newcastle, where it had arrived on Nov. 6. Delays in the delivery of the drugs to local British mobsters forced the crew to throw the Hashish overboard in order to avoid being seized by British customs, only to be caught in France.

A year-long investigation involving the cooperation of British and French police officials and repeated trips to Spain, Cyprus, and the Middle East brought some highly interesting evidence to light. First, it was proven that the four tons of

hashish had been loaded into the *Cleopatra Sky* by units of the Syrian Army which had transported it in military trucks all the way from the Bekaa Valley. Second, it was also shown, according to British customs officer Brian Wilson, that both Partoussi and Ali, respectively the ship's captain and lieutenant, were no mere seamen, but held ranks within Syria's military intelligence. Third, the delivery involved an Anglo-Syrian drug network going up to the highest level of the Syrian state.

The Anglo-Syrian drug network

What prompted Judge Fahet to incorporate the DEA document in the proceedings of the case, was evidence linking the network to leading figures in Syrian intelligence. Among those named has been Commander Hassan Ali, a former military attaché in Paris who was expelled in 1982 after having been involved in a car-bomb explosion against the *Al Watan al Arabi* newspaper on Rue Marbeuf, which killed one passerby. Hassan Ali is described in the case as a leading officer in military intelligence in Lebanon. Also named is Commander Ali Haydar of the Defense Brigades in northern Lebanon.

The name of Syrian Vice President Rifaat al-Assad was also repeatedly mentioned. Though his involvement in the *Cleopatra Sky* operation itself was not raised, his name came up in relation to the man considered to be the brains behind the shipment: British subject Alan Brooks, currently in jail in Spain for other drug offenses. Since 1984, when he moved to Spain, Brooks has been based in the Nueva Andalucia district of the town of Marbella (near Málaga). Brooks reportedly maintained "good neighborly" relations with Rifaat al-Assad, who owns a house in the same district. Brooks also owned a yacht, the *Diogene*, located in the Puerto Banus nearby.

In 1988, several of Rifaat al-Assad's security guards were declared *persona non grata* after they harassed local shop-owners in the same Puerto Banus region. In a case that Spanish authorities decided to keep as quiet as possible, it was proven that Rifaat's associates were blackmailing the shop-owners into selling their shops. A woman, owner of a local restaurant who resisted the pressures, had her restaurant ransacked. One Spanish security official reportedly became outraged at the behavior of the Syrians and leaked the story to a newspaper, for which he was condemned to six years in jail in July 1989. Indeed, as it was mentioned in the French case, Spanish intelligence and Syrian intelligence are reported to have reached an agreement whereby Damascus commits itself not to foster violent or terrorist activities on Spanish soil. But as the Dec. 12 issue of the French daily *Libération* notes, this agreement does not say anything about the use of Spain by Syria for its drug-smuggling operations.

Alan Brooks, it was said in court, had masterminded the establishment of a new Anglo-Syrian drug connection, involving in particular what was described as the new mafia



The President of Syria, of whom Henry Kissinger said on April 11, 1989: "I rather like Hafez al-Assad. He is a cold analyst of the national interests of his country."

of the Manchester region in northwest Britain. His yacht, the *Diogene*, was used as a secret location for holding meetings. The relationship between Brooks and Rifaat, even if it did not formally involve drug activities, seems to have been very close indeed. For example, Brooks is now also wanted by a French judge in a totally different case: On Aug. 17, 1988, a speedboat ran over several swimmers off the coast of Antibes in southern France, killing several before fleeing. A French investigation showed that the speedboat actually belonged to Rifaat. However, Jaime de Mora, a member of the Spanish Royal Family and close cousin of the King, immediately came to Rifaat's defense saying that they had been together in Spain on that particular day. Yet, no one else but Alan Brooks is now suspected of having been at the boat's helm at the time!

Because of the various charges against him, it may now be some time before Brooks is actually tried for his involvement in the *Cleopatra Sky* caper as it was detailed by mobster-turned-informant Paul Cryne. Meanwhile, the Brest case has naturally put the spotlight on Syrian drug activities in southern Spain. This cannot but bring to mind the name of international drugs and arms smuggler Monzer al-Kassar. Al-Kassar was expelled from Spain in 1987 for drug related activities, and is now under suspicion of having sold weapons to the ETA Basque separatist organization. He now lives in Damascus under the protection of intelligence boss General Ali Duba, and is reportedly selling his own house in Marbella. But that is not the end of the story. On Jan. 7, the West German weekly *Bild am Sonntag* started a series of exposés on al-Kassar's role in drugs and international terrorism, based on investigations by former police official Manfred Morstein, author of a best seller last year on al-Kassar's terrorist operations. In the same vein, the daily *Bild Zeitung* revealed in early December 1988 that the explosives used to kill Deutsche Bank chairman Alfred Herrhausen belonged to a lot smuggled into Europe in 1977 by the Red Army Fraction through its contacts with Syrian intelligence, and Monzer al-Kassar in particular.