

The Progress Report

CIA Admitted Guilt in U.S. Citizens' Deaths and Addictions

CIA Complicity in Cocaine Distribution

by Wes Hills

(Publisher's note -- Smith refers below to "both Bush boys." Of course Bush has three sons and we should all remember the third, a convict who was found guilty of looting and embezzling from the American public.)

Drug figure entrapped, lawyer says

A Dayton attorney will seek a reduced sentence for a major drug dealer by claiming the U.S. government sponsored crack cocaine's sweep of America's inner cities to finance Ronald Reagan's covert war against Nicaragua.

Attorney Jon Paul Rion said he will seek testimony from political and civil rights leaders and people affiliated with the CIA and FBI. He said Gary Webb, author of a newspaper series and book titled *Dark Alliance*, which claimed CIA complicity in crack cocaine distribution, has agreed to testify.

Rion will raise what he calls an "urban entrapment defense" on behalf of Charles Goff Jr. in a sentencing hearing March 19 before Chief U.S. District Judge Walter H. Rice.

Rion will try to persuade Rice to depart from federal sentencing guidelines calling for Goff to get a prison sentence of 16 to 19 years. (He faces a mandatory 10 years). Goff was arrested in October 1996; police netted nearly \$1 million and 80 pounds of cocaine.

Rion concedes that his defense, if it succeeds, will open the floodgates in virtually all crack cocaine sentencings.

"That's the intent," he said.

Rice, who strongly opposes the sentencing guidelines, declined comment on Rion's unprecedented defense.

Rion said he will seek to prove that the "U.S. government, through the CIA and DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), knew of and turned their heads from the importation of 55,000 kilos (about 60 tons) of cocaine" to finance the contras in their covert war against Nicaragua starting in the early 1980s.

After Webb raised this claim in his August 1996 series in the San Jose Mercury News, the newspaper reassigned Webb and issued a "clarification" saying parts of the series didn't meet journalistic standards.

At first the series was widely assailed by the government and others in the media. No one could believe that the U.S. government would subject its own citizens to the horror of crack cocaine merely to buy guns for right-wing guerillas in Central America. But last October, as reported in the Texas Observer, the CIA released an unclassified version of a secret report, conceding the truth of most of the charges.

Rion insists that newly released information by the U.S. Justice Department and other sources supports Webb's series.

Prior to contra importation of cocaine in the early 1980s, Rion said, a kilo of cocaine cost about \$100,000, confining its use largely to the "upper class."

The price plunged to \$10,000 a kilo as the contras, using U.S. government planes and bases, "established a nationwide distribution network among the middle and lower economic classes," Rion said, citing Webb's reporting and other sources.

The introduction of cheap crack cocaine in about 1981 gave the CIA and contras "a way to distribute large amounts of cocaine to low-income people," he said

"All of a sudden, crack cocaine was everywhere in this country," especially in the black community, Rion said.

Worse, he said, the CIA, contras and their allies introduced large amounts of weapons to the drug trade, creating such violence that the U.S. Senate quickly passed laws calling for much longer sentences for drug offenses involving crack.

A drug offense involving 5 grams of crack cocaine carries a mandatory sentence of five years in prison. It takes 100 times that amount of powdered cocaine to trigger the same sentence.

Barry McCaffrey, the retired Army general who is the United States official drug czar, has admitted that while blacks represent only 12 percent of the U.S. population and just 14 percent of the drug users, they make up 33 percent of the drug arrests and 48 percent of those in prison for drug offenses.

These statistics have led Rev. Jesse Jackson, U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., and others to challenge the sentencing guidelines and rally to Webb's defense.

Jackson has asserted Webb's series "challenges the moral authority of our government." Waters, who wrote the foreword to Webb's book, has said the book "brings to light one of the worst official abuses in our nation's history."

While stopping short of Webb's contentions, others have raised serious questions about the CIA's behavior.

Peter Kornbluh, a senior analyst at the National Security Archive, a nongovernmental, nonprofit institution that maintains a library of declassified documents, noted in an Aug. 30 column published by *The Baltimore Sun*:

According to the Justice Department, the CIA and the attorney general's office in 1982 worked out a "memorandum of understanding" that exempted the CIA from having to report illegal drug smuggling by its people.

"The CIA, despite repeated denial, did, in fact, interfere with law enforcement proceedings in the 1983 San Francisco 'Frogman Case' -- at the time the biggest cocaine bust in California history. After two Nicaraguans were arrested and more than \$30,000 in cash seized from their safe house, the suspects claimed the money was contra funds rather than drug revenue. The CIA, according to newly disclosed documents, made a 'discreet approach' to high-level Justice Department officials and dispatched an agency lawyer to San Francisco 'to avoid inquiry into activities or other (CIA) interests' in Central America. After the meeting, the U.S. attorney's office returned the confiscated cash to the contra/drug traffickers."

"High-level officials at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., made the strategic decision to keep known contra drug traffickers on its payroll. In a briefing to the still-secret report before the House Intelligence Committee last March, CIA Inspector General Fred Hitz admitted that 'there are instances where the CIA did not, in an expeditious or consistent fashion, cut off relations with individuals supporting the contra program who were alleged to have engaged in drug trafficking activity.'"

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