



Crashed Jet Carrying Cocaine Linked to CIA

by Jeremy R. Hammond / September 13th, 2008

A number of jets connected to drug-trafficking, including a Gulfstream II carrying more than 3 tons of cocaine that crashed in the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico last year, have been linked to the CIA through both its extraordinary rendition program and a supposed sting operation known as “Mayan Express”.

A private jet that crashed last year in eastern Mexico and was found to be carrying more than 3 tons of cocaine was also used by the Central Intelligence Agency for clandestine operations, the Mexican daily *El Universal* reported last week.

The newspaper cited documents from the United States and the European Parliament which “show that that plane flew several times to Guantanamo, Cuba, presumably to transfer terrorism suspects.” It said the European Parliament was investigating the jet for its possible use in “extraordinary rendition” flights, whereby prisoners are covertly transferred by the U.S. To a third country.

In June, 2006, the British Department for Transport website published flight data on US aircraft into or out of the UK. According to the site, “This data had previously been released by Eurocontrol to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to assist with its enquiry into allegations of ‘extraordinary rendition’ flights operating in Europe.” The jet that crashed in Mexico, with registration number N987SA, is listed in the data report.

According to *El Universal*, FAA records show that the jet flew to Guantanamo on May 30, 2003. From June 23 to July 14, the jet flew from New York to Iceland, France, Italy, and Ireland. From July 16 to 20, it flew from the U.S. To Canada, the UK, Ireland, the UK, Canada, and back to the U.S. Again. From April 7 to 12, 2004, it went from New York to Canada, the UK, Canada, and again to the U.S. The jet then flew to Guantanamo again. On April 21, it flew from the U.S. To Canada, France, the UK, Canada, and back to the U.S. It left the U.S. For Guantanamo once more on January 21, 2005.

The jet crashed on September 24, 2007. According to an Aviation Safety Network description of the accident, the Gulfstream Aerospace G-1159 Gulfstream II jet with registration N987SA crashed near Tixkokob in the northern part of the Yucatan Peninsula. ASN describes it as an “Illegal Flight” and reports that “When being chased by Mexican military helicopters, the crew carried out a crash-landing. No bodies were found in the wreckage, but soldiers found 132 bags containing about 3.6 tons (3.3. Metric tons) of cocaine.”

An initial Reuters report on the crash noted that “Drug planes packed with South American cocaine — often with

passenger seats ripped out to make space — frequently fly through Mexico and Central America en route for the United States. Some unload their cargo at clandestine airstrips south of the border where traffickers send it on by road or sea.”

El Universal, in its initial report on the crash in 2007, stated that the cocaine was in 132 bags and noted the registration number of the wrecked plane.

McClatchy Newspapers observed a few days after the crash that “news reports have linked the plane to the transport of terrorist suspects to the U.S. Detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but those reports cite logs that indicate only that the plane flew twice between Washington, D.C., and Guantanamo and once between Oxford, Conn., and Guantanamo.”

In November of last year, reporters from the Tampa Tribune followed up on the international investigation that resulted after the Gulfstream II crash. An expert on the drug trade from the University of Miami told the reporters that cocaine is being moved by air through Florida more frequently, as an alternative to being brought into the U.S. In the southwest.

The Gulfstream II jet was one of two planes being used by the Mexican Sinaloa drug cartel, also known as the Pacific Cartel, to carry cocaine. The other jet, a DC-9, had been seized and was found to be carrying 5.5 tons of cocaine. Both aircraft were purchased by the cartel from St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport.

The DC-9 with tail number NOOSA, was seized on April 11, 2006 carrying an amount of cocaine valued at an estimated \$82,500,000, according to Airport-Dat.com. Reportedly sold in March, the jet was scheduled to depart for Simon Bolivar International airport in Venezuela on April 5. FAA records show that at the time of the seizure, it was still registered to Royal Sons Inc., which operates out of St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport. It was deregistered two days after the seizure and listed as exported to Venezuela.

At the time of the crash, the Gulfstream II was registered to Donna Blue Aircraft Inc., owned by Joao Luiz Malago and Eduardo Dias Guimaraes, who had reportedly purchased the jet in July and then sold it to two Florida men on September 16. Two days later, the jet left Fort Lauderdale for Cancun. Then, according to Mexican authorities, it flew to Columbia to pick up the cocaine and was en route to deliver the drugs when it came to the attention of the military and crashed in the resulting chase.

Some have speculated that Donna Blue Aircraft may have been a front company. The Florida Department of State Division of Corporations lists the “Date Filed” for the company as March 29, 2007. And from June 1, it was listed at an address in Coconut Creek, Florida. Then, on June 18, 2008, the company name was changed to North Atlantic Aircraft Services, Corp., listed at the same address, but with Malago as the sole owner.

Journalist Daniel Hopsicker visited the Coconut Creek location and found no sign that such a business existed there. Hopsicker wrote, “Moreover the brief description of Donna Blue on its Internet page, apparently designed to ‘flesh out the ghost a little,’ is such a clumsy half-hearted effort that it defeats the purpose of helping aid the construction of a plausible ‘legend,’ or cover, and ends up doing more harm than good... For example, the website features a quote from a satisfied Donna Blue Aircraft customer. Unfortunately his name is ‘John Doe.’ And the listed phone number is right out of the movies: 415.555-5555.”

The company’s website (now offline) stated only, “we are in this business over 20 years, attending South, North and Central america, with outstanding service, we are today most trusted company in this market. our customer

loyalty make us different” (sic). According to *Whois*, the site was created on August 20, 2007, a month after the Gulfstream II was reportedly bought by the company and less than a month before it crashed carrying the cocaine. Once uploaded, the site was apparently never updated and seems to have gone offline sometime after February 2008. According to the site description still available on Alexa, the company opened in 1995 despite the fact, as noted above, that the date the company was filed with the Florida Department of State was in March 2007.

Malago sold the jet to Clyde O'Connor. The name of Gregory D. Smith also appeared as a co-signer on the bill of sale.

A reporter from the *Broward-Palm Beach New Times* contacted Gregory D. Smith of Global Jet Solutions. When asked about the plane crash, Smith replied, “I’m not allowed to discuss that — I’m sorry,” and hung up. Contacted a second time, he said, “I’m not going to divulge anything.”

O'Connor had once written a letter to the editor in response to an article on the death of a police officer saying that “one less cop is not a bad thing.” He was convicted in 2001 for criminal air safety violations. In October 2007, he was detained by Canadian officials after they searched a Cessna 210 he had flown to Nova Scotia and found two Derringer pistols he had failed to report.

Reporters from McClatchy Newspapers attempted to reach O'Connor at one of his companies, Execstar Aviation in Fort Lauderdale, but the number had been disconnected. “Adding to the plane’s mystery”, their article noted, “are allegations that it made trips in 2003, 2004 and 2005 between the United States and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where the U.S. detention center for suspected terrorists is located.”

Baruch Vega, a Columbian who has worked with the FBI, DEA, and CIA in law enforcement operations told *Narco News* that one of the main pilots used in operations for flights between Florida and South America was named Greg Smith. Vega said,

Well originally ... I met Greg Smith ... we needed a pilot, a very trustful pilot, someone we could trust to bring in the [Colombian] drug traffickers to surrender. Then the members of the FBI recommended to get in contact with this guy [Smith] because he was very close to them. Ever since we flew only with him. Everything was with him. ... I never asked anything [about Smith's background]. But he [Smith] brought a couple of pilots because we always have two pilots in the plane. He occasionally brought pilots from the US Customs. I tell you one thing. We flew with Greg Smith easily 25 to 30 times. All [the] operations [were] between the end of 1997 to 2000.

He added that there were “DEA agents in the plane and of course drug traffickers who were coming to surrender with attorneys.” He also said the name of the company from which the aircraft were chartered was Aero Group Jets. A court document confirms one instance in which the CIA had worked with the DEA to bring a fugitive Colombian drug trafficker, one Mr. Cristancho, to Florida by means of an aircraft rented from Aero Group Jets.

According to *Narco News*, “A check of the public records available through Florida’s Department of State lists the registered agent/officer of that now inactive company as Gregory D. Smith.”

When contacted by *Narco News*, the Gregory Smith identified in the *Broward-Palm Beach New Times* story denied that he was the same Greg Smith as the one whose signature appeared as co-signer on the bill of sale of the Gulfstream II. He said his middle initial is “J” and that he had been wrongly identified.

Narco News obtained a copy of a 2007 document with the signature of Gregory Smith from Global Jet Solutions and compared it with the signature Gregory D. Smith in a 1998 annual report from Aero Group Jets filed with the state of Florida. The signatures “appear to be different,” *Narco News* concluded. They do indeed appear to be different signatures, but the fact that the two samples are 9 years apart also must be taken into consideration, as a person’s signature may evolve over time.

In a follow up report, *Narco News* tracked down Malago, who denied that he operated a front company. “Some people told on internet,” he said, “that my company is a CIA cover office and that bring me a lot of problems. First this is not true and you can imagine if this people came to talk with me. I have family and dont want any more problems there” (sic).

Malago also agreed to share a copy of the bill of sale of the Gulfstream II jet with *Narco News*, which reported that “In comparing the two signatures, there are some differences, such as one is signed as Gregory D. while the other is signed simply as Greg, with no middle initial. However there are some striking similarities as well, including the fact that some of the letters appear to be penned in precisely the same way.”

Mike Levine, a former undercover DEA agent who has worked as an expert witness in court cases, told *Narco News*, “I did much of this handwriting comparison work, without using an expert, but my opinion was accepted before grand juries as having a significant amount of work experience in comparing handwritings (IRS, BATF, Customs and DEA). I would say the samples you sent me are definitely the same handwriting.”

Although inconclusive, there is thus compelling evidence that the Gregory Smith who cosigned with O’Connor for the purchase of the Gulfstream II from Malago was indeed the same Gregory Smith who was involved in piloting flights for CIA and DEA operations out of Florida.

The recent article from *El Universal* noted that the Gulfstream II jet had also been previously owned by AGI Holdings Corp., which sold it to S/A Holdings LLC, a company for which, the paper says, there is virtually no information.

The use of front companies by CIA to provide cover for its operations is well known and documented.

In December 2005, the *Toronto Star* ran a story on CIA “ghost flights”. It noted that a plane with registration N196D was registered with the FAA under Devon Holding and Leasing, Inc. — but that no such company existed.

There is no Devon Holding and Leasing Inc. at 129 W. Center St. in Lexington, N.C. There is no phone listing. The city offices have never heard of it; neither has the Chamber of Commerce. The law offices of James A. Gleason are at 129 W. Center St., but five days of inquiries there failed to yield an answer to this simple question: Does anyone in this office know of a company called Devon Holding and Leasing? It is almost certainly a CIA shell company, existing on paper only, and the turboprop was likely carrying a “ghost” prisoner to a country where torture is used during interrogations.

Devon Holding and Leasing was being investigated by the European Parliament for its possible role in the CIA’s rendition program, and was named by investigators as a CIA “shell company”.

In one documented case of extraordinary rendition, the *Toronto Star* story continues, the CIA flew Maher Arar, who is from Ottawa, from New York’s John F. Kennedy Airport to Syria, where he was tortured as a suspected

terrorist. In another case, Osama Moustafa Hassan Nasr was abducted from the streets of Milan and taken to Egypt, where he was tortured. Saad iqbal Madni was similarly taken from Jakarta and flown to Cairo, where he was held for two years before being delivered to Guantanamo Bay. He claims he was tortured in Egypt.

On the use of front companies by the CIA:

“It’s careless tradecraft,” says John Pike, an expert on U.S. intelligence matters at GlobalSecurity.org. “They (the CIA) have allowed the tail-spotters into the game and they have not come to grips with the advent of the Internet, and not come to grips with the massive parallel processing which is underway with all those tail-spotters.” The planes are supposed to be registered with legitimate companies, so they just blend in and can’t be traced to the CIA, Pike says. “These are not real companies. They should be using good-looking companies which arouse no suspicion at all.”

The *New York Times* ran a story in 2005 stating that Aero Contractors Ltd. was a CIA front company. “When the Central Intelligence Agency wants to grab a suspected member of Al Qaeda overseas and deliver him to interrogators in another country,” the *Times* report said, “an Aero Contractors plane often does the job. If agency experts need to fly overseas in a hurry after the capture of a prized prisoner, a plane will depart Johnston County and stop at Dulles Airport outside Washington to pick up the C.I.A. team on the way.”

The *Times* also stated that “The company was founded in 1979 by a legendary C.I.A. officer and chief pilot for Air America, the agency’s Vietnam-era air company” and that “Aero appears to be the direct descendant of Air America”.

The article in the *Times* declined to note, however, the CIA’s well-documented role in heroin trafficking through Air America in southeast Asia during the war in Vietnam.

Adding to the intrigue, in December, 2007, *Narco News* reported that according to DEA officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity, the crashed Gulfstream II jet “was part of an operation being carried out by a Department of Homeland Security agency” codenamed “Mayan Express”. The effort was “spearheaded by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the sources claim.” The report continues:

The operation also appears to be badly flawed, the sources say, because it is being carried out unilaterally, (Rambo-style), by ICE and without the knowledge of the Mexican government — at least it was up until the point of the coke-packed Gulfstream jet’s abrupt impact with the Earth.

“This is a case of ICE running amok,” one DEA source told *Narco News*. “If this [operation] was being run by the book, they would not be doing it unilaterally,” — without the participation of the DEA — “and without the knowledge of the Mexican government.”

The DEA confirmed to *Narco News* that it was handling the investigation into the crash. The pilots were apprehended after their initial escape from the crash site and apparently “spilled the beans on the ICE operation during their interrogation by Mexican authorities, DEA sources tell *Narco News*.”

“One proposition that all of the law enforcers who spoke with *Narco News* agreed on with respect to the Mayan Express is that even if DEA was precluded from participating in the effort, the CIA almost certainly was involved on some level.”

Narco News also noted that a report from a British government agency listed the Gulfstream II jet as one “European investigators were interested in obtaining more information about in relation to a probe into CIA rendition flights” and added that other sources also suggested that “Mayan Express” might have been a CIA operation using ICE for cover.

Narco News reported again in 2008 on yet another plane that was apparently involved in a drug trafficking operation. On November 26, 2004, a twin-prop Beechcraft King Air 200 landed and was abandoned on a makeshift runway in a cotton field in Nicaragua. Traces of cocaine were found in the plane. The cocaine had apparently been loaded onto a truck. Several days after the plane was abandoned, law enforcement officials arrested the occupants of a truck carrying 1,100 kilos of cocaine.

The abandoned aircraft’s tail number was N168D, registered to none other than Devon Holding and Leasing Inc., the same company used as a front by the CIA for its extraordinary renditions operations, as noted previously.

Then the story of that plane gets even more convoluted, as FAA records show that the plane registered under Devon Holding and Leasing Inc. with tail number N168D actually belongs to a different kind of plane, model CN-235-300. The Beech 200’s actual tail number is N391SA, registered with the FAA under Sky Way Aircraft Inc.

Sky Way Aircraft Inc. can also be linked to Royal Sons Inc., which, as noted above, was still the registered owner of the DC-9 that was seized carrying more than 5 tons of cocaine. The parent company of Sky Way Aircraft was Skyway Communications Holding Corp., which had originally arranged to purchase the DC-9 that was ultimately registered with Royal Sons Inc. The president of Royal Sons, Frederick J. Geffon, was also a shareholder in Skyway Communications. In addition, the two companies had at one time jointly filed for a loan to purchase another DC-9, tail number N120NE. The CEO of Skyway Communications, James Kent, had also served under contract with the Department of Defense, the National Security Agency, and the Department of the Navy.

Like the DC-9, the Beech 200 was sold to a buyer in Venezuela in October 2004, about one month before it was abandoned in the cotton field and linked by authorities to cocaine trafficking.

The Beech 200 may have been a part of the Mayan Express operation. According to Narco News, “Mark Conrad, a former supervisory special agent with U.S. Customs, ICE’s predecessor agency, speculates that the Mayan Express operation is not controlled by ICE at all, but is, in fact, a CIA-run operation using ICE as a cover. He adds that the CIA has agents operating inside many federal law enforcement agencies utilizing what is known as an ‘official cover.’”

A former ICE agent also told Narco News he suspected the CIA was behind the drug plane operations.

There is no shortage of precedents for alleged CIA involvement in drug trafficking.

Aflred W. McCoy’s “The Politics of Heroin”, first published in 1972, documented CIA complicity in drug trafficking such as its involvement the opium and heroin trade in southeast Asia.

Journalist Gary Webb’s “Dark Alliance” series is a well known investigation into allegations of the CIA’s involvement in the Los Angeles crack epidemic in the 1980s to help finance the Contras in the terrorist war to overthrow the elected government of Nicaragua.

Michael Ruppert, former narcotics officer with the Los Angeles Police Department, famously confronted CIA director John Deutch at a televised conference with information on specific CIA operations, which he cited by name and said he had documentation on, and said the CIA had been dealing drugs in L.A. for a long time.

And there is evidence that the CIA flew drugs into Mena, Arkansas during Bill Clinton's governorship, in its operations to finance the Contras.

In 1993, CBS *60 Minutes* ran a show headlined "The CIA's Cocaine". The former head of the DEA, Judge Robert Bonner, told Mike Wallace, the show's host, that the CIA had an unauthorized operation to bring drugs into the U.S. "If this has not been approved by DEA or an appropriate law-enforcement authority in the United States," Bonner said, "then it's illegal. It's called drug trafficking."

Bonner, asked to rationalize the operation, suggested that it might "lead to some valuable drug intelligence about the Colombian cartels."

A DEA agent interviewed for the show said that she had been told by the CIA officer in charge of the CIA station in Caracas, Venezuela, that they had to keep the cartel happy by delivering their cocaine to their dealers in the U.S. "The CIA and the Guardia Nacional," she explained, "wanted to let cocaine go on into the traffic without doing anything. They wanted to let it come up to the United States, no surveillance, no nothing."

The CIA had gone to the DEA with its proposal, which was rejected. "They made this proposal," said Bonner, "and we said, 'No, no way. We will not permit this. It should not go forward.' And then, apparently, it went forward anyway."

Senator Dennis DeConcini of the Senate Intelligence Committee also told Wallace, "It was an operation that I don't think they should've been involved in.... I don't doubt that the drugs got in here." He called the operation "a mistake."

Morley Safer closed the piece by saying, "And what happened to the tens of millions that were paid for the CIA's cocaine? Well, General Guillen insists he didn't get any of it. But Judge Bonner says one thing is certain, the Colombian cartel did. They got their money once the dope made it to our streets."

Senator and 2004 presidential candidate John Kerry told NBC Dateline that the CIA was complicit in the flow of drugs into the U.S. His Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Narcotics, Terrorism, and International Operations found that "it is clear that individuals who provided support for the Contras were involved in drug trafficking" and that this activity did not go unnoticed by the government agencies.

Kerry also headed up a Senate investigation into the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) which documented the CIA's involvement in the bank, which was a criminal front for money launderers, drug traffickers, arms dealers, and even nuclear proliferators.

The government went into damage control. In 1997, the Department of Justice issued a report addressing the allegations of CIA involvement in drug trafficking, and the CIA released its own report the following year.

The full story behind the crashed Gulfstream II jet and the other planes that were found to have been involved in drug trafficking is far from known. But the facts that have surfaced to date strongly indicate CIA involvement of one kind or another. The agency's fingerprints, one might reasonably say, are all over this one.

Jeremy R. Hammond is the editor of [Foreign Policy Journal](#), a website providing news, analysis, and opinion from outside the standard framework provided by government officials and the corporate media, particularly with regard to the "war on terrorism". His articles have also been featured in numerous other online publications. You can contact him at: jeremy@foreignpolicyjournal.com. [Read other articles by Jeremy](#), or [visit Jeremy's website](#).

This article was posted on Saturday, September 13th, 2008 at 6:00pm and is filed under [Drug Wars](#).

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3 comments on this article so far ...

John Hatch said on September 14th, 2008 at 3:23pm #

It's long been known that the 'war on drugs' is as bogus as the 'war on terror'. Not that people don't get hurt, though. There's also a CIA drug connection to 9/11.

Hans Bennett said on September 14th, 2008 at 7:46pm #

Great article! I had not heard about this at all. This is my favorite article giving background on CIA drug trafficking (deep stuff!):

The CIA and Drugs
Just say "Why not?"
by William Blum

"In my 30-year history in the Drug Enforcement Administration and related agencies, the major targets of my investigations almost invariably turned out to be working for the CIA."

Dennis Dayle, former chief of an elite DEA enforcement unit.{1}

On August 18, 1996, the San Jose Mercury initiated an extended series of articles about the CIA connection to the crack epidemic in Los Angeles. Though the CIA and influential media like The Washington Post, The New York Times, and The Los Angeles Times went out of their way to belittle the significance of the articles, the basic ingredients of the story were not really new — the CIA's Contra army, fighting the leftist government of Nicaragua, turning to smuggling cocaine into the U.S., under CIA protection, to raise money for their military and personal use.

What was unique about the articles was (A) they appeared in a "respectable" daily newspaper and not an "alternative" publication, which could have and would have been completely ignored by the powers that be; and (B) they followed the cocaine into Los Angeles' inner city, into the hands of the Crips and the Bloods, at the time that street-level drug users were figuring out how to make cocaine affordable: by changing the costly white powder into powerful little nuggets of crack that could be smoked cheaply.

The Contra dealers, principally Oscar Danilo Blandon and his boss Juan Norwin Meneses, both from the Nicaraguan privileged class, operated out of the San Francisco Bay Area and sold tons of cocaine — a drug that was virtually unobtainable in black neighborhoods before — to Los Angeles street gangs. They then funneled millions in drug profits to the Contra cause, while helping to fuel a disastrous crack explosion in L.A. and other cities, and enabling the gangs to buy automatic weapons, sometimes from Blandon himself.

The principal objection raised by the establishment critics to this scenario was that, even if correct, it didn't prove that the CIA was complicit, or even had any knowledge of it. However, to arrive at this conclusion, they had to ignore things like the following from the SJM series:

- a) Cocaine flights from Central America landed with impunity in various spots in the United States, including a U.S. Air Force base in Texas. In 1985, a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent assigned to El Salvador reported to headquarters the details on cocaine flights from El Salvador to the U.S. The DEA did nothing but force him out of the agency{2}.
- b) When Blandon was finally arrested in October 1986, after congress resumed funding for the Contras, and he admitted to crimes that have sent others away for life, the Justice Department turned him loose on unsupervised probation after only 28 months behind bars and has paid him more than \$166,000 since.
- c) According to a legal motion filed in a 1990 police corruption trial: In the 1986 raid on Blandon's money-launderer, the police carted away numerous documents purportedly linking the U.S. government to cocaine trafficking and money-laundering on behalf of the Contras. CIA personnel appeared at the sheriff's department within 48 hours of the raid and removed the seized files from the evidence room. This motion drew media coverage in 1990 but, at the request of the Justice Department, a federal judge issued a gag order barring any discussion of the matter.
- d) Blandon subsequently became a full-time informant for the DEA. When he testified in 1996 as a prosecution witness, the federal prosecutors obtained a court order preventing defense lawyers from delving into Blandon's ties to the CIA.
- e) Though Meneses is listed in the DEA's computers as a major international drug smuggler and was implicated in 45 separate federal investigations since 1974, he lived openly and conspicuously in California until 1989 and never spent a day in a U.S. prison. The DEA, U.S. Customs, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and the California Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement have complained that a number of the probes of Meneses were stymied by the CIA or unnamed "national security" interests.
- f) The U.S. Attorney in San Francisco gave back to an arrested Nicaraguan drug dealer the \$36,000 found in his possession. The money was returned after two Contra leaders sent letters to the court swearing that the drug dealer had been given the cash to buy supplies "for the reinstatement of democracy in Nicaragua". The letters were hurriedly sealed after prosecutors invoked the Classified Information Procedures Act, a law designed to keep national security secrets from leaking out during trials. When a U.S. Senate subcommittee later inquired of the Justice Department the reason for this unusual turn of events, they ran into a wall of secrecy. "The Justice Department flipped out to prevent us from getting access to people, records — finding anything out about it," recalled Jack Blum, former chief counsel to the Senate subcommittee that investigated allegations of Contra cocaine trafficking. "It was one of the most frustrating exercises that I can ever recall."

A Brief History of CIA Involvement in Drug Trafficking

1947 to 1951, France

CIA arms, money, and disinformation enabled Corsican criminal syndicates in Marseille to wrestle control of labor unions from the Communist Party. The Corsicans gained political influence and control over the docks — ideal conditions for cementing a long-term partnership with mafia drug distributors, which turned Marseille into the postwar heroin capital of the Western world. Marseille's first heroin laboratories were opened in 1951, only months after the Corsicans took over the waterfront.{3}

Early 1950s, Southeast Asia

The Nationalist Chinese army, organized by the CIA to wage war against Communist China, became the opium barons of The Golden Triangle (parts of Burma, Thailand and Laos), the world's largest source of opium and heroin. Air America, the CIA's principal airline proprietary, flew the drugs all over Southeast Asia.{4}

1950s to early 1970s, Indochina

During U.S. military involvement in Laos and other parts of Indochina, Air America flew opium and heroin throughout the area. Many GI's in Vietnam became addicts. A laboratory built at CIA headquarters in northern Laos was used to refine heroin. After a decade of American military intervention, Southeast Asia had become the source of 70 percent of the world's illicit opium and the major supplier of raw materials for America's booming heroin market.{5}

1973-80, Australia

The Nugan Hand Bank of Sydney was a CIA bank in all but name. Among its officers were a network of US generals, admirals and CIA men, including former CIA Director William Colby, who was also one of its lawyers. With branches in Saudi Arabia, Europe, Southeast Asia, South America and the U.S., Nugan Hand Bank financed drug trafficking, money laundering and international arms dealings. In 1980, amidst several mysterious deaths, the bank collapsed, \$50 million in debt.{6}

1970s and 1980s, Panama

For more than a decade, Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega was a highly paid CIA asset and collaborator, despite

knowledge by U.S. drug authorities as early as 1971 that the general was heavily involved in drug trafficking and money laundering. Noriega facilitated “guns-for-drugs” flights for the Contras, providing protection and pilots, as well as safe havens for drug cartel officials, and discreet banking facilities. U.S. officials, including then-CIA Director William Webster and several DEA officers, sent Noriega letters of praise for efforts to thwart drug trafficking (albeit only against competitors of his Medellin Cartel patrons). When a confluence of circumstances led to Noriega’s political luck running out, the Bush administration was reluctantly obliged to turn against him, invading Panama in December 1989, kidnapping the general, and falsely ascribing the invasion to the war on drugs. Ironically, drug trafficking through Panama was not abated after the US invasion.{7}

1980s, Central America

Obsessed with overthrowing the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua, Reagan administration officials tolerated drug trafficking as long as the traffickers gave support to the Contras. In 1989, the Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations (the Kerry committee) concluded a three-year investigation by stating: “There was substantial evidence of drug smuggling through the war zones on the part of individual Contras, Contra suppliers, Contra pilots, mercenaries who worked with the Contras, and Contra supporters throughout the region. ... U.S. officials involved in Central America failed to address the drug issue for fear of jeopardizing the war efforts against Nicaragua. ... In each case, one or another agency of the U.S. government had information regarding the involvement either while it was occurring, or immediately thereafter. ... Senior U.S. policy makers were not immune to the idea that drug money was a perfect solution to the Contras’ funding problems.”{8} In Costa Rica, which served as the “Southern Front” for the Contras (Honduras being the Northern Front), there were several different CIA-Contra networks involved in drug trafficking, including that of CIA operative John Hull, whose farms along Costa Rica’s border with Nicaragua were the main staging area for the Contras. Hull and other CIA-connected Contra supporters and pilots teamed up with George Morales, a major Miami-based Colombian drug trafficker who later admitted to giving \$3 million in cash and several planes to Contra leaders.{9} In 1989, after the Costa Rica government indicted Hull for drug trafficking, a DEA-hired plane clandestinely and illegally flew him to Miami, via Haiti. The US repeatedly thwarted Costa Rican efforts to extradite Hull back to Costa Rica to stand trial.{10}

Another Costa Rican-based drug ring involved a group of Cuban Americans whom the CIA had hired as military trainers for the Contras. Many had long been involved with the CIA and drug trafficking. They used Contra planes and a Costa Rican-based shrimp company, which laundered money for the CIA, to move cocaine to the U.S.{11}

Costa Rica was not the only route. Other way stations along the cocaine highway — and closely associated with the CIA — were the Guatemalan military intelligence service, which harbored many drug traffickers, and Ilopango Air Force Base in El Salvador, a key component of the U.S. military intervention against the country’s guerrillas.{12}

The Contras provided both protection and infrastructure (planes, pilots, airstrips, warehouses, front companies and banks) to these CIA-linked drug networks. At least four transport companies under investigation for drug trafficking received US government contracts to carry non-lethal supplies to the Contras.{13} Southern Air Transport, “formerly” CIA-owned, and later under Pentagon contract, was involved in the drug running as well.{14} Cocaine-laden planes flew to Florida, Texas, Louisiana and other locations, including several military bases. Designated as “Contra Craft,” these shipments were not to be inspected. When some authority wasn’t clued in and made an arrest, powerful strings were pulled on behalf of dropping the case, acquittal, reduced sentence, or deportation.{15}

1980s to early 1990s, Afghanistan

CIA-supported Mujahedeen rebels engaged heavily in drug trafficking while fighting against the Soviet-supported government and its plans to reform the very backward Afghan society. The Agency’s principal client was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, one of the leading druglords and leading heroin refiner. CIA-supplied trucks and mules, which had carried arms into Afghanistan, were used to transport opium to laboratories along the Afghan-Pakistan border. The output provided up to one half of the heroin used annually in the United States and three-quarters of that used in Western Europe. US officials admitted in 1990 that they had failed to investigate or take action against the drug operation because of a desire not to offend their Pakistani and Afghan allies.{16} In 1993, an official of the DEA called Afghanistan the new Colombia of the drug world.{17}

Mid-1980s to early 1990s, Haiti

While working to keep key Haitian military and political leaders in power, the CIA turned a blind eye to their clients’ drug trafficking. In 1986, the Agency added some more names to its payroll by creating a new Haitian organization, the National Intelligence Service (SIN). SIN was purportedly created to fight the cocaine trade, though SIN officers themselves engaged in the

trafficking, a trade aided and abetted by some of the Haitian military and political leaders.{18}

NOTES

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c) Murray Waas, "Cocaine and the White House Connection", *Los Angeles Weekly*, Sept. 30-Oct. 6 and Oct. 7-13, 1988, passim
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 18. *New York Times*, Nov. 14, 1993; *The Nation*, Oct. 3, 1994, p. 346
- Written by William Blum, author of *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*;
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Carol D McEver said on September 14th, 2008 at 10:10pm #

Greed and money! The "rulers" of the U.S. do whatever they want and the media brainwashed public does nothing. Flood us with dope, ruin lives, then make it so hard to live that there's no time to even know what is going on. Make gambling legal everywhere and put up casinos on every corner. So, the ones without jobs take their welfare, disability or retirement checks, and/or somebody else's money they borrow or steal and sit in the casinos like mindless zombies until the casino gets it all. And animal activists like me think we can get anywhere with the greedy factory farmers?!?

Too bad the ones who care about things like the environment, animal welfare and abuse and other societal issues aren't the ones with the money to fix things.

I'll never know, personally, but maybe once you reach a certain level of wealth, nothing else matters but getting more. Like you become addicted to the next dollar. No matter what it takes or who it hurts to get it.

Gamblers are addicted to that next win and will lose everything trying for it, while each win reenforces his motivation and each loss makes him return to "get it back".

Crack addicts are always after that first hit. The best one, the big one, the next one.....and will keep smoking it until they absolutely cannot beg borrow or steal money anywhere.

And the problem with the money "addiction" is, they have the money to fund it!!

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