

Barry Seal

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Adler Berriman Seal (July 16, 1939–February 19, 1986), better known as **Barry Seal**, was an American aircraft pilot who flew flights for the Central Intelligence Agency and the Medellin Cartel, among others. Seal was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and began flying at the age of 15. In 1955, he received his pilot's license at the age of 16 and joined the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), whose members at the time also included Lee Harvey Oswald and David Ferrie.^[2] He later was linked through a dated photograph to Operation 40, a covert CIA operation whose members included; Tosh Plumlee, Frank Sturgis, future CIA Director Porter Goss and anti-Castro operatives involved in the Bay of Pigs Invasion.

He also joined the Army Special Forces to continue flight training. In 1966, Seal went to work for TWA as a flight engineer and later became the youngest 747 pilot in the nation. He flew transcontinental flights for TWA until he was fired after he agreed to fly plastic explosives from Miami to Mexico for an anti-Castro group. The buyer turned out to be a Federal Agent and he was arrested. He lost his job with TWA and became a private aviation consultant for groups in Latin America, which led to a career in drug trafficking.^[3]

In 1980, he began working for the Ochoa family and the Medellin Cartel transporting more lucrative cocaine shipments.^[4]

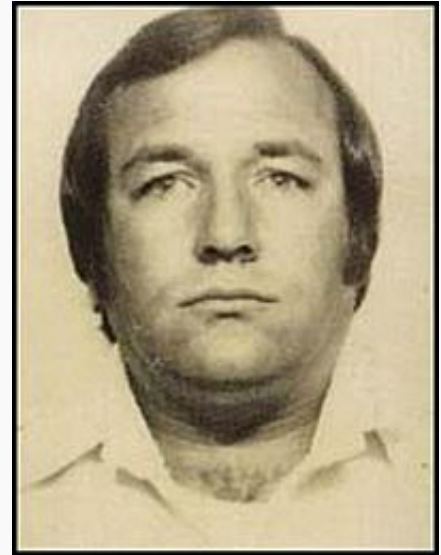
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Drug Smuggler

After he made contacts with various Latin America drug producing

Barry Seal



Born	Adler Berriman Seal July 16, 1939 Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Died	February 19, 1986 Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Cause	Gunshot
Charge(s)	Conspiracy to smuggle narcotics
Occupation	Pilot



"This photograph was taken in a nightclub in Mexico City on 22nd January, 1963. It is believed that the men in the photograph are all members of Operation 40. Closest to the camera on the left is Felix Rodriguez. Next to him is Porter Goss and Barry Seal. Tosh Plumlee

organizations he began to develop his smuggling strategy. By 1981 he worked mainly for the Ochoa family and the Medellin Cartel transporting more lucrative cocaine shipments. This is according to the Frontline documentary on the drug war. He then became one of the largest transportation rings for the cartel in America.^[5]

Barry Seal began his drug smuggling career in 1976 after he lost his job with TWA. He initially worked with South American marijuana growers. Then he began to move cocaine shipments along with his general smuggling business. In 1979 he was arrested in Honduras and spent nine months in jail. Once released he met another contract pilot, William Roger Reaves, who agreed to introduce him to the Ochoa family. The Ochoas with Jorge Luis Ochoa Vasquez as their leader, headed the Medellin Cartel.^[6]

After successful runs into his homebase in Louisiana he moved operations to an infamous airport facility in Mena, Arkansas. There he owned and operated many planes and helicopters and advanced radar equipment. This includes the C-123 transport plane which was used famously in the Nicaragua sting operation. "All of his aircraft were equipped with the most expensive cryptic radio communications we had ever seen at that time," said DEA Agent Ernest Jacobsen. The operation was very successful until Seal was indicted on conspiracy to smuggle Quaaludes into Florida in 1984.^[7] While operating for the Medellin Cartel, Seal went by the alias, "Ellis Mackenzie."^[8]

Undercover Informant

In order to avoid a long prison sentence, Seal contacted law enforcement authorities. He was turned down initially by local prosecutors and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), agents in Miami. He flew to Washington D.C. and contacted agents in the Vice President's drug task force. After some deliberation they decided to use Seal as a high level informant against the Medellin Cartel.^[9] According the Frontline Godfather of Cocaine Investigation, "Jake Jacobsen was Seal's DEA handler. Jacobsen still has the high-tech message encrypter which Seal gave him." Ernest "Jake" Jacobson was the DEA agent assigned to Seal during this period.^[10] In order to mitigate his 1984 arrest in Fort Lauderdale, Florida for money laundering and Quaalude smuggling, he agreed to testify against his former employers and associates in the drug trade, putting several of them in jail. Among those Seal testified against were Chief Minister of the Turks and Caicos Islands Norman Saunders and members of the Medellín Cartel. Seal also testified before the President's Commission on Organized Crime in October 1985.^[11]

Using a concealed camera installed by the CIA, Seal took pictures during the Nicaragua sting operation that clearly showed Pablo Escobar, Jorge Ochoa, and other members the Colombian Cartel loading kilos of cocaine on to a C-123 transport plane. Also Frederico Vaughan, an associate of Tomas Borges of the Interior Ministry of Nicaragua was photographed with Sandanista Soldiers helping load the plane.

In 1984, a Washington Times article stated DEA informant Barry Seal had successfully infiltrated the Medellin cartel's operations in Panama and Nicaragua.^[12] The story was leaked by Oliver North to prove Nicaraguan Sandinistas' involvement in the drug trade and to build support for the Contra war effort. This leak and subsequent controversy eventually led to the Iran Contra Affair which unraveled a year later.^[13]

Seal was both a smuggler and an informant for DEA in this sting operation against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. In 1984 Seal flew from Nicaragua to Homestead Air Force Base in Florida with a shipment of

is attempting to hide his face with his coat. Others in the picture are Alberto Blanco (3rd right) and Jorgo Robreno (4th right)." - text from Spartacus Educational site (<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk>) by John Simkin^[1]

cocaine that had been allegedly brokered through the Sandinista government.^[14] This cocaine was seized by the DEA, and was never received by the cartel's distribution handlers in Florida, which immediately caused suspicion in Medellin pointing to Barry Seal as the person responsible for this lost shipment.^[15]

This story was printed by both *The Washington Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, exposing Seal's involvement in the operation. Also the articles exposed Colombian cartel leaders and a Nicaraguan Interior Minister who were photographed moving cocaine onto an aircraft. Despite these pressures, Seal went ahead and testified the pictures taken during the trip showed Sandinista officials in Nicaragua brokering a cocaine deal with members of Colombia's Medellin Cartel, One month after Seal's death on March 16, 1986, President Reagan showed one of the photographs Seal took on national television, to bolster Congressional support for the Contras, He suggested that a top ranking Sandinista official was involved in drug smuggling.^[16]

DEA officials in Washington denied the claim a few days later, pointing out that the Nicaraguan was a local fixer. Regardless, the publicity accorded the sting, combined with Seal's assassination, led to years of speculation that the smuggler had close ties to the CIA.^[17]

As part of his plea agreement, Seal was ordered to a halfway house in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. where he was murdered by hired Colombian assassins for the Medellin Cartel. His story was made into a film in 1991 by HBO, *Doublecrossed*.

Death

On February 19, 1986, Barry Seal was shot to death in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in front of a branch of the Salvation Army on Airline Hwy, which he was required to stay at as a condition of his plea bargain, making him an easy target for retaliation. As he sat in his parked Cadillac, a man carrying a Mac-10 machine gun approached him. He then emptied a magazine into his body, neck and head, killing Seal instantly, which brought the DEA's most important investigation to an end. Colombian assassins sent by the Medellin Cartel were apprehended while trying to leave Louisiana soon after Seal's murder.^[18]

In 1987, Luis Carlo Quintero-Cruz (the trigger man), Miguel Velez, and Bernardo Antonio Vasquez, were convicted of the slaying of Barry Seal and sentenced to life in prison.^[19]

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4. ^ Murder Verdicts in Drug Ring Case (<http://www.nytimes.com/1987/05/14/us/murder-verdicts-in-drug-ring-case.html>)
5. ^ Murder Verdicts in Drug Ring Case (<http://www.nytimes.com/1987/05/14/us/murder-verdicts-in-drug-ring-case.html>)



Photograph of the Barry Seal murder scene.

6. ^ PBS's Frontline: Fernando Arenas Interview (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/interviews/arenas.html>)
7. ^ Frontline: The Godfather of Cocaine 1995 (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/programs/transcripts/1309.html>)
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