

DoJ moves to protect Iran-Contra apparatus

by Herbert Quinde

The two key criminal charges against Oliver L. North, stemming from the Iran-Contra scandal, will soon be dropped. The dismissal of the criminal charges means that the full story of Irangate will probably never come out in a court of law, while North is "left out in the cold" to face 12 other felony counts that, upon his probable conviction, could find the scapegoated Marine in a federal prison. His crime was to dutifully carry out a series of disastrous administration foreign policy initiatives. Despite much speculation about a pardon, it is very unlikely.

The dropping of the two conspiracy charges, which deprives North of a defense based on classified material, demonstrates the complete political control of the U.S. judicial system. A decision was made top-down to protect "national security," i.e., administration officials from the President and President-elect on down.

Although both President Reagan and the President-elect have been led to believe that the worst is over, the legal maneuver still leaves in place the guts of the "secret government" structure that brought us the Irangate fiasco, to blackmail President Bush. Bush is already facing the prospect of short-leash control by a coalition of Wall Street banks and Congress.

On Jan. 4, Attorney General Richard Thornburgh met with independent counsel Judge Lawrence Walsh to tell him that the "intelligence community" had determined that North's request to use classified documents in his defense threatened national security. Therefore, Walsh was instructed to drop the charges. The Department of Justice issued a statement saying that they were happy the charges were to be dismissed.

A week earlier, the administration bureaucracy had gone into in an uproar, as North's lawyers served trial subpoenas on President Reagan, President-elect Bush, and numerous other high-ranking officials involved in the scandal, seeking to force them to testify in open court.

A Washington insider summarized the popular political sentiment in the nation's capital as subpoenas rained down on the White House. Alluding to the role of the President's wife in creating the mess, he commented, "The bloodletting will really start now. Nancy had it her way and both the President and Bush will pay for it."

Sources report that the national security establishment as well as numerous Republican Party political operatives had been advising Reagan to take advantage of the Christmas

season to pardon both North and former NSC director Adm. John Poindexter. The pardons would signal that Reagan was taking the blame, reestablishing the credibility of the Executive Branch, and leaving the "private profiteers" of the secret government such as retired Maj. Gen. Richard Secord and Iranian businessman Albert Hakim to fend for themselves.

But Nancy Reagan strongly advised the President that a pardon would provoke "bad press" and mar the perception of his Hollywood-perfect presidency, say sources who are part of the pardon lobby.

Even liberal journalists who have been in the forefront of using the Irangate affair as a way to weaken the Office of the Presidency, opined in candid conversation that an executive pardon would be accepted as honorable and at worst would provoke a few days of critical editorials.

Numerous proponents of a pardon have emphasized that there is a principle involved, not simple pragmatic political considerations. Both North and Poindexter were military men in uniform following the orders of their Commander-in-Chief. Even though many believe that the Iran-Contra foreign policy gambit was fundamentally stupid, even criminal, military and intelligence community professionals feel that scapegoating the two would seriously undermine the process of government.

Ironically, the root of the Iran-Contra policy was President Reagan's Executive Order 12333, signed in 1981, which permitted the creation of what Sen. David Boren (D-Okla.) termed a "parallel government." Reagan's executive order allowed for the flourishing of a "private" intelligence apparatus, allegedly loyal to the government. The Reagan-Bush administration's rejection of Lyndon LaRouche's advice to disband that "secret government" apparatus, is what led the pair into their present dilemma.

A comparison with the judicial railroading of LaRouche has been made by some Washington insiders. If North and Poindexter deserve a pardon, LaRouche, who served the administration much better with his policy inputs, has similar standing. According to testimony by a former NSC official in the recently concluded "LaRouche trial" in Alexandria, Virginia, LaRouche was the victim of a political vendetta resulting from the "policy wars" within the White House. Ninety percent of the policy establishment, early on, opposed LaRouche's input, which resulted in the creation of the Strategic Defense Initiative.

A former top White House Reaganite who served in the first term, having come to Washington from California, commented that by Reagan's second term, which some call the "Nancy-Baker administration" (the First Lady and soon to be Secretary of State James Baker), disastrous foreign policy initiatives were made worse by the immoral back-biting and back-stabbing which became dominant in and around the White House. "We were told to be team players. Protect the President at all costs. Take no prisoners and eat our own wounded," he said.