

North trial spills the beans on Bush Irangate role

by Sandro Mitromaco

More than one year after *EIR* published an exposé titled “George Bush Sinks Deeper Into Iran-Contra Scandal” (Jan. 29, 1988), the story has broken out in front-page headlines worldwide. Washington pundits who anticipated an “October surprise” that would demolish Bush’s political ambitions before the presidential elections, are now wondering whether that “surprise” may now be in the making.

The U.S. government on April 6, during the course of the trial of Oliver North, released a document that included previously classified material which begins to blow apart Bush’s “I-didn’t-know-anything” coverup line. Among other revelations, the document shows that on March 16, 1985, when a U.S. delegation met with Honduran President Roberto Suazo Córdova to convince him to help the Contras in exchange for economic and military aid, it was George Bush personally who led the delegation and made the offer of a *quid pro quo*.

“In early March 1985,” according to the document, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger informed National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane “that the DoD had commenced expedited procurement and delivery of military and other items to Honduras. When Vice President Bush met with President Suazo, Bush told Suazo that President Reagan had directed expedited delivery of U.S. military items to Honduras. Vice President Bush also informed Suazo that President Reagan had directed that currently withheld economic assistance for Honduras should be released; that the United States would provide from its own military stocks critical security assistance items that had been ordered by Honduran armed forces; and that several security programs under way for Honduran security forces would be enhanced.”

In June 1984, Bush, in a meeting at the White House, had warned the President to be careful to respect certain

formalities when using “third countries” in circumventing the congressional ban on military aid to the Contras. “The only problem that may come up,” he told President Reagan, “is if the United States were to promise to give these third parties something in return so that some people might interpret this as some kind of exchange.”

But the government document proves that less than one year later, Bush had forgotten these formalities.

Mountains of material on George Bush’s real role remain to be revealed, however. There has yet been no reference, for example, to the fact that—as *EIR* revealed more than one year ago—it was the then-Vice President Bush who, through the Special Situations Group, ran the White House intelligence coordinating bodies used by North and his group to conduct their illegal Iran-Contra activities. Bush had headed the SSG since early 1982! But while waiting for more accurate details, we can still learn from the April 6 document that the “third countries deal” was considered potentially so embarrassing that it was decided never to put anything down on paper.

Forced to lie

Unexpectedly, Oliver North decided to go on the stand to testify in his own defense, a move that is considered by trial observers as an effort to increase the pressure—some say blackmail—on Bush. “I felt like a pawn in a chess game played by giants,” North stated on April 7. “I never made a single trip . . . I never made a single contact . . . without the express permission” of his superiors.

As rumors fly in Washington, Bush is beginning to feel the heat. At his press conference on April 7, called to discuss the Alaska oil spill, he seemed to have lost his nerve. “How do you reconcile your efforts to arrange third country military

aid for the Contras with the spirit of the ban by Congress?" he was asked by one reporter. "All the material you seem to be referring to, all the material that was introduced yesterday, has been available to the independent counsel and the Iran-Contra committee," was Bush's answer.

But that was untrue. Unfortunately for him, a few hours after the press conference, one of the lawyers for the joint congressional Iran-Contra committee told ABC News, "We never got that information." And Sen. Edmund Muskie (D-Me.), one of the three members of the Tower Commission which investigated Irangate in 1986-87, stated that he was not aware of the Honduran story and Bush's involvement.

Asked about this, Bush refused comment. When the press kept pressuring him for an answer, an angered Bush shot back: "I don't want to talk about it any more. Go back and interpret what I said."

A rebellion of the 'pawns'

Oliver North will continue now to testify. If he was just a "pawn in a chess game played by giants," as he claims, he was certainly not the only one. According to information available to this press agency, quite a number of "pawns" are now willing to talk.

One of these is former CIA agent Richard J. Brenneke, who testified in court Sept. 23, 1988: "The people involved have, as I said, either, in my opinion, been killed or systematically discredited over a considerable period of time. . . . And I can't live with myself if I don't at least make the court aware of it. And this has been going on for a number of years."

This dramatic statement was delivered in the court of Judge Jim R. Carrigan in Denver, Colorado, during a closed-door session at the end of the trial of *United States v. Heinrich Rupp*. Rupp, who worked for many years for various CIA proprietaries, was being tried for fraud and recycling of dirty money, after having been the witness of extraordinary events relating to Irangate.

"In October 1980," Brenneke stated, "I was present in Paris, France, at a meeting. . . . The purpose was to negotiate, not only for the release of the hostages then being held at the United States Embassy in Teheran, but also to discuss the means by which the terms [were to be settled with representatives of the Iranian regime]. . . . In the end agreement was reached, and the logistics of transferring \$40 million for the purchase of weapons was worked out. And it was for this meeting that Mr. Rupp brought the then vice-presidential candidate George Bush, and the to-be-director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Mr. Casey, to Paris, France."

The object of the proceeding was to find out more about the statement by defendant Heinrich Rupp, that he personally had flown the plane that brought Bush and Casey to Paris to deal with the Ayatollah. "The question," wrote a journalist in the *Rocky Mountain News* who was able to interview Rupp, "is this: Did Ronald Reagan and George Bush arrange to have

Iran hold 52 hostages until after the November 1980 presidential election when Reagan defeated incumbent Jimmy Carter?" According to Brenneke and Rupp, the answer is yes. According to Brenneke, the Paris journey took place on Oct. 18-19, 1980 and lasted less than 24 hours. The hostages were released only after the election of the Reagan-Bush ticket. There are 21 hours unaccounted for in the Bush schedule, precisely in those two days in 1980.

The Bush campaign tried everything to discredit anyone who claimed to know about those meetings. One participant, U.S. government informant Cyrus Hashemi, died later in a London hospital, of a form of leukemia that impressed his doctors as the fastest case in medical records. Brenneke stated that Hashemi, whom he knew very well, had been killed to shut him up. "At first I dismissed this, but not any more," said former National Security Council staffer Gary Sick, who was in charge of the hostages before the 1980 election. "I'm convinced on the basis of what I heard that there were some meetings in Paris. I know that the Iranians changed their policy at that time."

"So what if somebody gave \$40 million for 52 hostages?" asked Kenneth Qualls, who is said to have been the co-pilot who flew with Rupp to Paris. "They are alive aren't they? Who cares if [Bush] was there and he lied? You know, the fact is he made a deal, and deals like that are made in the Middle East all the time." Also former Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr declared to the *New York Times* that a meeting between Iranian officials and the Reagan campaign had taken place in 1980.

"I discussed this situation with individuals . . . at the Central Intelligence Agency approximately 10 days ago, when Mr. Rupp informed me that he was going to be tried again," stated Brenneke in his deposition. "I was told that there is a very substantive faction within the agency who feels that individuals that have served . . . have been poorly treated, like Mr. Rupp. . . . And I was told the following sequence of events will take place: An individual, a retired CIA person, would begin speaking with a foreign newspaper or a foreign journalist. He would provide the journalist with enough information relating to what I have told you today. . . . Subsequent to that, an individual employed by the agency would provide additional details."

Mr. Rupp is currently in a federal prison—accused of having stolen money—after having undergone a three-month psychiatric examination following his statements concerning George Bush. But a "Deep Throat," who apparently knows much more than has yet come out, is stressing that there are many similar cases, beside the Rupp case. Another case is that of Bob Sensi, a personal acquaintance of Bush, familiar with the details of the "British connection" of the Iran arms traffic, who ended up in jail accused of having stolen \$2.5 million. Then there is the case of Michael Aspin, who knows a lot and is now in jail near London, also accused of theft. And there are many others. . . .