

Southeast Asia drugs, POW issue hit Bush

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Kiss the Boys Goodbye: How the United States Betrayed its Own POWs in Vietnam

by Monika Jensen-Stevenson and William Stevenson

Penguin Books, New York, 1990
493 pages, hardbound, \$21.95.

In the post-Vietnam era, several books have appeared that detail the involvement of American intelligence agents in heroin trafficking in Southeast Asia. Perhaps the most famous is Alfred McCoy's *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. A team of *Newsday* reporters penned an award-winning volume called *The Heroin Trail*. This reviewer was part of a team of *EIR* researchers who have produced, since 1978, three editions of the authoritative book *Dope, Inc.*, which exposes the politics of the Golden Triangle within the broader profile of the international narcotics cartel.

Other accounts catalogue the sad saga of American spies gone dirty-with-dope in the course of the so-called secret wars to "defeat communism." Communism fell, no thanks to these agents' dealings, and we are left with an American covert operations establishment that may be corrupted beyond repair, and with an American public that is so strung out on drugs that it may take a quarter century for the country to dry out.

Monika Jensen-Stevenson's scrutiny of the U.S. government's betrayal of its own prisoners of war (POWs) and soldiers missing in action (MIAs) in Vietnam provides an important added piece of this ugly picture.

Jensen-Stevenson was a producer for CBS-TV's *Sixty Minutes* when she first became involved in the POW-MIA issue. She says that what started out as a journalistic assignment mushroomed into a secret war in which she and her husband, author William Stevenson, found themselves in league with an underground network of former GIs, their families, and a few political allies battling an entrenched apparatus in the government that was committed to covering up the fact that a large number of American soldiers had been left behind in Southeast Asia to die. The deeper the Stevensons dug into the POW-MIA mess, the nastier it got. Pentagon and CIA hit teams, they were told, had been sent into the jungles of Southeast Asia to assassinate American soldiers in order to cover up scandals that could blow the lid

off the Pentagon and Langley, should the truth ever be known. When one CIA team leader, Jerrald Daniels, balked at the idea of killing fellow Americans, he died under still mysterious circumstances.

The scandals? Long after the fall of Saigon and the purported U.S. pullout of Southeast Asia, a secret covert war had been continued—financed almost exclusively through the heroin trade. Some of the POW-MIAs had not been lost prior to the official end of the Vietnam war, but years later, while fighting this second war. The quest for POW-MIAs left behind after the official withdrawal from Saigon had been used for years as a cover for carrying out the secret war. Thus, no serious effort had ever been mounted to free the missing.

As her investigation went on, Jensen-Stevenson says she discovered that some of the leading figures in that late 20th century replay of the Opium Wars were senior ranking officials of the Reagan administration. Richard Armitage, who remains a top official in the Bush administration, played a pivotal role in blocking the efforts to get to the bottom of the POW-MIA tragedy. Col. Dick Childress, the Asia specialist on the Reagan National Security Council staff, is named in the book as another critical figure in the coverup.

(In 1982-83, the same Childress figured prominently in an effort led by Michael Ledeen and Walter Raymond, also of the NSC staff, to shut out Lyndon LaRouche and *EIR* from the Reagan White House at the point that LaRouche had been leading a successful public campaign on behalf of what became known as Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. Childress, according to eyewitness reports, went around slandering LaRouche as "KGB.")

Bush's 'cease and desist order'

Jensen-Stevenson found that a small core of Pentagon officials deplored the government's duplicity and lies. She names Lt. Gen. Eugene Tighe, who headed an official U.S. government POW-MIA study group whose conclusions were ultimately suppressed, as one such ally. Others were Lt. Col. James "Nick" Rowe (a Green Beret officer assassinated in the Philippines in 1989), Green Beret Col. James "Bo" Gritz, and Navy Capt. Eugene "Red" McDaniel (who spent six years in a North Vietnamese POW camp before being released in 1973).

Jensen-Stevenson portrays Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot as the biggest advocate of the POW-MIA cause from outside the military ranks. In 1986, President Reagan authorized Perot to conduct his own investigation of the POW-MIA situation, giving Perot, who had already served on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, access to all the classified files on the matter.

The author reports that this involvement by Perot led to a serious falling-out with his fellow Texan, Vice President George Bush. When Perot complained to Bush that he could not get to the prisoners because corrupt U.S. covert operatives were busy moving illegal drugs and arms around the

world, she writes, "This ended Perot's official access to the highly classified files as a one-man presidential investigator. 'I have been instructed to cease and desist,' he had informed the families of missing men early in 1987." The cease and desist order had come personally from George Bush, according to Perot, as told to Jensen-Stevenson.

In an April 16 article plugging Perot's bid for the presidency, the *Washington Post* wrote that Perot was especially incensed after Bush named Richard Armitage to become Secretary of the Army in early 1989. Bush had been CIA director when Armitage was running around Thailand in the mid-1970s. Perot, convinced that Armitage had betrayed the Americans left behind in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam to shield his own involvement in dope-financed covert operations, helped to defeat the nomination to the Army post, but then Bush named Armitage to a senior State Department job (he is now in charge of administering U.S. aid to the former Soviet republics).

What is one to make of all this? Keep in mind that Monika Jensen's husband and co-author, William Stevenson, is the author of *A Man Called Intrepid*, a paean to the World War II British intelligence operative Sir William Stephenson, who was a leading advocate of the alliance between "British brains" and "American brawn" to rebuild the British Empire. Thus, it is no surprise that while the Stevensons' book blasts one part of the Anglo-American liberal establishment, it advances another to take power—if and when Bush becomes too much of a liability. The *Washington Post's* apparent embrace of the Perot candidacy and POW issue suggests that that moment is getting closer.

Clinton is jumpy over Mena scandal

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On April 21, during a presidential campaign appearance at the annual dinner of the Pittsburgh National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Gov. Bill Clinton of Arkansas was asked to comment on the alleged involvement of his personal security chief, Buddy Young, in the coverup of weapons and drugs trafficking between Mena, Arkansas; Guadalajara, Mexico; and Central America. As reported last week, Young is the target of a federal civil suit by ex-Contra trainer Terry Reed accusing him of committing a string of felonies to secure a false indictment of Reed, at the point the latter was about to expose the drug-smuggling activities of Oliver North, Felix Rodriguez, and Amiram Nir on behalf of the Nicaraguan Contras.

Clinton bristled in front of a group of 15 reporters and

NAACP members: "That fairy tale was discredited by *Time* magazine." He was referring to a story by Richard Behar in the April 20 issue of *Time*, which had labeled Terry Reed as a liar and a fraud.

The *Time* story, though, is contradicted by Reed's attorney. She told *EIR* that she had run her own investigation and had corroborated Reed's allegations about Contra training and drug trafficking in Mena, and Contra guns-for-drugs trafficking out of Mexico. Even investigator Gene Wheaton, who had voiced doubts about Reed's role in Mena, says that he believes that Buddy Young was involved in helping to frame up Reed on federal insurance and mail fraud charges, to further the coverup.

Wheaton says that he is sure that Governor Clinton was fully briefed on the Mena scandal by 1988. Rep. Bill Alexander (D-Ark.) flew back to Little Rock to fully brief the governor in person, after he learned about the goings-on in Mena, including Medellín Cartel cocaine smuggler Barry Seal's role and the ties of the Mena group to Lt. Col. Oliver North at the White House. On April 21, the syndicated television show "A Current Affair" aired its own report, in which former Internal Revenue Service investigator William Duncan, Arkansas State Police officer Russell Welch, and two Arkansas county prosecutors recounted their experiences of battling Clinton's coverup of the Mena scandal.

Even after Representative Alexander got \$25,000 earmarked in the Department of Justice's FY 1991 budget to finance a state probe of Mena, the governor stalled. None of the money has been put into the hands of investigators as of this writing. Ex-IRS investigator Duncan, now employed by the Arkansas Attorney General's office, is designated to head up that state investigation.

By "A Current Affair's" account, Mena is still the scene of government-backed covert operations. In March, a young Arkansas pilot named Hendricks died when his C-130 transport plane crashed in Africa. His parents say Hendricks was recruited for the overseas job at Mena. Mark Swaney, the head of the Arkansas Committee, a citizens' group, told *EIR* last week that large heroin shipments were arriving at Mena as recently as March 1992.

The *Reed v. Young* trial opens in federal court in Little Rock in September. If Clinton has reason to be edgy about it, so does the presumed Republican presidential candidate, George Bush. Reed's suit charges that Clinton's bodyguard, Buddy Young, engineered the 1988 indictment of Reed in order to shield Felix Rodriguez from being accused of running cocaine to finance the Contras—months after the Iran-Contra scandal took over the headlines. Rodriguez, a career CIA agent, is the Iran-Contra figure most linked to Bush, who was then vice president, and his national security aides Donald Gregg and Sam Watson. It was Rodriguez who kept Gregg briefed hourly on the Southern Air Transport plane downed in October 1986, which led to the exposure of the secret Contra supply operation.