

Is Pentagon hiding documents on anti-LaRouche operations?

by Edward Spannaus

Pentagon records concerning “secret government” operations directed against former presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche have disappeared from official files, according to documents filed in a federal court case in Washington, D.C. A search of official files in those Department of Defense (DOD) offices responsible for covert operations has turned up only four pages of records, but others may have been removed or destroyed, say affidavits submitted by military officials.

The only documents found by DOD officials involved a request made by Department of Justice officials in October 1986 to the Pentagon’s Joint Special Operations Agency asking for DOD assistance in providing a secure building for documents to be seized in a raid of offices used by associates of LaRouche in Leesburg, Virginia. After the raid, which took place on Oct. 6-7, 1986, two truckloads of documents were taken to a Marine Corps facility, Henderson Hall, in Arlington, Virginia.

However, as court papers filed in late July show, these documents are probably only the “tip of the iceberg.” Indeed, even these documents suggest that many other documents once existed; all of which points to a much larger covert operation directed against LaRouche involving secret military units linked to the illegal “Contra” (Nicaraguan rebels) operations being run in the mid-1980s by Lt. Col. Oliver North and Maj. Gen. Richard Secord.

One of the offices targeted in a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request made by this reporter was that of former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Noel Koch. Koch, who testified that Secord was “a close friend,” set himself up as the “special operations czar” and “counter-terrorism” top dog in the first years of the Reagan administration. Koch was in the Pentagon’s civilian side — the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) — and was known as an outspoken adversary of LaRouche. Koch’s superior was Undersecretary of Defense Richard Perle, also an opponent of LaRouche.

As the OSD’s alleged top counter-terrorism specialist, Koch worked closely with the inter-agency counter-terrorism committee run by Oliver North out of the National Security Council. This group, known as the Operations Sub-Group of the Terrorist Incident Working Group (OSG/TIWG), was used by North and FBI Assistant Director Oliver “Buck” Revell to target opponents of the North-Secord drug-running

Contra operation in Central America. FBI “special operations” units, which were deployed against other of North’s opponents, were also used against LaRouche, according to court affidavits and documents.

Records hidden and destroyed

DOD records are generally organized in such a manner as to prevent them from being located in FOIA searches, according to Pentagon sources. In the offices of the International Security Affairs cluster where Koch worked, for example, each desk officer keeps his own “working files” which are not considered as part of the “official” files; therefore, they are not searched in response to FOIA requests. Indeed, FOIA requests are considered a “pain in the a —,” and search assignments are regarded as “Mickey Mouse” business; searches are conducted in a half-hearted manner almost designed to ensure that nothing will be found which would have to be turned over to an FOIA requester.

It is not too surprising then, that an official search of Koch’s former offices by DOD officials found no documents dealing with LaRouche. However, in court-filed affidavits, DOD officials were compelled to admit that Koch’s records were either “destroyed,” given to other offices, “or taken by Mr. Koch upon his departure from DOD.” Sources within the Pentagon have advised this reporter that, although there are restrictions on what records a DOD official can take with him when he leaves, no one would interrogate Koch, a high-level political appointee, about what records he was taking out with him. These sources also suggested that Koch would not have left any incriminating documents behind when he left DOD in 1987, but would have sent them to the “burn bag.”

DOD ‘sensitive support’

The four pages of documents which were disclosed show something quite peculiar: that the Justice Department used a secret, classified channel to obtain military assistance in the LaRouche case — an allegedly domestic case in which prosecutors repeatedly denied that there was any “national security” component.

These documents were located in the files of the Support Activities Branch (SAB) of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Operations Division (SOD). A DOD affidavit filed in court

states that the SAB "is the sole Joint Staff repository for records reflecting sensitive support provided to non-DOD agencies." Although the affidavit does not explain just what this "sensitive support" is, both Pentagon documents and sources indicate that "sensitive support" refers to assistance provided to other agencies in the context of covert operations, counter-intelligence activity, counter-terrorist operations, and so forth.

Iran-Contra documents show, for example, that when the CIA wanted to conduct a joint CIA-DOD operation in connection with North's clandestine Contra operations, the Support Activities Branch got involved through the same official, Col. Byron Hooten, who handled the 1986 Justice Department request in the LaRouche case. A March 7, 1986 message from North to Adm. John Poindexter complained that Hooten had called him, and that the DOD wanted a written request from the CIA. North wrote that this is "something that Secord has bitched about" and that the Operations Sub-Group was established to circumvent such bureaucratic requirements.

The Joint Chiefs Special Operations offices, located in Room 2C840 of the Pentagon, were a major recruiting ground for North and Secord's illegal Contra operation. Secord himself, a long-time covert operations specialist, had, naturally enough, recruited his top aides for the Contra resupply operation (such as Richard Gadd and C.L. Stearns) from Room 2C840. Another recruit was John Cupp, an Army Delta Force veteran who went to work for Secord and Gadd after "retiring" from the Army and the Joint Special Operations Agency in late 1985.

Cupp, it was later disclosed, was the individual referred to in a secret coded message sent from Secord to North in May 1986, which stated: "Our man here claims Lewis has collected info against LaRouche." During the time period in April-May 1986 when Cupp was talking about gathering information against LaRouche, Cupp was constantly traveling back and forth from the United States to Secord's "safe house" in Costa Rica, according to congressional testimony.

A favorite technique of North and company was to label their opponents as "terrorists," and then to deploy the FBI and other agencies against them, coordinating this through the Operations Sub-Group. The Operations Sub-Group included not only the likes of Noel Koch, Oliver North, and Buck Revell, but also representatives of the Pentagon's Joint Special Operations Agency (JSOA), the State Department, and the CIA.

Congressional testimony has shown, for example, that North and the FBI's Revell targeted Jack Terrell as a "terrorist threat" because he was providing information on the Contra operation to journalists and investigators. Jeffrey Steinberg, an associate of Lyndon LaRouche and opponent of the Contra operation, was likewise put into the FBI's "Terrorist Photo Album" and targeted for harassment and eventual frameup by the FBI and Justice Department — based on spurious infor-

mation given to the CIA and FBI by the rogue circle around John Cupp and Fred Lewis, the "Lewis" named in the North-Secord coded message.

FBI 'special operations' units

The FBI's little-known "special operations" units were also involved in the arrangements between the Justice Department and the Pentagon around the October 1986 Leesburg raid. When federal prosecutors in Alexandria, Virginia were arranging to have the military take custody of the two truckloads of documents seized in the raid, the written request was hand-carried to the Pentagon by an agent of the FBI Special Operations Division, according to one of the documents disclosed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The phone number given in the memorandum is for the FBI's "Aviation and Special Operations Unit," which oversees all FBI aviation programs, and the FBI's "Special Operations Groups" (SOG) which, according to FBI officials, handle surveillance in cases involving alleged terrorism and national security.

An affidavit filed in court by this reporter states that he has been advised by confidential sources that the FBI's SOGs were involved in surveillance of individuals and buildings associated with LaRouche in Leesburg during the 1985-86 period. He also states that he has been told that the Operations Sub-Group was conducting covert operations against LaRouche.

This reporter has also been advised by a highly knowledgeable military source that the FBI's now-famous Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) worked closely with JSOA and military special operations units in the mid-1980s. Former FBI Director William Webster has also acknowledged that the HRT received training from the military's Joint Special Operations Command.

FBI documents also show that the HRT, which carried out the recent Waco, Texas massacre, was also directly involved in the October 1986 Leesburg raid. Lyndon LaRouche has charged that one of the primary objectives of that raid was to carry out a Waco-style bloodbath in Leesburg and to kill him in the course of a military-style assault on his living quarters.

Is this what the missing Pentagon documents would show?

Whatever was going on around the military involvement in the LaRouche case, it seems to have had little to do with the actual court case against LaRouche which was the pretext for the Leesburg raid. This is demonstrated by the fact that, for the first two weeks after the raid, Virginia State Police were denied any access to the military base where the seized documents were being held — despite the fact that the search and seizure was the product of joint federal and state search warrants, and the documents were supposed to be under joint federal-state custody.

A hearing is now scheduled for mid-September in the court case involving the missing Pentagon papers.