

North candidacy is a test for the nation

by Ed and Nancy Spannaus

President George Bush's flunkey Oliver North has emerged as the front-runner in the Virginia U.S. Senate elections, following the June 14 Democratic primary and deadline for the filing of independent candidates. The outcome of North's candidacy will have major consequences for the political direction of the United States. Can a proven drug-runner, masquerading as a patriot representing "family values," get elected to the U.S. Senate?

The line-up for the Virginia seat begins with incumbent Sen. Charles Robb, who won the Democratic primary with 58% of a dismal 9% of the electorate voting. He is joined by independent candidates from both the Democratic and Republican parties: former Gov. L. Douglas Wilder on the Democratic side, and former Attorney General Marshall Coleman on the Republican side. While Wilder reserved his final declaration of candidacy until June 18, he filed double the necessary petition signatures, and is expected to go ahead.

Under these conditions, the section of the Republican Party which nominated North, over the opposition of former Reagan budget director James Miller, arguably commands the strongest base for any candidate in the state. In addition, North has a massive national base which has been cultivated under the ruse of his "victimization" by the special prosecutor in the Iran-Contra affair.

But North's popularity could evaporate in a flash if his real history as a drug-runner and operative in Bush's secret government mafia were publicized. In fact, North felt compelled to respond to charges from LaRouche Democrat Nancy Spannaus, who ran in the Virginia primary, claiming that they were "balderdash." This shows a sensitivity that could be effectively exploited, if North's opponents were willing to take on his true criminal record.

Texas revelations

North's role in bringing planeloads of cocaine into the United States as part of the arms-supply operation to the Nicaraguan Contras in the mid-1980s, was never pursued by Congress or the special prosecutor. But the evidence on the public record is extensive, and devastating.

The most documented source is the Kerry Committee report, released in December 1988. The report concluded that "there was substantial evidence of drug smuggling through the war zones on the part of the individual Contras, Contra pilots, mercenaries who worked with the Contras, and the Contra supporters throughout the region." Investigator Jack Blum found that cocaine was brought into the United States by the "planeload."

There are additional sources of information readily available. One is the set of North's notebooks, in the public domain due to his trial on the more trivial charges of lying to Congress and receiving illegal gratuities. The other is a whole group of individuals in the intelligence community who were involved in the secret government operations, or in covering them up.

One of these individuals, Celerino "Cele" Castillo, has just gone public. His story has been published in a monthly magazine with a 10,000-copy circulation, the *Texas Observer*. Celerino, who was the Drug Enforcement Administration's main agent in El Salvador during the years 1985 to 1991, told authors Dennis Bernstein and Howard Levine that "a huge drug- and gun-smuggling operation . . . was run out of the Ilopango military airport by the 'North Network' and the CIA."

Castillo told journalists that he and his agents observed both cocaine and drug money being run out of Ilopango's hangars 4 and 5—both of which were owned and operated by the CIA and North's right-hand man, Felix Rodriguez (a.k.a. Max Gomez). Castillo wrote a memo in February 1989 to the U.S. attaché in

Guatemala, which identified more than two dozen known drug smugglers who worked out of those hangars. One was Carlos Alberto Amador; another was Walter "Wally" Grasheim, who was documented as a cocaine and arms smuggler.

Castillo made more than one effort to inform authorities of the illegal drug-trafficking which he had observed. In addition to his written report, he provided verbal reports to the ambassador to El Salvador, Edwin Corr; to FBI agent Mike Foster, who was working with Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh; and to Vice President George Bush himself.

Castillo told the *Observer* that he spoke directly to Bush at a cocktail party in Guatemala City on Jan. 14, 1986. After Castillo had detailed North's operation, Bush "shook my hand and he walked away," Castillo said.

This is not surprising since, as outlined in National Security Decision Directives 2 and 3, Vice President George Bush was in charge of the secret government apparatus which ran the Contra supply operation, and for which White House National Security Council aide Oliver North was the point man.

Will it be exposed?

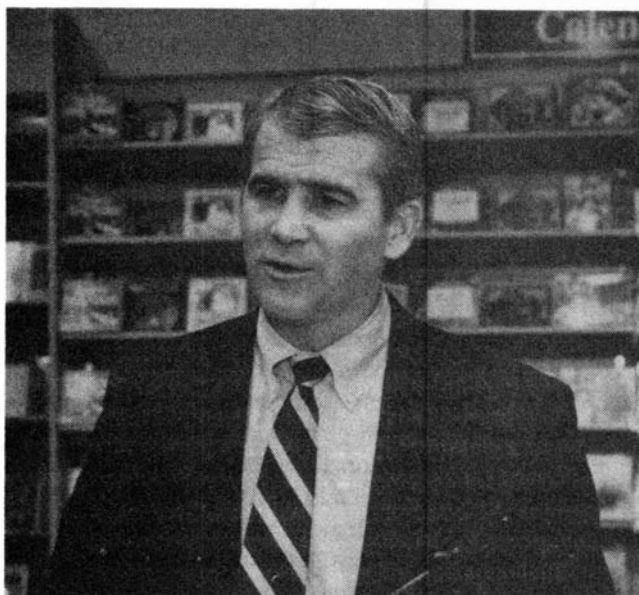
The *Texas Observer* story was picked up as a front-page item in the Charlottesville, Virginia *Daily Progress* on June 11, and was cited by Virginia's Lt. Gov. Donald Beyer, Jr. in a speech that same day. But, otherwise, the exposure of North's drug-running has been left to the LaRouche wing of the Democratic Party.

The coverup is coming from both Republicans and Democrats. On the Republican side, televangelist Pat Robertson is playing a crucial role in burying North's responsibility for the drug-running, even as he attempts to use the Contra operation as a weapon against President Clinton. Robertson's use of serious moral issues in his pursuit of making money, has built himself a large following in the nation among many citizens who are genuinely appalled by the destruction of family values. Revelations about how North embraced communists, drug-runners, and other advocates of free trade, would likely shatter Robertson's efforts on North's behalf.

Nor is it at all clear that North himself could remain cool in the face of the truth coming out. His history contains numerous examples of his going off the deep end under psychological stress.

More surprising is that the Democratic Party has yet to pick up on North's involvement in drugs as part of its arsenal against a formidable opponent. Sources have reported to *EIR* that Senator Robb will avoid this line of attack altogether. Indeed, the senator's public statements have consistently stressed his intention to confront his opponents on various social issues, from "reproductive rights" to "gay rights" and more traditional forms of human rights.

The LaRouche wing of the Democratic Party has committed itself to pursue the attack, of course. Candidate Spannaus has announced her intention to form a political action committee that will spearhead the campaign against North's



Oliver North, the front-runner in the Virginia senatorial campaign. Have we reached the point that a proven drug-runner can be elected to the U.S. Senate?

crimes, ranging from his drug running, to his illegal activities as part of the parallel secret government which was run by Vice President Bush. One of the targets of those activities was the prosecution of Lyndon LaRouche and his associates, who vigorously opposed the Contra operation at the time.

Democratic Party values

It will take more than a negative campaign for the Democratic Party of Virginia (and nationally) to avoid disintegration. Democrats came back to the party to elect President Clinton *despite* their disgust with the party's agenda for gay rights and other radical anti-family positions. If the Democrats, including Robb, do not abandon Republican-style economic policies, they are likely to find their base eroding even more rapidly.

Democratic activists with long memories recall when the party stood for something very different. They remember the Democratic Party of Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy, which, for all its faults, stood for government action in favor of scientific and industrial progress. Today, the only place they find a continuation of such policies is in the LaRouche wing of the party. For this reason, certain sections of the party which have previously campaigned for ejecting LaRouche Democrats, are now eager to include the former pariahs—if only to ensure that the necessary ideas of reindustrialization are discussed.

There is no question but that a realignment of U.S. politics is under way—as the splits and chaos in Virginia's Senate race dramatize. Whether any of these parties will represent the American System values which the nation requires, is still an open question at this point.