

The case against drug trafficker Oliver North

by Nancy Spannaus

Virginia Republican senatorial candidate Oliver North claims he is being maligned by those, including this author, who say that he was one of the biggest drug traffickers in United States history. North wants you to take his word for it. He claims that if the special prosecutor didn't charge him with the crime of drug-running, he couldn't possibly be guilty.

But you don't have to take Ollie's word for it, or mine. There is such a mass of material on the public record that anyone who looks at it with an open mind, has to come to the conclusion, minimally, that North's supply operation to Nicaragua's Contra rebels was responsible for running planeloads of drugs into this country.

There is no question but that the material on the public record alone, would suffice to justify a federal indictment against Oliver North for conspiracy to bring cocaine into the United States. Indeed, there are many people in prison in this country on such drug conspiracy charges, who were indicted and convicted on much less evidence than is openly available on North.

What does it take to indict someone on a drug conspiracy? First, *knowledge* of trafficking in illegal drugs. Second, *agreement* that such trafficking go on—which agreement can be indicated without saying a single word. And third, *one overt act* in furtherance of the conspiracy—which overt act need not be criminal in itself. Any prosecutor worth his salt could adduce a powerful array of evidence to bring such a case against North.

Evidence of drug-running

Here is a sampling of the evidence that drugs were being brought into the United States as part of the Contra supply operation.

First, and most extensive, is the material compiled by the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate. The more than 150-page report, called "Drugs, Law Enforcement and Foreign Policy," was issued in December 1988 following an investigation which began in April 1986 in response to allegations by Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) that illegal gun-running and narcotics-trafficking was associated with the Contra rebels. This report is available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Second, you could go to some of the sources for the

Kerry report, including the Miami Police Department. That department did its own investigative report back in 1984, which identified links between Contras and Miami cocaine traffickers, and which was passed on—if not known before—to North's National Security Council apparatus.

Third, you could go to Terry Reed and his book *Compromised: Bush, Clinton, and the CIA*, which was published this year by former CIA contract employee Reed and investigative reporter John Cummings. Reed gives personal testimony to seeing planeloads of cocaine being transported into Arkansas, and Mexico, by pilots who were delivering weapons to the Contras.

Fourth, you could go to former Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) employee Celerino Castillo, who has begun to tell of his personal observations of drug-running as part of the Contra operation. Castillo is still writing a book, but his story has begun to go out through the print media. The most extensive so far has been in the July 17 issue of the bimonthly magazine called the *Texas Observer*.

There are undoubtedly other individuals who might be willing to tell the story of their own involvement in the trafficking.

Fifth, there are affidavits on the public record in the murder trial of the assassins of DEA agent Enrique Camarena. One, by DEA informant Lawrence Victor Harrison, in particular, pinpoints the Contra drug-running connection.

Lastly, there are North's own notebooks, some of which are a matter of public record due to the Iran-Contra prosecution. One entry, from Aug. 9, 1985, reads: "Honduran DC-6 which is being used for runs out of New Orleans is probably being used for drug runs into U.S."

Agreement and action

Did North agree that this activity, as briefly outlined above, should go ahead? Well, he was the staff coordinator for the Crisis Pre-Planning Group, a secret government apparatus run by George Bush. After the Boland Amendment made it illegal for the CIA to arm the Contras, the CPPG under North ran the operation.

All federal prosecutors assert that a conspiratorial agreement does not have to be written or even verbal.

And what was the overt act which North performed to further the conspiracy? Just take any of the payments which he personally authorized to be made to companies run by known drug-traffickers (outlined in the Kerry report). Approving payments to drug-traffickers from accounts he controlled, would qualify in any prosecutor's book as an overt act in furtherance of the conspiracy.

Case closed? No, in fact, this material is just the tip of the iceberg—an iceberg which Americans better wake up to before they elect a cocaine conspirator (among other things) into the U.S. Senate. (A substantive review of the evidence of North's ties to drug-running can be found in the July 18 issue of the *New Federalist* newspaper.)