

ARGUS: a profile of Focal Point operations

by Leo F. Scanlon, Jr.

The key role played by Loudoun County, Virginia Sheriff John Isom, a stooge of the Hunt Country families, in a paramilitary outfit known as the Armored Response Group, U.S. (ARGUS), became a major issue in the recent elections in which Isom was voted out of office. Two of ARGUS's founding members and officers, "Generalissimo" J.C. Herbert Bryant, Jr., the stepson of Magalen Ohrstrom Bryant, and Warren County, Mississippi Sheriff Paul Barrett, are headed to federal prison, convicted of felonies, while Isom and his involvement with ARGUS remain part of a federal corruption probe.

Career intelligence officers have described ARGUS as an "asteroid," an entity established to provide cover for off-line private intelligence operations. It was created with family monies (from the Ohrstrom-Bryant and Hanes families), and its operational officer was a family member—not the clown Herb Bryant, but the top intelligence operative John W. Hanes, Jr. (see p. 29). ARGUS was fully integrated into the "Focal Point" apparatus that put together intelligence, military, and other entities for operational deployment (see p. 40). Information from the federal felony trial of Herb Bryant, as well as other source material, identifies Thomas Nelson Harvey, an intelligence officer tasked to ARGUS, as a "focal point" operative and case officer for the project.

What is ARGUS

ARGUS was officially established in 1986, first as the Law Enforcement Assistance Foundation (LEAF), then as ARGUS. J.C. Herbert Bryant, Jr. served as president; Isom served as its secretary. Both were members of its executive board, which managed its daily affairs. Magalen Ohrstrom Bryant and John W. Hanes were the moneybags for ARGUS. According to IRS documents, during 1986-89 alone, ARGUS received a quarter of a million dollars from both families combined.

According to its founding documents, ARGUS was established to acquire special surplus armored military equipment for use in "anti-terrorist," "anti-drug," and other crisis situations involving police and law enforcement agents. ARGUS was described as a deployment point for equipment such as armored personnel carriers for use by local police throughout the Mid-Atlantic region; to facilitate these deployments, ARGUS obtained a C-130 military transport aircraft. In addition, through its contacts, ARGUS was able to arrange to have access to the Regional Organized Crime Information Center

(ROCIC), a government computer database.

Ohrstrom Bryant and Hanes were more than financial patrons. Both played an active role in directing ARGUS's affairs. Ohrstrom Bryant was a founding member of the board of directors. Hanes served as CEO of the executive board and board of directors, and as treasurer. Annual board meetings were convened at his shooting club in West Virginia, and his Belle Haven Country Club in Alexandria, Virginia. In addition, records show that ARGUS held a meeting of its board of directors at the U.S. Army depot at Cameron Station in Alexandria, where the board also had use of the officers' club.

In the 1994 trial of Herb Bryant, in which he was convicted of impersonating a federal officer, Harvey testified that he used his capacity as an aide to Sen. John Warner (R-Va.) and his intelligence connections to help arrange for Bryant, Isom, and others associated with ARGUS to receive Special Deputy U.S. Marshal badges; he further claimed to have arranged for ARGUS, nominally a civilian-run organization, to receive surplus military armored equipment and to be able to store the equipment at Cameron Station. Harvey told the court that he arranged for ARGUS personnel to receive paramilitary training. Harvey's influence with Jack Twomey of the Marshals Service also led to Bryant being appointed to head the U.S. Marshals Foundation. That foundation foundered amidst allegations of mismanagement, fraud, and other illegal acts by top Marshals officials.

Based in Loudoun County, ARGUS, under Harvey's operational control and with Bryant and Isom as "cover," fell under the umbrella of a larger quasi-private security apparatus, deployed through networks associated with the families, as represented by people such as Hanes. Through contact with police at state and local levels, and integration into such regional operations as the ROCIC, ARGUS appears to have been recruiting specially trained operatives for certain still-undisclosed purposes.

An indication of what such purposes might have been comes from the confirmed information that pieces of ARGUS equipment and some of its personnel were brought into place as "backup," as part of the state-federal-local raid on offices of companies associated with the LaRouche movement in Leesburg, Virginia on Oct. 6, 1986. That raid was to include the assassination of LaRouche, to be accomplished through a raid on his residence possibly involving ARGUS equipment. The raid was called off after President Reagan was informed of the operation in progress.

"Asteroid" operations such as ARGUS, to be effective, are best kept out of public view. However, the antics of the clown Bryant and Isom's corruption made that difficult. ARGUS became a local scandal, and therefore a potential liability, when it was revealed in 1992 that Isom had used his office to have Loudoun County foot the bill for ARGUS's insurance, and even to hold title to some of its military equipment. That was done behind the backs of the Board of Super-



This ARGUS armored vehicle was "at the ready" for use in a planned Oct. 6-7, 1986 assault, on the residence of Lyndon LaRouche.

visors, the county's legislative body, which ordered Isom to break all county ties to ARGUS.

That act led to ARGUS's unraveling. Its equipment was reportedly disposed of, although there is no confirmation that this was ever completed. And ARGUS, until earlier this year, maintained a phone in Loudoun and an office address. Meanwhile, there is evidence that ARGUS may have made false representations to state and federal tax authorities, for which its officers could be liable.

Profile

Thomas Harvey, a 'Focal Point' operative

Thomas Harvey, who was an Army officer at the time he created ARGUS, was working in Senator Warner's office on assignment, from his official posting as an assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army. Intelligence specialists who have reviewed Harvey's official military record, note that his career path fits the profile of the typical "spook" military officer, operating on behalf of networks which penetrate the military and the world of black operations. He has the profile of a "Focal Point" operative.

Harvey graduated from West Point in the early 1970s, and was posted to a SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied

Powers Europe) support group position. In 1975, he trained as a Foreign Area Specialist in Yugoslav studies. It was at this time that the Henry Kissinger apparatus began building gunrunning networks in the Balkans which would supply arms for proxy-wars throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Ibero-America. Harvey was later assigned to the headquarters of the 9th Army Division (which has responsibilities throughout the Pacific), and in 1983 attended the Command and General Staff College, thus becoming eligible to serve with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Although Harvey's name appears in the Pentagon telephone directories from 1983 until his retirement in 1991, he is usually listed as an official in the office of the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, a speechwriter responsible for space, arms control, and low-intensity operations. According to his testimony in the trial of Herb Bryant, Jr., some of which has been confirmed, he held numerous sensitive intelligence positions during that time, including stints working directly for Vice President Dan Quayle and Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney in the Bush administration, senatorial staff positions with Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) and Warner, and for the White House Space Council. Informed sources indicate that Harvey is a protégé of Richard Armitage, who was Assistant Secretary of State for International Affairs. Armitage is a notorious intelligence community "Asia hand" whose career in the Pentagon has been tainted with charges of gunrunning, drug smuggling, and privateering on a grand scale.

According to Bo Gritz, one of the most highly decorated military officers in history, Harvey was the National Security Council contact point for his mission to negotiate with Khun Sah, the leader of the Shan tribe in Burma. Khun Sah had been a partisan of the CIA's covert military operations in Laos and Cambodia, and had developed elaborate drug-smuggling capabilities in order to fund these military activities. Khun Sah told Gritz that he wanted "out" of the business, and would be willing to shut down the drug routes throughout the Golden Triangle. Khun Sah's claimed that it was U.S. intelligence and military officials, Richard Armitage and Ted Shackley, in particular, who were providing him with weapons for self-defense, and shaking him down for drugs. Their blackmail was simple—no drug money, no guns. Shan tribesmen would be handed over to the Communist Chinese.

When Gritz returned to the United States with this surrender offer, a bonanza in the war against drugs, he was told by Harvey that the Bush administration was "not interested" in the offer. He was told to shut up about Khun Sah's revelations. Gritz refused, and he and his associate Scott Weekly have been subject to intense legal harassment as a result.

Harvey continued to work for the families in the ARGUS operation at least until his retirement from active military service in 1991. At that point, he appears to have transferred to another "asteroid" operation, also funded by Ohrstrom Bryant money, the Global Environmental Technology Corporation (see p. 34).