

Los Angeles crack cocaine case expands beyond 'CIA' charge

by Edward Spannaus

The attorney for convicted drug dealer Ricky Ross has expanded the scope of inquiry in his case in federal court in Los Angeles, and is demanding that the U.S. government produce documents from the National Security Council and other U.S. intelligence agencies—besides the CIA—which would contain evidence of U.S. government involvement in drug trafficking in the 1980s.

Included in the latest court filing by Ross's attorney, submitted on Nov. 13, is evidence pertaining to "privatized" intelligence operations and covert military operations run under the putative authority of Executive Order 12333—the first time these issues have been officially raised in the wake of the "CIA crack cocaine" controversy generated by the explosive series of articles published by the *San Jose Mercury News* in August.

This advances the investigation around Contra drug trafficking significantly beyond the issue of the "CIA," into the arena of military covert operations and privatized intelligence operations which were conducted under the direction of then-Vice President George Bush in the 1980s. *EIR* has thoroughly documented how Bush took control of covert operations in the early part of the Reagan administration, and we have repeatedly argued that a narrow focus on the CIA is a blind ally which will allow the real culprits responsible for the drug epidemic in the United States to escape exposure and prosecution.

CIA says, 'no records'

On Nov. 6, the CIA filed an affidavit with the court reporting that a search of its records turned up nothing regarding either Danilo Blandón or Norwin Meneses, the two major drug-traffickers identified as CIA-backed Contra drug-smugglers in the *San Jose Mercury News* series. The CIA record search also found no pertinent information on Ronald J. Lister, who claimed a CIA affiliation when he was arrested by the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in 1986 during the Blandón-Meneses drug ring raids, or on David Scott Weekly, who was identified by Lister as his CIA contact.

Predictably, the CIA affidavit stated that, in its searches, "CIA located no information in its records systems that Messrs. Ross, Blandon, Meneses, Lister, or Weekly had any relationship with the CIA, whether operational, contractual, or employment."

The CIA said that it did find records identifying Meneses as "the kingpin of narcotics traffickers in Nicaragua prior to the fall of Somoza." It stated that it had found one record pertaining to a "Ron Lister"—but nothing showing that he has any connection with the agency—and records concerning Scott Weekly, showing that he had been active in Thailand in the early 1980s, and that he "had been arrested for taking explosives on a commercial airline and had claimed he was doing this for the CIA." CIA records also showed that Weekly had been in Thailand in 1983-84 in connection with "a private effort claiming to free American POWs and MIAs," and that he was deported from Thailand in 1986.

Included with the CIA affidavit was a copy of a 1986 FBI cable to the CIA, indicating that "investigation has also identified documents indicating that Lister has been in contact with 'Scott Weekly' of the 'DIA.' "

Part of the background of the Lister-Weekly matter, was that documents had surfaced in another court proceeding in Los Angeles, which showed that when Los Angeles Sheriff's Department detectives raided Lister's house in 1986, they found "films of military operations in Central America, technical manuals, information on assorted military hardware and communications, and numerous documents indicating that drug money was being used to purchase military equipment for Central America." Documents were also found which diagrammed "the route of drug money out of the United States, back into the United States purchasing weaponry for the Contras."

An official report by one of the detectives from the 1986 raid stated: "Mr. Lister . . . told me he had dealings in South America and worked with the CIA and added that his friends in Washington weren't going to like what was going on. I told Mr. Lister that we were not interested in his business in South America. Mr. Lister replied that he would call Mr. Weekly of the CIA and report me."

Non-CIA covert operations

In response to the last government filing, which included the CIA affidavit and copies of newspaper articles attempting to debunk the *San Jose Mercury News* series, Ross's attorney Alan Fenster filed his supplementary memorandum on Nov. 13, charging the government with deliberately withholding evidence from Ross, and with stonewalling on Ross's docu-

ment requests.

In the section of Fenster's brief dealing with "United States Government involvement in drug dealing," the attorney emphasized that Ross "does not have the financial resources to conduct a full-scale hearing with live witnesses into the question of whether agents of the United States Government assisted the Contra organization in selling cocaine in this country in the early 1980s." Fenster has already submitted affidavits of former Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and CIA agents, including Celerino Castillo, and excerpts of the report of Sen. John Kerry's (D-Mass.) subcommittee, to support his request for exculpatory evidence and documents; the government has ridiculed and attempted to discredit all this evidence. In his latest filing, Ross's attorney submitted additional evidence and affidavits showing government involvement in Contra drug trafficking.

Furthermore, in respect to the CIA's response involving Ronald Lister and Scott Weekly, Fenster submitted an affidavit by this writer, and Fenster told the court:

"Mr. Spannaus's affidavit reveals that Mr. Weekly was in fact a United States government covert operator, but not specifically in the employ of the Central Intelligence Agency. This affidavit gives the lie to the Government's claim that Mr. Weekly is nothing but a fraud, and reraises the question of just how connected Mr. Lister might have been if he was working with Mr. Weekly. Mr. Spannaus's affidavit also raises an issue never fully discussed before this Court, and that is the issue of whether United States Government involvement in drug dealing and the Contras might have been an operation of one or more intelligence sections of the United States Government not specially operating under the aegis of the CIA."

Fenster then states that it is because of evidence that "the National Security Council, not the CIA, had supervision of covert operations after 1981," that Ross has broadened his request for documents to include the National Security Council and other intelligence departments of the U.S. government. The memorandum concludes with a demand that "this Court should require the Government to obtain all relevant records of all concerned departments of the United States Government, not just those of the Central Intelligence Agency. . . ."

Weekly and the NSC

The affidavit by *EIR*'s Spannaus recites the "privatization" provisions of Executive Order 12333, issued in 1981, and also describes how "components of the Department of Defense (DOD) regularly engaged in covert operations during the 1980s, and often conducted activities which were, in the popular mind, attributed to the 'CIA.' "

The affidavit then describes the evidence that Weekly, a close associate of Lt. Col. James "Bo" Gritz (ret.), was working as part of a team created by Gritz, after Gritz was requested by the deputy director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in 1979 to officially resign from the U.S. Army, and

carry out a private intelligence operation in Southeast Asia. Gritz's team made a number of U.S. government-backed missions into Thailand, Laos, and Burma between 1982 and 1986, to determine whether America POWs were still alive in Southeast Asia.

The irony is that Gritz is a highly decorated former Green Beret, who is well known for his opposition to drug trafficking; Gritz was prosecuted by the government in the late 1980s after exposing the role of certain Reagan-Bush government officials in drug smuggling in Southeast Asia.

In his book *Called To Serve*, Gritz described how he formed a "private" team with the assistance of the DIA, CIA, and the Army's Intelligence Support Activity (ISA). The ISA was a secret Army special operations unit, involved in counter-terrorist activity and also support for the Nicaraguan Contras in Central America. Sworn evidence exists showing that, during most of the 1980s, Gritz was reporting to military intelligence officials through an intermediary known as a "cut-out."

In late October 1986, just before the date of the Los Angeles Sheriff's raid on the Blandón drug ring, Gritz was contacted by a staff officer of the U.S. National Security Council, Lt. Col. Thomas Harvey, and asked to go into the "Golden Triangle" area of Burma, to determine whether there were American POWs there. Gritz told Harvey that he would need special documents to undertake such a mission. A few days later, Harvey told Gritz to come to Washington. On Oct. 28, 1986, Gritz and Scott Weekly flew there, and Harvey provided them with two letters, one for Gritz on White House letterhead, and one for Weekly on National Security Council letterhead, stating that Gritz and Weekly were cooperating with the U.S. government.

The letter given to Weekly states:

"The bearer and undersigned of the only original of this document is David Scott Weekly. Mr. Weekly is cooperating in determining the authenticity of reported U.S. prisoner of war sightings. . . .

"Mr. Weekly is an operational agent cooperating with this office. . . ."

It was on the previous day, Oct. 27, that Ronald Lister had told Los Angeles Sheriff's detectives that "his friends in Washington weren't going to like what was going on," and that he was going to call "Mr. Weekly of the CIA" and report what was going on.

The same Lt. Col. Thomas Harvey was also instrumental in setting up the "private" paramilitary unit in Loudoun County, Virginia, called "ARGUS" (Armored Response Group U.S.). ARGUS equipment, including an armored personnel carrier, was on standby during the Oct. 6-7, 1986 raid, by federal, state, and local agents, on the offices of organizations associated with Lyndon LaRouche in Leesburg, Virginia. A profile of Harvey was included in the special issue of *EIR* on the "Lords of Loudoun," published on Dec. 15, 1995, p. 41.