

Editorial

The media are protecting George Bush

The national news media have recently been full of gloating coverage of a recent editorial in the *San Jose Mercury News*, by the newspaper's editor, acknowledging that there were some flaws in an August 1996 series of articles by reporter Gary Webb. But before the folks at the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* break out the champagne, let's review the facts.

Last August, Webb authored a three-part series of articles, titled "Dark Alliance," which documented the role of several California-based Nicaraguan Contra officials in spreading crack cocaine on the streets of South Central Los Angeles during the early 1980s, in league with a prominent local drug dealer, "Freeway" Ricky Ross. The Webb series traced the ties of the two Contra officials, Danilo Blandón and Norwin Meneses, to Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN) military commander Col. Enrique Bermudez.

As *EIR* reported at the time, Webb's series contributed an important, added element, to the already-voluminous body of evidence assembled by Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), Iran-Contra Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh, and prosecutors of Lt. Col. Oliver North and others, proving that the Contras were heavily financed through cocaine trafficking. The series provoked a firestorm of news coverage, Congressional hearings, and public protests. Then-CIA Director John Deutch held a town meeting in Los Angeles, to answer the charges. Both the CIA's and the Department of Justice's inspectors general opened investigations. Their findings are due to be released this summer.

But, Webb's articles contained one serious flaw, which *EIR* immediately corrected with the release of a September 1996 *Special Report*, "Would a President Bob Dole Prosecute Drug Super-Kingpin George Bush?" Webb linked the Meneses-Blandón-Ross crack cocaine operations to the CIA. The *EIR Special Report* proved, in fact, that the Contra guns-for-drugs operation was directed out of the White House by then-Vice President George Bush. Under Executive Order 12333 and National Security Decision Directive 3, President Reagan authorized the use of privatized assets to con-

duct U.S. covert operations, and he placed Vice President Bush in charge of the entire covert operations agenda of his administration. Bush ran the Central America program, including the Contra cocaine connection, using his chief national security adviser Donald Gregg, ex-CIA officer Felix Rodríguez, North, and others. Reliable eyewitness accounts, such as those of El Salvador-based Drug Enforcement Administration agent Celerino Castillo, fully corroborated the Bush chain of command over the Contra cocaine pipeline, including the relevant Meneses-Blandón-Ross Los Angeles distribution ring.

The *EIR Special Report* warned that the idea that "the CIA" was behind the Contra-crack cocaine connection was dead wrong, and anyone peddling that line was covering up for George Bush. Unfortunately, even Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) continued to focus her attention on the CIA.

The editorial by the editor of the *San Jose Mercury News* acknowledging that there were some flaws in the Webb series, was not a repudiation of Webb's work—any more than the *EIR* report was a repudiation of the solid investigative work done by Webb. The *Mercury News* had come under intensive attack, led by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*, for daring to publish the Contra cocaine story. Each of those papers published thousands of words of copy, attempting to trash the Webb series, using the most shallow of journalistic tricks. They are guilty of staging an all-out cover-up of the role of George Bush in the biggest drug scandal of the 1980s! Compared to that perfidy, Webb's errors of omission are of minor consequence.

At the end of *EIR's Special Report*, the authors published an 18-page drug-kingpin indictment against Bush and others, based solely on government documents and court records. That indictment was blacked out by all of the major daily newspapers, despite its wide circulation in Washington and around the world. However, there is no statute of limitations on those charges. George Bush remains a free man, despite the evidence that he helped usher in the "crack decade." That is the real issue here.