
Off the Record

Seymour Hersh and the DeMoss affairs

by Scott Thompson

On June 19, CIA Director William Casey called investigative reporter Seymour Hersh to warn that he faced possible prosecution, if Hersh should include "communications intelligence" in his forthcoming book on the Soviet downing of the Korean airliner KAL-007. Informed sources believe Casey was partially prompted to take this step, because a June 12 *New York Times* article by Hersh had recklessly endangered the life of Gen. Manuel Noriega, commander of the Panamanian Defense Forces.

That article, timed to coincide with leaks about General Noriega from closed-door hearings held by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) at the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemispheric Affairs, cited unnamed CIA sources claiming that General Noriega served as a "double agent," providing the Agency with intelligence on Soviet and Cuban activities in Central America. Hersh's piece revealed that the Agency was even able to read the Cubans' analysis of what Noriega fed them—a story that, if true, puts the general's life in jeopardy from Cuban assassins.

Asked about Casey's call, Hersh said: "I'm not interested in hurting national security, but I'm very aware of competing interests and that national security is often used to justify other things." In an earlier statement, Hersh was more direct: "I hate secrets. I don't think there should be secrets. . . . I happen to believe that making sure every car gets 25 miles to the gallon is the most important kind of national security."

Strange bedfellows

Many conservative supporters of Senator Helms have expressed shock to find him a political bedfellow of Seymour "Psywar" Hersh. But on June 21, Helms praised the innuendo and slander that Hersh had poured out against General Noriega—all purportedly from high-level sources with access to "highly classified intelligence." Helms is thus on record praising the reckless endangerment of U.S. intelligence assets abroad.

Hersh is the perfect shill for Helms's plan to "democratize" Panama by installing a lackey of Adolf Hitler, Arnulfo Arias, whom Helms claims is the rightful President. Hundreds of U.S. intelligence documents from the National Archives show Arias to have met with SS chief Heinrich Himmler; to have opened meetings with the Nazi salute and "Heil Hitler"; to have trafficked in narcotics; to have sought to drive the U.S. from Panama during World War II; and to have rewrit-

ten the Panamanian Constitution upon taking office to discriminate against Jews. Since a 1941 coup co-sponsored by the U.S. embassy, the Panamanian Defense Forces have kept this goosestepping Nazi out of power. Hersh claims he did not know that Helms is so committed to Arias, that he would topple the Panamanian military to put him in power.

Informed sources report that an employee in the firm of Colby, Bailey, Werner, who assisted Helms in preparing hearings to back Arias, may have also fed material to Hersh. While the exact identity of Hersh's sources is still under investigation, it is notable that almost the same charges appeared later in a piece under the name of Washington syndicated columnist Georgie Anne Geyer—except she claimed they had been discussed at Senator Helms's hearings. A member of Geyer's staff disclosed that she had talked with Helms aide Deborah DeMoss about the hearings. Informed sources allege that Geyer's article was drafted by DeMoss's superior in Helms's office, Jim Lucier.

When investigating leaks, the operating procedure is: "Don't look under the bed, look in it." An earlier case involving DeMoss, may prove this rule. A government official, a leading journalist, and a noted author all claim that she had an affair with Col. Roberto D'Aubuisson, the El Salvador right-winger who was Helms's favorite to be installed as President. Helms's staff had picked up D'Aubuisson at a 1980 Buenos Aires meeting of the World Anti-Communist League (also attended by Bologna train-station bomber and hired assassin of the Bolivian "cocaine colonels," Stefano Delle Chiaie). DeMoss was assigned to introduce D'Aubuisson to Washington, and she later visited him frequently in El Salvador.

Senator Helms was on such intimate terms with D'Aubuisson's ARENA Party, that his staff allegedly leaked a fabricated story that U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Thomas Pickering was "the purchasing agent" through which the CIA funneled an estimated \$600,000 to D'Aubuisson's opponent, José Napoleón Duarte. This phony story, similar to allegations concerning Noriega from the recent Helms Panama hearings, triggered a plot, which may have been linked to D'Aubuisson, to murder the U.S. ambassador.

But DeMoss did more. When the White House warned Senator Helms on May 17, 1984 that it had sent special presidential-envoy Vernon Walters to confront D'Aubuisson on the plot, she warned D'Aubuisson. Before the President's envoy could deplane the next day, D'Aubuisson called a press conference claiming he had just discovered a left-wing plot to murder the U.S. ambassador.

DeMoss would not return calls about the leaks from the Helms hearings. But, asked about reports of an affair with D'Aubuisson, she phoned back to say: "I categorically deny, and if you do not print my denial, I'll sue." As for leaking to her alleged lover that he was suspected of being part of a murder conspiracy, DeMoss said: "I did it on orders from President Reagan, relayed by Senator Helms." White House spokesmen have not confirmed this story.