

New evidence links George Bush to Los Angeles drug operation

by Edward Spannaus

On Oct. 27, 1986, federal and local law enforcement officials executed search warrants on more than a dozen locations connected to a major cocaine-trafficking ring in southern California centered around Danilo Blandón. One of the locations raided was the home of a former Laguna Beach police officer by the name of Ronald Lister.

Los Angeles Sheriff's Department detectives reported that when they raided Lister's house, 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."

New evidence has now surfaced showing who some of Lister's "friends in Washington" were, and we shall see that these "friends" ran all the way up to the Office of the Vice President, at that time George Bush.

Mark Richard's tell-tale notes

Around the same time as the October 1986 drug raid, "Mr. Weekly," whose full name is David Scott Weekly, became the subject of a federal investigation opened for the purpose of prosecuting him on federal explosives charges. According to later testimony, this investigation was under way for some time before Weekly himself first learned about it, which was on Dec. 21-22, 1986.

But ten days before Weekly learned that he was being targeted, Bill Price, the U.S. Attorney in Oklahoma City handling Weekly's case, had a telephone conversation with a top official at Justice Department headquarters about some of the stickier aspects of the investigation. The official to whom

Price talked was Mark Richard, a Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division, and the career Justice Department official who served as the Department's liaison to the intelligence agencies.

The question arises: What might have triggered this conversation between Mark Richard—the DOJ's point of contact for the NSC, CIA, and military intelligence agencies—and the Oklahoma prosecutor?

First of all, on Oct. 5, 1986, a C-123 cargo plane, flying from El Salvador's Ilopango military air base, had been shot down over Nicaragua. Three crewmen were killed, and the fourth, Eugene Hasenfus, was captured by the Nicaraguan Sandinistas. This was the beginning of the public unravelling of what became known as the "Iran-Contra" affair.

Then came the Oct. 27 raid in Los Angeles, after which the Los Angeles FBI office communicated to FBI headquarters what had transpired, including Lister's claims of involvement in arming the Contras, and his citation of "Mr. Weekly" as being "CIA" and a "DIA subcontractor"—referring to the Defense Intelligence Agency. (The FBI had already interviewed a businessman to whom Lister had bragged, on Aug. 1, that he was involved in arming the Contras, and that his arms deals were "CIA approved.")

On Nov. 10, 1986, the FBI sent a teletype to various sections of the CIA, inquiring about Lister, Blandón, Weekly, and some others. The inquiry, over the name of the FBI Director, asked diplomatically if any of these individuals were "of operational interest" to the CIA.

FBI documents also show that a teletype was sent to FBI headquarters on Dec. 9, followed up by a phone conversation with an FBI supervisor on Dec. 11—the same day that Mark Richard spoke to the prosecutor in Oklahoma City—who was at the time secretly preparing his case against Scott Weekly.

In August 1987—less than a year later—Mark Richard was required to give testimony in the Congressional Iran-Contra investigation. While being interrogated about various matters in which there were allegations of Justice Department interference in Contra-related cases, Richard was specifically questioned about handwritten notes he had made during his Dec. 11 conversation with prosecutor Bill Price. Richard said

that Bill Hendricks of the DOJ's Public Integrity Section, which was dealing with a lot of the Iran-Contra matters, had previously been in touch with Price. After examining his own notes, Richard said that the conversation pertained to "an individual who had been arrested and his possible involvement in some CIA/Contra-related activities." (In fact, Scott Weekly was out of the country on Dec. 11, and had not yet been arrested.)

Richard was asked about the portion of the notes which read: "Weekly posts on tape that he's tied into CIA and Hasenfus. Said he reports to people reporting to Bush." Richard disclaimed any knowledge of what this meant, and said that the matter had been referred to the Independent Counsel. He said that in his notes, "There is a suggestion of a relationship to the CIA and the exportation of explosives to the — countries."

Richard was then asked: "And he's alleging or indicating to someone that he's connected with the CIA and he is reporting to people who report to Bush?" Richard answers: "That's what he's asserting."

Richard's notes, printed in Appendix B, Volume 23 of the Congressional Iran-Contra Report, also reference Weekly's toll calls to "Col. Nestor Pino, Spec Asst to Undersecretary for Security Assistance," apparently made in September-October 1986, and also "Phone calls from Weekly to Alex, Va.—Tom Harvey of NSC," apparently on Oct. 30, 1986.

Richard's reference to Tom Harvey is most significant. *EIR's* investigations have shown that Harvey was operating out of George Bush's office, and was definitely one of the "people who report to Bush." Nestor Pino was likewise deeply involved in the drug-ridden Contra supply operation, which was being run out of Bush's office though Felix Rodriguez, as well as by Oliver North, under the direct supervision of Bush's national security adviser Donald Gregg.

What has misled many investigators — and has continued to confuse the issue — is that many of these operatives, even Bush himself, at one point or another worked for the CIA. But the Contra-drug operation was not a "CIA" operation: It was run at a level *higher* than the CIA, primarily through military and private networks deployed out of the National Security Council, which in turn was operating in these matters under the direction of Vice President Bush.¹ The case at hand — of Ron Lister, Scott Weekly, and Tom Harvey — is a very good example of how such things actually worked, in contrast to popular fairy tales about the "CIA."

Who is Ronald Lister?

Before discussing Lister's "friends," a few salient facts about Lister himself.

1. For a more thorough description and documentation of this structure, which operated under the authority of Executive Order 12333 and various National Security Decision Directives, see the two *EIR Special Reports*: "Would a President Bob Dole Prosecute Drug Super-Kingpin George Bush?" September

The investigation of the Blandón drug ring — the Contra-linked cocaine-smuggling operation featured in the controversial *San Jose Mercury News* series last Fall — appears to have begun in late 1984, with a probe into a Colombian money-laundering operation in the city of Bell, California, near southeast Los Angeles. The police officer who initiated the investigation, which was done at the request of agents from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and Customs Service, identified former Laguna Beach police officer Ronald Lister as transporting large amounts of cocaine and "millions of dollars" for Danilo Blandón.

During interviews with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department last year, as part of their internal investigation of the *San Jose Mercury News* series, Lister acknowledged that he and Blandón were in the drug business, and he told Sheriff's investigators that "he had moved \$50-60 million for Blandón." Lister also admitted that he himself had been a user of cocaine from 1985 to 1989.

In a well-researched article in the May 22 issue of the *Los Angeles Weekly*, investigative reporter Nick Schou has documented some of Lister's ties to former CIA officials. A San Diego weapons dealer, Timothy LaFrance (mentioned in Mark Richard's notes), told Schou that Lister's company, Pyramid International Security Consultants, was a "private vendor that the CIA used" to do things that the agency itself couldn't do. LaFrance said he had made a number of trips to Central America with Lister, providing weapons to the Contras. Another employee of Pyramid was Paul Wilker, a former CIA officer who, after leaving the CIA, had worked for a company called "Intersect" in Orange County, California. One of the founders of Intersect was still another former CIA officer, John Vandewerker. Vanderwerker told reporter Schou that he had met Lister through Wilker, his former employee. Vanderwerker also said that either Lister or Wilker had helped him apply for a job at Fluor Corporation, the large construction firm, with Bill Nelson, then Fluor's vice president for security and administration. Nelson was a well-known figure, having been the CIA Deputy Director for Operations in the 1973-76 period. According to Schou, Nelson, Wilker, and Vanderwerker all retired from the agency around 1976, when they set up Intersect. (This was prior to the late 1970s purge of the CIA's Operations Directorate under Adm. Stansfield Turner; the Turner housecleaning spun off many of the privatized "asteroid" operations, which then played such an important role during the 1980s.)

To round out the picture of Lister's associates, we note that in ten pages of notes seized from Lister's house in the 1986 raid, is a list of six names, which starts with Bill Nelson, and ends with Roberto D'Aubuisson, the military strongman of El Salvador in that period.

ber 1996; and "George Bush and the 12333 Serial Murder Ring," October 1996.

Also in the list is Scott Weekly. Elsewhere in Lister's ten pages of notes, he had written: "I had regular meeting with DIA Subcontractor Scott Weekly. Scott had worked in El Salvador for us. Meeting concerned my relationship with the Contra grp. in Cent. Am."

Lister's 'friends in Washington'

Recall, that among the names mentioned in Mark Richard's notes were those of Nestor Pino and Tom Harvey.

Nestor Pino, an Army colonel, worked with one William Bode; both Pino and Bode were designated as special assistants to the Undersecretary of State for Security Assistance. Pino was posted to the State Department from the Pentagon's Defense Security Assistance Agency. Both Bode and Pino were deeply involved in the then-secret program supplying arms and supplies to the Contras. This program is often described as "guns down, drugs back." It is not surprising, therefore, that Pino and Bode were also both closely tied to Felix Rodriguez, one of the top drug-runners in the Contra operation, who was directly deployed out of Bush's office through Bush's national security adviser Donald Gregg — another former CIA official.

It was William Bode who introduced Felix Rodriguez to Oliver North in December 1984, as Rodriguez was on his way to meet with Gregg. (A few weeks after this, Gregg introduced Rodriguez personally to Bush, in the Vice Presidents' office.)

In his book *Shadow Warrior*, Rodriguez describes Pino as a close buddy of his from the days of the Bay of Pigs "2506 Brigade." Rodriguez says that at the "2506" training camp in Guatemala, he became friends with both Nestor Pino, and with Jose Basulto — more recently known for his provocative actions as part of the "Brothers to the Rescue" operation.

Scott Weekly's involvement with Bode and Pino came about in the following way. In August 1986, Bode contacted Col. James "Bo" Gritz, the retired, highly decorated special forces commander, and asked him to come to Washington to discuss a training program for Afghanistan mujahideen general-staff officers — another of the clandestine operations being run by the intelligence community simultaneously with the Contra operation. Gritz met with Bode and Pino at the State Department twice in early August, and then, with his longtime associate Scott Weekly, launched a training program in unconventional warfare for the Afghans, conducted on federal land in Nevada.

The training program, as Gritz later testified, was financed by \$50,000, paid through Albert Hakim's Stanford Technology Group — one of the companies used by Oliver North, Richard Secord, et al. for shipping arms to Iran and to the Contras. The Stanford group was found by Iran-Contra Independent Counsel prosecutor Lawrence Walsh to have been at the heart of what he called "The Enterprise."

Now, there is no evidence whatsoever that Gritz had any knowledge of Weekly's ties to the drug-dealer and money-launderer Ron Lister, much less any involvement in it. Indeed, Gritz is well-known for his opposition to drug trafficking; he was prosecuted by the federal government in the late 1980s after exposing the role of certain Reagan-Bush government officials in drug smuggling in Southeast Asia — as we shall see below.

Scott Weekly was a weapons specialist, working as part of a team created by Gritz, after Gritz had been requested in 1979 by the deputy director of the Defense Intelligence Agency to officially resign from the U.S. Army, and carry out a private intelligence operation in Southeast Asia. Gritz's team carried out 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.

In his 1991 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 in 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."

To return to our narrative: In late October 1986, as the first round of the Afghan training program was being completed, and just before the Los Angeles Sheriff's raid on the Blandón drug ring, Gritz was contacted by an NSC staff officer, Lt. Col. Thomas Harvey. (The misnamed "NSC staff" is not a staff for the National Security Council, but it serves the President — and in this case the vice president — on national security matters.)

Colonel Harvey told Gritz that information had recently been given to Vice President Bush indicating that Burmese drug lord Khun Sa had information on U.S. prisoners of war still being detained in Southeast Asia. Harvey asked Gritz if he could go to the Golden Triangle area of Southeast Asia to attempt to verify this report. He could, Gritz said, but he told Harvey that he would need special documents for such a mission.

A few days later, Harvey told Gritz to come to Washington. On Oct. 29, 1986, Gritz and Scott Weekly flew there, and met Harvey near the White House. 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. . . .”

This was Oct. 29. Mark Richard’s notes also indicate a toll call by Weekly to Tom Harvey the next day.

‘CIA’ was the cover story

As to the claims by Lister, Weekly, and others that Weekly was working for the CIA, Gritz has more recently had a number of highly pertinent things to say.

In his *Center for Action* newsletter, Dec. 5, 1996, while discussing the FBI’s confusion over whom Weekly worked for when he was working for Gritz, Gritz wrote: “The FBI never knew exactly who I was working for.” Gritz indicates that he was working for ISA—the Army’s Intelligence Support Activity, and explains: “The truth is that the initials ‘ISA’ were above Top Secret to the point where CIA was our cover. ISA worked directly for the National Security Council.”

Gritz then says that he initially worked for DIA, and was then transferred to J-5 (Strategic Plans and Policy) of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, when his POW operations went into the field. “Toward the end it was ISA that picked up the effort.” He describes how he was called into the White House by Adm. Bobby Inman, then deputy director of the CIA, just before the POW mission was taken away from ISA and given back to DIA.

Gritz continues: “It is no wonder the FBI had no idea who was actually carrying the ball! Scott Weekly never worked for DIA—he worked for me.”

When Gritz was reached by *EIR*, he confirmed and elaborated what he had written in his newsletter. Gritz disavowed any knowledge of a link between Weekly and Ron Lister, and said that Weekly only had a few contacts with the CIA, and that those were through Gritz. Gritz confirmed that he himself was actually working for the ISA. “It was identified, incorrectly, as a low-level Army intelligence effort,” Gritz explained, “but it really worked directly for the National Security Council. Otherwise, how in the hell could we have been doing all the weird things we were doing? And we used the CIA as a cover, when you had to get messages, and this kind of stuff.”

“When I came on board,” Gritz continued, “I was carefully briefed: ‘We are not under the CIA, we are not under Defense Intelligence; we work for the National Security Council.’” He also said that ISA coordinated with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which provided the “muscle” for ISA, using Delta Force special operations forces.

Tom Harvey, Bush, and ‘the families’

Now, to the matter of Col. Thomas Harvey.

Thomas Nelson Harvey graduated from West Point in the early 1970s, and was posted to a SHAPE (Supreme Headquar-

ters Allied Powers Europe) support group position. In 1975, he trained as a Foreign Area Specialist in Yugoslav studies. Harvey was later assigned to the headquarters of the Ninth 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.

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 has been colored with allegations of gun running, drug smuggling, and privateering on a grand scale. During Gritz’s mission to Khun Sa in 1986, Khun Sa identified Armitage as playing a central role in “Golden Triangle” drug trafficking—which has some bearing on Harvey’s behavior after Gritz returned from his 1986 mission.

From 1983 until his retirement in 1991, Harvey was usually listed in Pentagon directories as located in the office of the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army; he was, among other things, a speechwriter responsible for space, arms control, and low-intensity operations. According to his own testimony, he held numerous sensitive intelligence positions during that time. Among these, were his serving as a military assistant to the Senate Armed Services Committee, where he worked closely with Senators Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) and John Warner (R-Va.).

Asked about Tom Harvey, Gritz told this reporter that Harvey was actually working out of George Bush’s office. “Harvey was the military adviser to Sen. John Warner, and he was also, of course, in the NSC, working in the Vice President’s Office—George Bush at the time,” Gritz said. “Harvey was the Ollie North look-alike for George Bush.”

It was apparently while Harvey was at the NSC in 1985-86, that he was instrumental in the creation of a bizarre “private” paramilitary unit in Loudoun County, Virginia, called “ARGUS” (Armored Response Group U.S.). ARGUS’s ostensible purpose was to provide surplus armored military equipment for use in “anti-terrorist” and other crisis situations by local law enforcement agencies in the mid-Atlantic region. Among its acquisitions were a C-130 military aircraft, an armored personnel carrier, and an armored forklift.

One of the few times that ARGUS equipment was actually deployed, to be on standby, was 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. That raid was officially run by the FBI, but it was later learned that planning for the raid included the “focal point” office of the J-3 Special Operations Division of the Pentagon’s Joint Chiefs of Staff. Two truckloads of seized documents were taken to highly secure U.S. Marine Corps facilities at Henderson Hall in Arlington, Virginia,

where they were presumably culled over by intelligence specialists, before being reviewed by state and federal prosecutors.

ARGUS was a project of the oligarchal families based in the Loudoun County “Hunt Country” (see article, p. 64). Magalen Ohrstrom Bryant and John W. Hanes were both officials and funders of ARGUS; at the same time, Bryant and Hanes were both funding Oliver North’s secret Contra operations as well.

In 1988, by which time Harvey was posted to Senator Warner’s staff, he was able to set up ARGUS’s training base at the Army’s Cameron Station base in Alexandria, Virginia. ARGUS also housed some of its specialized armored vehicles at Cameron Station. Given that ARGUS was supposedly a completely private operation, this was rather extraordinary—except that ARGUS was obviously *not* “private”; it was rather part of the *privatized* military-intelligence operations which flourished under the authority of Executive Order 12333 and Bush’s “secret government” apparatus.

After his retirement from active military service in 1991, Harvey continued to work for these same intelligence-related “family” networks. He became the chairman and CEO of the Global Environmental and Technology Foundation. On Global’s Board of Directors, naturally, is Maggie Bryant, also listed as chairperson of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. It is reported that Harvey was personally selected for this role by Maggie Bryant, who has called him one of her most trusted operatives. Among Global’s projects is what is called the “Defense and Environmental Initiative,” which, in their words, involves “integrating environmental considerations into America’s national and international security mission.”

‘Erase and forget’

Now, back to Gritz’s dealings with Tom Harvey in 1986-87.

Gritz and his team, including Scott Weekly, did go to Burma, where they met with Khun Sa. Khun Sa told Gritz that he did not have any American POWs, but he proposed a deal with the United States: that he would stop all drug flows out of the Golden Triangle, in return for recognition of his Shan State. He would guarantee the eradication of opium production in the Golden Triangle, which was the major source of heroin coming into the United States—although it was rapidly being supplanted by drugs from the “Golden Crescent” of Afghanistan and Pakistan as a by-product of the arms and money flowing into the Afghan War. The parallels between the Bush “secret government” clandestine operations in Central American and those in Afghanistan are striking: The net result of both was a massive increase in drugs coming from those areas into the United States. Guns and drugs, like love and marriage, go together like the proverbial horse and carriage. (The Afghan operation gave us something else: the worldwide British-controlled terrorist network

known today as the “Afghansi.”)

The other thing which Khun Sa offered—even more explosive—was that he would name the names of U.S. government officials involved in illegal arms and drug trafficking.

Gritz and his team returned just before Christmas 1986. In his book, Gritz reports that he submitted his after-action report to Harvey; a few days later, Harvey called. When Gritz asked Harvey about the reaction to Khun Sa’s proposal to stop the drug trade, Harvey told Gritz: “Bo, there’s no one around here who supports that.” Gritz’s account continues:

“I reminded him that Vice President George H.W. Bush was appointed by his boss, the President of the United States, as the ‘Number-One Cop’ for stopping drugs before they got to the United States. Reagan had declared war on drugs, and Bush was his so-called ‘Czar.’

“Harvey reiterated, this time in a more forcible tone, ‘Bo, what can I tell you? There’s no interest in doing that.’

“I knew then that we were treading on some very sensitive toes,” Gritz writes, “but I didn’t know whose.” Almost immediately, Scott Weekly was charged with illegal shipments of explosives (the C4 used in the Afghani training program) and he was induced to plead guilty without a trial, and even without a lawyer.

In May 1987, Gritz was told in no uncertain terms to cease and desist all of his activities related to the Golden Triangle and drugs. He was contacted by Joseph Felter, his close friend and the former head of Wedtech, the scandalized defense contractor. Felter told Gritz that he was conveying a message from Tom Harvey and a State Department official named William Davis: that Gritz was to “erase and forget” everything about his trip to the Golden Triangle. Felter told Gritz that Harvey and Davis said that “if you don’t stop everything you’re doing . . . you’re gonna serve 15 years in prison as a felon!” (Felter later confirmed the thrust of his remarks, and that he was acting on behalf of Harvey, in a sworn affidavit.)

Gritz was at the time about to be charged with using a false passport, for travelling to Southeast Asia on a passport in a different name which had in fact been provided to him by the U.S. government, through the NSC-run ISA. Gritz was also threatened with charges for neutrality violations, for the Afghan training operation. Gritz says that when he was finally indicted in 1989, Tom Harvey showed up, and told him privately: “Bo, we’re so angry with you! Your focus is supposed to be prisoners of war. Why do you insist on getting involved in this government drug operation?”

The coverup continues to this day. The attacks on Bo Gritz to prevent exposure of the U.S. government complicity in the Golden Triangle drug trade, and the frantic efforts in late 1986-87 to suppress any exposure of the Contra drugs-for-guns dealings—as shows up in the Lister-Weekly case—were clearly one and the same.

And in both cases, we see that the trail leads directly to the same place: George Bush.