

July 12, 2000, Peter Dale Scott asks:

"PLEASE HELP STOP CONGRESSWOMAN PELOSI FROM KILLING THE CIA-DRUG STORY"

Berkeley - In May 2000, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, a liberal Democrat, participated in a shameless attempt to stop public interest in the CIA's use and protection of drug-traffickers supporting the Nicaraguan Contras. If you did not know this, please read the attached op-ed and analysis of a Report released in May by the House Permanent Select Committee (HPSCI), on which she serves.

If you agree that she should now repudiate the Report, please let her know. As this is written, in July 2000, the U.S. is drifting into a protracted war in Colombia, a war all too like the Vietnam War in its early stages. Rep. Pelosi herself recently warned that Clinton's \$1.6 billion aid plan will lead the United States into "a five- to 10-year commitment, which will cost U.S. taxpayers in excess of \$5 billion." Many observers envisage a much more costly scenario, not only in dollars but in lives.

Congresswoman Pelosi needs to be persuaded that it is thus a matter of life and death to undermine the ideological underpinnings of this so-called War on Drugs. One of the best ways to do this is to expose, rather than dishonestly bury, the CIA's recurring habit of allying itself with drug-traffickers.

The HPSCI Report is a dishonest piece of propaganda, transmitting lies easily disproven. It purports to be based on two earlier investigative reports by CIA Inspector-General Frederick Hitz. However, compared to it, the Hitz reports are relatively candid, casting needed light on the CIA-drug problem which Pelosi herself has deemed to be important. Pelosi may not have realized all this when she let the Report be released without dissent.

But what will she do now? Will she represent the needs of the CIA or of her electorate? If the latter, how will she challenge the cover-up she signed on to?

Will Pelosi repudiate the HPSCI Report?

Will Pelosi press for an open hearing on the second Hitz Report, something originally promised by the Committee but never provided?

Will Pelosi press for a fuller release of Hitz II? As released in redacted form, Hitz II has only one page on Southern Air Transport, a former CIA proprietary which was in the DEA database for suspected smuggling? Many have suspected a major scandal here which the CIA is still trying to hide.

Was Pelosi aware that John Millis, HPSCI chief of staff when the Committee's report was prepared and released, was a CIA veteran who for thirteen years worked with and supplied the heroin-smuggling mujahedeen in Afghanistan? (At least one of the suspect airlines supplying these mujahedeen, Global International, was also involved in Iran-Contra.)

If Pelosi was aware of this conflict of interest, will she apologize? If not, will she expose Chairman Porter Goss, another CIA veteran, for so brazenly putting the interests of the CIA ahead of those of Congress and the American people?

Up to now, Nancy Pelosi and her Washington and San Francisco offices have refused to answer repeated phone calls and FAXes on this question. This is where you can make a difference, whether or not you are a voter in her Eighth District in San Francisco. Please

contact her and let her know your concern, preferably in your own words.

She can be reached by email at sf.nancy@mail.house.gov Her office phone numbers are (415) 556-4862 (San Francisco) or, preferably (202) 225-4965 (Washington).

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[Following is an editorial written by Peter in response to the House Intelligence Committee's actions of May 12, 2000]

OP-ED

What Will Congress Do About New CIA-Drug Revelations?

Peter Dale Scott

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CONGRESS WILL shortly have to decide whether to bury or deal with explosive new revelations that the Central Intelligence Agency protected major drug traffickers who aided the Contra army in Central America. These new findings go far beyond the original stories which gave rise to them by Gary Webb in 1996.

Webb had alleged that cocaine from two Contra-supporting traffickers, Norwin Meneses and Danilo Blandon, had helped fuel the national crack epidemic. The resulting political firestorm brought promises of a full investigation. After an unprecedented review of internal CIA and Justice Department files, three massive reports, totaling almost 1,000 pages, were released by the inspectors general of the CIA (Fred Hitz) and Justice Department (Michael Bromwich).

The new revelations confirmed many of Webb's claims. Meneses and Blandon were admitted to have been (despite previous press denials) "significant traffickers who also supported, to some extent, the Contras." For years they escaped prosecution, until after support for the Contras ended.

Meanwhile the reports opened the doors on worse scandals. According to the reports, the CIA made conscious use of major traffickers as agents, contractors and assets. It maintained good relations with Contras it knew to be working with drug traffickers. It protected traffickers which the Justice Department was trying to prosecute, sometimes by suppressing or denying the existence of information.

This protection extended to major Drug Enforcement Agency targets considered to be among the top smugglers of cocaine into this country. Perhaps the most egregious example is that of the Honduran trafficker Juan Ramon Matta Ballesteros. Matta had been identified by the DEA in 1985 as the most important member of a consortium moving a major share (perhaps a third, perhaps more than half) of all the cocaine from Colombia to the United States. The DEA also knew that Matta was behind the kidnapping of a DEA

agent in Mexico, Enrique Camarena, who was subsequently tortured and murdered.

A public enemy? Yes. But Matta was also an ally of the CIA. Matta's airline, SETCO, was recorded in U.S. files as a drug-smuggling airline. It was also the chief airline with which the CIA contracted to fly supplies to the Contra camps in Honduras. When the local DEA office began to move against Matta in 1983, it was shut down. Though Matta's whereabouts were well-known, the United States did not arrest and extradite him until 1988, a few days after Congress ended support for the Contras.

At Matta's first drug trial, a U.S. attorney described him as "on the level of the top 10 Colombian drug traffickers." We now learn from the CIA Hitz reports that, in the same year, 1989, CIA officials reported falsely, in response to an inquiry from Justice, that in CIA files "There are no records of a SETCO Air." CIA officers appear also to have lied to Hitz's investigators about who said this.

There appears to have been a broad pattern of withholding information from the Justice Department. For example, when Justice began to investigate the drug activities of two Contra supporters, CIA headquarters turned down proposals that CIA should interview the two men. The reason in one case was that such documentation would be "exactly the sort of thing the U.S. Attorney's Office will be investigating."

The House Committee on Intelligence received this information, and chose to deny it. According to a recent committee report, "There is no evidence . . . that CIA officers . . . ever concealed narcotics trafficking information or allegations involving the Contras."

Just as dishonestly, the committee found that "there is unambiguous reporting in the CIA materials reviewed showing that the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) leadership in Nicaragua would not accept drug monies and would remove from its ranks those who had involvement in drug trafficking." In fact, the Hitz reports contained a detailed account of drug-trafficking by members of the main FDN faction, the September 15th League (ADREN).

Those named included the FDN chief of logistics. According to the Hitz Reports, "CIA also received allegations or information concerning drug trafficking by nine Contra-related individuals in the (FDN) Northern Front." This included credible information, corroborated elsewhere, against leaders such as Juan Ramon Rivas, the Northern Army chief of staff. Yet CIA support for the FDN continued, through a period when aid to any drug-tainted Contra organization was forbidden by statute.

In short, the House Committee Report is a dishonest coverup of CIA wrong-doings, what one might expect from a committee chaired and staffed by former CIA officers.

As committee member Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, D-S.F., said in a hearing two years ago, "This is an issue of great concern in our community." Will she, and other like-minded representatives, repudiate this flimsy attempt to silence that concern with falsehoods?

The answer may depend on the voters: Will they object as strongly as before?

(Peter Dale Scott was an expert witness before the Citizens' Commission on U.S. Drug Policy.)