

BUESO ROSA, LATCHINIAN AND NARCO TERRORISM

On October 28, 1984, the FBI seized a shipment of 345 kilos of cocaine worth an estimated \$40 million on a rural airstrip in South Florida. The proceeds from the sale of cocaine were to have been used to finance a plot to assassinate Honduran President Roberto Suazo Cordoba.¹⁹

Arrested in the plot were General Jose Bueso-Rosa, who was at the time the Honduran military attache in Santiago, Chile, Gecard Latchinian, a Honduran arms dealer living in Miami, and Faiz Skaffy, a Honduran businessman also living in Miami. All were charged with conspiracy to commit murder.²⁰

At the time of the arrests, FBI Director William Webster stated:

We don't want international terrorists to establish beachheads or bases for operations in the United States such as they have enjoyed for years in other parts of the world.²¹

Factual Admissions by the United States in the trial of Oliver North, released publicly on April 6, 1989, revealed that "in mid-September, 1986, Lt. Col. North advised Admiral Poindexter that U.S. Ambassador Negroponte, General Gorman of South Com, senior CIA official Duane Clarridge, and Lt. Col. North had worked out arrangements for support of the [Contra] Resistance with General Bueso-Rosa, a former Honduran military officer who had recently been convicted of offenses in the U.S. Lt. Col. North suggested that efforts be made on Bueso-Rosa's behalf to deter him from disclosing details of these covert activities."²²

Bueso-Rosa was subsequently extradited from Chile to the United States. While Latchinian was convicted by a federal jury on conspiracy charges and sentenced to 30 years in prison, Bueso-Rosa was treated very leniently. He was sentenced to five years at Eglin Air Force Base federal prison camp in Florida, after senior U.S. government officials attempted to intercede on his behalf since ". . . he had been a friend to the U.S. . . . involved in helping us with the Contras."²³ The Justice Department had objected strenuously to the lenient treatment accorded Bueso-Rosa, arguing that the conspiracy was the "most significant case of narco-terrorism yet discovered."²⁴

On November 21, 1987, Jorge Ochoa was arrested on a highway in Colombia driving a \$70,000 Porche owned by Said Speer, a Honduran Colonel serving as a military attache in Bogota. Said-Speer denied knowing Ochoa and said that his use of the car was unauthorized, but he could not explain how he was able to purchase such an expensive car on the pay of a Honduran Colonel.²⁵

¹⁹ "FBI Nips Plot to Kill President of Honduras," By Robert E. Taylor, *The Wall Street Journal*, November 3, 1984.

²⁰ "Papers Show Drug Link to Suspect in Alleged Plot Against Honduran," by Jon Nordheimer, *The New York Times*, November 3, 1984.

²¹ Taylor, op. cit.

²² Agreed Statements, *U.S. v. North*, U.S. District Court, 1988, # 102.

²³ Subcommittee testimony of Francis J. McNeil, Part 3, April 4, 1988, p. 52, Iran/Contra deposition of Mark M. Richard, Appendix B, Volume 23, August 19, 1987, pp. 122-128

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 44-49.

²⁵ "Military officers in Honduras are linked to the drug trade," by James Le Moyne, *The New York Times*, February 12, 1988, p. A1