

Scandals worsen around Thornburgh

by Steve Komm and Jeff Steinberg

According to a source close to the White House, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has quietly begun background checks on several individuals now being considered to replace Richard Thornburgh as Attorney General. The reports came as word was expected from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania that a federal grand jury has handed down a perjury and cocaine indictment against one of Thornburgh's oldest and closest aides, Henry Barr. Up until May of last year, Barr had been the Attorney General's executive assistant, overseeing all department criminal prosecutions.

Drugs, and more drugs

Barr resigned from the Department of Justice 48 hours after a federal grand jury was empaneled in Harrisburg to investigate cocaine use by former state officials. Initially, published reports had suggested that the principal target of the grand jury probe was Richard Guida. Up until 1986, Guida had been the number-two man in the Pennsylvania State Attorney General's office under Governor Thornburgh. Guida had been in charge of all criminal prosecutions. He resigned after several Harrisburg-area cocaine traffickers told investigators and reporters that they had sold sizeable amounts of cocaine to him at the cafeteria in the State House and at other locations in and near the Capitol.

Now, however, according to a six-page document submitted by Guida's attorney Paul Killian before a federal judge in Scranton, Pennsylvania, it appears that the original federal grand jury was directed at Barr, as well as Guida.

The memorandum was filed in opposition to a motion by Assistant U.S. Attorney Gordon Zubrod to have Guida's plea agreement nullified. In a deal reached in March of this year, Guida agreed to plead guilty to one count of cocaine use, in order to avoid a much larger indictment for cocaine distribution. According to Zubrod, Guida failed to live up to his end of the agreement, which involved full disclosure of everything he knows about cocaine use by other current and former Pennsylvania state officials. Zubrod charged that Guida had failed several lie detector tests administered by the FBI and had withheld evidence crucial to the still-ongoing Harrisburg grand jury.

In response to the Zubrod motion, Killian submitted a public document stating that Guida had provided the government with information on cocaine use by 10 individuals, including Henry Barr. Although Barr was expected to be indicted by the Harrisburg grand jury on April 10, the Killian affidavit was the first instance in which Barr was publicly identified as a target of the grand jury.

On July 20, U.S. District Court Judge Edwin Kosik granted Zubrod's motion to vacate the plea deal, thus opening the door for Guida to be indicted on multiple drug and perjury counts. Sources close to the probe believe that the court ruling puts the final nail in the Barr indictment, which is now expected to be voted on within the next several weeks.

Sources close to the White House now say that the Barr indictment, if it does happen, will finish off Thornburgh's career as Attorney General. Since early this year, top aides to Thornburgh have been at the center of half a dozen embarrassing scandals and controversies.

Justice Department liars

On July 13, the *Washington Post* reported on yet another resignation by a Thornburgh associate from the Department of Justice. Barry H. Stern, the director of the office of liaison services since September 1988 and a decade-long aide to Thornburgh, announced that he was leaving the department to return to a corporate job in Philadelphia. Stern had become embroiled in a department controversy when he failed to complete questionnaires necessary for obtaining security clearance. Stern, along with other Justice Department political appointees, had been given temporary clearance at the time of his appointment. His continuing failure to provide the required background information became a point of serious conflict with department security officials, according to the *Post* account.

Now it appears that in the context of the reopening of the Guida prosecution in Scranton, yet another Thornburgh aide will become embroiled in scandal. Local reporters in Harrisburg are looking into the role of Richard Weatherbee in the initial coverup of the Guida cocaine scandal, at the time of his 1986 departure from the state government.

Weatherbee was at the time a lieutenant colonel and deputy commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police, in charge of drug enforcement. He is now a top aide to Thornburgh, coordinating the Attorney General's role in what the administration is fond of calling its war on drugs. According to a transcript of a Pennsylvania Supreme Court hearing on Dec. 4, 1986, on Nov. 17, 1986, Thomas Saylor, Guida's replacement as deputy state attorney general in charge of criminal prosecutions, had written to Weatherbee confirming that the department's internal probe of Guida had turned up no evidence of drug use.

Sources in Harrisburg charge that Saylor and Weatherbee covered up the massive evidence of Guida's cocaine habit in order to avoid a major scandal.