

# FBI, DEA challenged on Lockerbie coverup

by Jeffrey Steinberg

A congressional committee has revived questions about possible U.S. government complicity in the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland on Dec. 21, 1988, leaving 270 dead.

In mid-December, Rep. Robert Wise (D-W.V.) chaired hearings of the House Government Operations Subcommittee on Government Information, Justice, and Agriculture, probing the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) recent internal investigations into allegations that a drug enforcement "sting" operation may have inadvertently helped terrorists bypass security procedures at Frankfurt Airport in Germany and plant the bomb aboard Flight 103. Both probes whitewashed any involvement of DEA personnel or informants in the tragedy.

One day before the hearings, *Barrons* magazine published a report in its Dec. 17, 1990 issue stating that both government and private investigators had corroborated critical details of a September 1989 investigators report prepared for Pan Am, indicating that CIA personnel operating in Frankfurt had helped a notorious Syrian terrorist and narcotics trafficker, Mansur Al-Kassar, in the Pan Am massacre. The original Pan Am report was prepared by the New York City-based Interfor, a private consulting firm headed by a former Israeli Defense Force and Mossad officer, Juval Aviv.

*Barrons* reporter Maggie Mahar wrote that several active duty and retired U.S. intelligence officials had confirmed that the Aviv report contained accurate details about the bomb plot which have been covered up by the Bush administration.

On Dec. 14, attorneys for Pan American World Airways filed a third party suit against the U.S. government in federal court in Brooklyn, New York, charging Uncle Sam with responsibility for the massacre.

The Pan Am papers charged that "commencing in or about 1987, the United States established an operation, through one or more of its agencies, including the [DEA], designed to identify, arrest, prosecute and convict persons involved in illegal drug activities in the United States. . . . In order to facilitate the operation, the United States utilized known criminals, terrorists, terrorist organizations and terrorist sympathizers. . . . The United States knew that United States flag air carriers, including Pan Am, were targets of terrorist attacks and knew or should have known that by utilizing Pan Am passenger flights, by relying upon known criminals, terrorists, terrorist organizations and terrorist

sympathizers . . . the operation seriously jeopardized and endangered Pan Am passengers, crews and aircraft."

The lid is beginning to blow, despite the best efforts of the Bush administration to cover up the complicity of U.S. intelligence agencies, and the Syrian government of new-found ally Hafez al-Assad, in that heinous act.

## Wise blasts the FBI

Wise opened the public part of the hearings on Dec. 18 by tearing into the FBI for refusing to provide a witness or any information requested by the subcommittee despite the fact that Deputy Attorney General William Barr issued a press release on Dec. 4 proclaiming that the FBI had completed its probe of possible DEA complicity in the Pan Am 103 bombing and had given the agency a clean bill of health. While the FBI was being "totally uncooperative," the DEA was stonewalling the probe by withholding documents and refusing to make any DEA field agents or station chiefs available to the committee. Instead, assistant administrators David Westrate and Steven Greene claimed that the DEA had searched over 1,600 case files, had questioned agents, informants, and other personnel, and had concluded "1,000%" that the "scenario" presented in recent news accounts, that a DEA sting at Frankfurt Airport had helped terrorist bypass security and place a bomb aboard the plane, was "impossible."

Before the committee was reconvened in a closed-door executive session, Greene and Westrate admitted that no fewer than three suspected narcotics traffickers and/or DEA informants or sub-sources were onboard when Flight 103 went down. The revelation was made in the context of the DEA officials' denial that a particular passenger, Jafar, who had been named in an NBC News story as the bomb courier and a DEA informant, had ever worked for or had any contact with the agency.

Sources report that congressional investigators already have evidence showing that Greene and Westrate were lying under oath on a number of critical issues, and that one purpose for having them appear in public session was to lay a perjury trap.

With Pan Am's lawsuit now filed, with the Wise subcommittee scheduled to hold more hearings in January, and with several private investigations still ongoing, it is a sure bet that the Lockerbie scandal will not die.

Earlier this year, syndicated columnist Jack Anderson reported that one of President Bush's first actions in January 1989 was to work out a coverup of the Pan Am scandal with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Investigator Aviv is convinced that eventually the Lockerbie scandal will land at Bush's doorstep. He recently told North New Jersey *Herald* reporter David Kelly, "If we are right—and we are right—this will lead all the way up to the White House. I hate to be the one to make Dan Quayle the next President—but the chips will fall where they may."