

Thornburgh runs for Senate; aides jailed

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Steve Komm

On June 5, just one week after two former top aides received federal prison sentences on cocaine convictions, Attorney General Richard Thornburgh announced that he would leave the Bush administration in late July to run for the U.S. Senate from Pennsylvania. Thornburgh is virtually assured the Republican Party nomination for the Nov. 5 special election to fill the seat left vacant when John Heinz III died in a plane crash in April.

The attorney general, whose ties to a white collar cocaine ring in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania have made him a major liability for the Bush administration, had been urged by both the White House and leading Senate Republicans to leave the Justice Department post to seek the vacant Senate seat, as part of the GOP's effort to recapture some lost ground in the Congress during the 1992 elections. Thornburgh waited nearly two months to announce his decision, in order to clear the decks of some of the scandals that could upset his prospects for winning the November special election.

Drugs and perjury

Among the most egregious of those scandals was the involvement of some of his closest aides in a widespread cocaine ring servicing State House officials, during his two terms as governor of Pennsylvania (1979-87).

On May 30, the U.S. District judge in Scranton sentenced Henry Barr, Thornburgh's former general counsel and executive assistant, to 16 months in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Barr was convicted in a jury trial in February of cocaine use and perjury. Thornburgh testified at that trial and denied that he had any knowledge that his aide was a cocaine user or that Barr had lied to FBI agents conducting security clearance checks. Sources in Pennsylvania have told *EIR* that as early as 1982, Thornburgh had called Barr and a second top aide, Ronald Stern, onto the carpet for their indiscreet drug use while serving as cabinet aides in the State House. If those reports are substantiated, the Barr trial testimony could come back to haunt the outgoing attorney general.

Several days after the Barr sentencing, another former top Thornburgh aide, Richard Guida, was sentenced to 11 months in federal prison for cocaine trafficking. Guida was the deputy state attorney general and chief criminal prosecutor of Pennsylvania during Thornburgh's governorship. According to an April 16 broadcast of "A Current Affair," a television "magazine" show, Guida, while in the Thornburgh



Stepping down: Attorney General Richard Thornburgh.

administration, purchased a pound of pure cocaine from a Harrisburg narcotics trafficker and paid \$15,000 in cash. To avoid a 100-count cocaine-trafficking indictment, Guida "plea bargained" with federal prosecutors, and instead was charged with one count of cocaine distribution.

Among the other scandals that are expected to be aired during the special election campaign, are a series of financial kickbacks involving Thornburgh and top aides, which could also intersect illegal funding of the Nicaraguan Contras and financial links between Thornburgh and New York organized crime families. One of the highlights of these scandals is Thornburgh's close ties to former New York gubernatorial candidate and pharmaceutical magnate Lew Lehrman. Lehrman's political action committee, Citizens for America, has been implicated in questionable financial activities involving the Contras and other "Project Democracy"-backed insurgency movements.

According to reports published in the *Washington Post* on June 6, congressional Democrats are up in arms over the Thornburgh decision to stay on as attorney general until late July, when the Pennsylvania GOP will hold a convention to nominate him for the Senate seat. The Pennsylvania Democrats have already nominated Harris Woford as their candidate. Under Federal Election Commission guidelines, Thornburgh can technically raise funds for his primary election campaign until the August convention, and can then raise funds from the same contributors for the general election. Woford, already the Democratic nominee, cannot raise primary election funds.

President Bush reportedly wants Thornburgh in the attorney general post for the next two months, so that he can lead the campaign to pass the administration's anti-crime package, which would greatly increase the number of federal crimes for which the death penalty can be imposed.