

Lockerbie: Coleman case targets Oliver North network

by Mark Burdman

Trail of the Octopus: From Beirut to Lockerbie—Inside the DIA

by Donald Goddard with Lester K. Coleman
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December 21, 1993 was the fifth anniversary of one of the worst episodes of cold-blooded mass murder of the past couple of decades, the blowing up of the Pan American Flight 103 jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, resulting in the deaths of 270 persons. What makes the event so singular, beyond the scale of murder involved, is the political chicanery and hooliganism of leading Anglo-American powers in the affair. Frantic efforts have been deployed, initiated by former U.S. President George Bush and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher personally, even back in March 1989, to whitewash the role of Syria and Iran in the affair, and to hold Libya unilaterally responsible for the atrocity. At Anglo-American demand, and with French and Russian approval and a Chinese neutrality that has given the Anglo-Americans freedom to act, the U.N. Security Council has taken extraordinary measures against the Libyan regime, in violation of all norms of international law, for failure to hand over two individuals allegedly responsible for the crime. It is not to be excluded, that a "reprisal" attack could be mounted against Qaddafi's Libya in the immediate future.

Lockerbie continues to be a subject of enormous controversy. As 1993 neared its end, intelligence insiders told *EIR* that they anticipated that the coverup initiated by Bush and Thatcher would soon be demolished. Well-informed sources

reported a growing mood among a section of the intelligence establishment in Washington to release material that will reopen the "Syrian track." In the days leading up to Dec. 21, various revelations came out, on Britain's BBC-Four radio and in the London *Sunday Times* and other papers, which focused attention back on the Syrians. According to reports, there are vicious fights within the boardrooms of the company Lonrho, about whether the company should patronize the production of a film which would definitively detail the Syrian-Iranian involvement, and undermine the case of unilateral Libyan responsibility. Dr. Jim Swire, spokesman for the British branch of the "Lockerbie Victims" group of relatives of those killed five years ago, has called for a "full international inquiry" to get to the truth and to end the "hypocrisy created for international political convenience" that has characterized what he called "the Lockerbie scenario" over the past years.

Were the relevant leads to be vigorously pursued, this could have profound effects, in two directions. One would be to expose that faction of Anglo-American intelligence which has cynically played with the deaths of 270 people—including, it should be stressed, several U.S. intelligence agents who were on the plane—to protect the shady relations between the western secret services and drug traffickers and arms merchants in the Middle East. It has not escaped the attention of certain astute observers, that the mid-October to mid-December 1988 playing-out of the Lockerbie tragedy coincides, more or less exactly, with the dates of Lyndon LaRouche's indictment and conviction in the notorious Alexandria, Virginia federal "railroad." Such observers treat as credible the thesis that a full and honest investigation into Lockerbie would show that those culpable of covering up the true story of this mass murder, are part of the same apparatus

that arranged the frameup and incarceration of LaRouche.

At the same time, a truthful accounting for those deaths would put deserved pressure again on the Hafez al-Assad regime in Damascus, at a time when it is doing everything in its power to torpedo the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organization accord of mid-September and is continuing to suck the blood out of neighboring Lebanon.

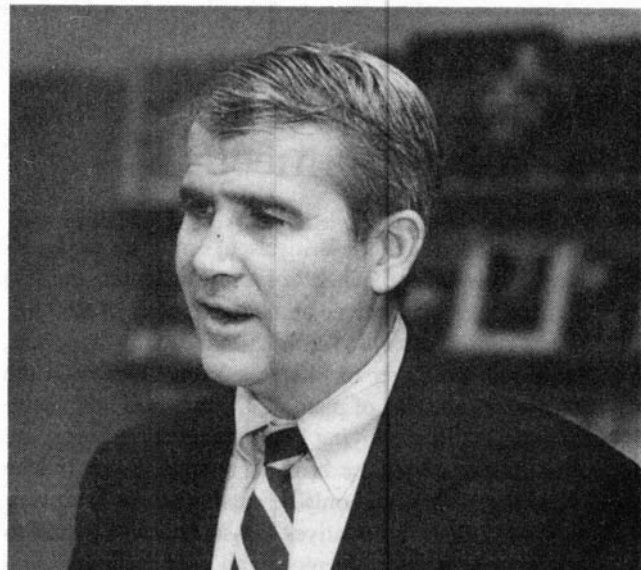
The biggest scandal in the 20th century?

In “the Lockerbie scenario,” the story of former Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) operative Lester Coleman looms large. *Trail of the Octopus* is authored by British-born, former *New York Times* writer Donald Goddard, basing himself largely on Coleman’s account. If as much as one-quarter of what is reported in the book is true, the Lockerbie affair indeed emerges as potentially as “the most major scandal in the history of government in the 20th century,” to quote Bert Ammerman, representing the American Victims of Flight 103, the U.S. branch of the advocacy group for the relatives of the innocents killed over Lockerbie.

Curiously, the handling of the book may itself emerge as one key feature of the scandal: Only five days before the Sept. 27 release of *Trail of the Octopus* by Bloomsbury Publishers, a grand jury in New York indicted Coleman on eight counts of perjury. A livid book review in the London *Sunday Times* soon thereafter demanded that, based on the perjury indictments, Bloomsbury should have withheld release of the book. Journalist David Leppard got so carried away with himself, that he ignored a couple of technical details, first that Coleman has only been indicted but not convicted of perjury, and second, that Coleman, in any case, is not the author of the book. (Indicative of how hot the Lockerbie story still is, and how shaky is the “lone Libyan assassin” line, Leppard himself thereafter wrote in the Dec. 19 *Sunday Times*, purporting to detail new findings that would indicate an East German Stasi-Syrian responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing, which might provide “the smoking gun of an official coverup,” and point to a “secret deal” by the British Foreign Office and U.S. State Department with Syria.)

In evaluating Goddard’s write-up of Coleman’s story, it should be noted that the DIA has officially admitted, in a signed affidavit, that Coleman had indeed been in its employ, although it did not admit—or deny—the veracity of the specific elements of Coleman’s story.

The perjury indictments came on top of the fact that Coleman had already been arrested on a passport violation charge, concocted by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and likely other government agencies in the spring of 1990, as the controversy over Lockerbie was being fought out in the U.S. media and behind closed doors in courts and government offices. Increasingly fearing for his and his family’s lives as the “octopus” made it known that it had him in its target sights, Coleman later fled to Sweden, the first American to seek asylum there since the Vietnam War. Un-



Oliver North: His buddy Monzer al-Kassar, a Syrian wheeler-dealer and CIA asset, helped to get the bomb planted on Pan American Flight 103, according to Coleman’s account.

der intensive U.S. Department of Justice and related pressure, he was denied formal refugee status by the Swedish government earlier this year, and is still “on the run.”

North and the DEA ‘sting’

Obviously, Goddard and Coleman have touched some raw nerves. To this date, no American publishing house has been willing to touch the book with a ten-foot pole.

The essence of Coleman’s story, as he relates it to Goddard, is the following:

He was brought into the DIA in the early 1980s. In the latter 1980s, after having done some crucial work in Lebanon, he was assigned to run a penetration-and-observation operation of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) activities in Cyprus. According to Coleman, the DEA had a complicated “play everybody against everybody else strategy” to deal with the massive amount of Syrian and/or Lebanese heroin trafficking into the United States. The DEA was running a “controlled drug sting,” extending from Lebanon into Cyprus, then into Frankfurt, Germany and London, and on into the United States, whereby drugs were *allowed* to be transported into the United States, ostensibly with the purpose of “stinging” U.S.-based drug traffickers in Detroit, Los Angeles, and other cities.

In the course of his work, Coleman inadvertently stumbled onto some things that were to become relevant, to him and others, after the destruction of the Pan Am Flight 103 jet. He was privy to a crucial piece of evidence that would lend credibility to the thesis that the terrorists were able to place a bomb on Flight 103 in Frankfurt, because Pan Am-Frankfurt enjoyed a “protected” status, in the context of the “controlled drug sting” operation. In Coleman’s view, as

British victims charge Syria-Iran connection

Dr. Jim Swire, M.D., the British spokesman for the Lockerbie victims, whose daughter Flora was among the 270 who died, was interviewed about the atrocity in the Dec. 20, 1993 *International Herald Tribune*. He was asked, "You point the finger of blame at Syria. Where do the two Libyans accused of planting the bomb fit in?" Swire responded: "I'm not saying I don't think the Libyans are guilty. They need to be brought to trial, but it is also evident that they would only be small minnows in a very big pond. I, and the relatives I associate with, want to know who originated the plot, who paid for it and who organized it."

Swire charged, "The West does not, in fact, want the two Libyans brought to trial." Asked why, he said, "Because if they were found guilty, we would immediate-

ly clamor for those behind them to be identified and prosecuted. If they were found innocent, we would ask for the criminal investigation to start again. I don't think either of those alternatives is palatable to the West because it's my belief, based on a good deal of evidence, both circumstantial and solid, that this act was planned by the Syrian-based terrorist organization, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command."

Asked, "Do you think it is true that Iran paid the Syrians to carry out the bombing?" Swire responded, "I believe so. After the shooting down of an Iranian airliner by the U.S. cruiser *Vincennes* in 1988, Teheran Radio broadcast a vitriolic warning that the skies would rain blood."

Asked, "Why do you think that western governments are trying to protect Syria? Because of the Middle East peace process?" He responded: "Yes. Some people have said to me, 'Don't you think you ought to pipe down, because you might upset the efforts to make peace in the Middle East?' My answer to that is that a peace founded on a fallacy won't last."

further elaborated by author Goddard after his own independent, corroborative research, the *modus operandi* of the Lockerbie bombing was that the Iranians and Syrians, acting with the help of advice from the Syrian wheeler-and-dealer (and CIA asset) Monzer al-Kassar, were able to penetrate the "controlled sting" and have the bomb planted. The Iranians were intent on seeking revenge for the July 1988 shooting down ("by mistake") of an Iranian civilian Airbus by the U.S. cruiser *Vincennes*, killing 290 Iranians.

The on-the-ground infrastructure for the terrorism was pieced together by the Syrian-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) of Ahmed Jibril, which had an elaborate support apparatus in the Frankfurt area, parts of which had even been raided and dismantled by German police in the weeks leading up to the Lockerbie bombing, beginning in October 1988. PFLP-GC operatives were able to place a bomb in the luggage of a Lebanese-origin DEA courier, or "mule," named Khalid Nazir Jafaar, who unwittingly brought the bomb aboard.

The matter of where the bomb was placed has become a crucial aspect of the Lockerbie story, and coverup. As Goddard stresses at many points, the "Libya authorship" story is largely dependent on concocted evidence which would point to the bomb having been placed in Malta by Libyan agents, into luggage that was sent to Frankfurt, and then re-routed successfully onto Pan Am Flight 103. As Goddard asserts, accurately in this author's view, it defies all credibility that terrorists capable of planning and carrying out something so deadly as Lockerbie would be so careless and amateurish as

to rely on a piece of luggage *twice* being routed onto two different aircraft.

Although differing from Coleman's interpretation in certain crucial respects, two other investigators are cited by Goddard as having independently come to many of the same conclusions. These are Israeli security expert Yuval Aviv and Pan Am lawyer James M. Shaughnessy, the latter having had the task of fending off charges that Pan Am had been criminally negligent in failing to provide adequate security for Pan Am Flight 103. In his legal counterattack, Shaughnessy developed evidence, highly convincing as it is presented by Goddard, that it was, rather, U.S. government malfeasance and questionable activity that allowed the bombing to occur.

In fact, the combined accounts of Coleman, Aviv, and Shaughnessy provide considerable evidence that the U.S. government, or at least high-level agencies or individuals within the U.S. government and intelligence apparatus, were absolutely aware not only that a terrorist strike was being planned against a U.S. airline for that time, but that it was, specifically, the Dec. 21, 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 that was being targeted. One enigma not fully explained is that U.S. citizens traveling from Moscow, who would have made a connecting flight at Frankfurt to return to the United States for the Christmas holidays, were warned against doing so by the U.S. Embassy, thereby saving these lives.

What is never adequately resolved by Goddard's book, and is a mystery that may never be resolved, is *why* elements of the U.S. government and/or security apparatus would not

have intervened to stop this flight, knowing what they knew. The hints provided by the book, though, are absolutely alarming, and have to do with the "special relations" developed over some years by the DEA and CIA with such "assets" or "capabilities" as Monzer al-Kassar, the buddy of Lt. Col. Oliver North in the Iran-Contra arms deals. Al-Kassar had such privileged relations with the friends of North within U.S. agencies, that he was privy to the kind of special information and insights that would have enabled him to provide the PFLP-GC with crucial tipoffs for the terrorism, while being protected at the same time by such friends across the Atlantic.

George Bush whines

Where the real scandal lies in the Lockerbie affair is in the gigantic coverup that has been mounted to hide the truth. Immediately following the Dec. 21 disaster, the PFLP-GC/Syria-Iran track was generally accepted as the right one to follow by the official Scottish inquiry team and by others. All this changed abruptly, Goddard points out, with a March 1989 telephone call between President Bush and Prime Minister Thatcher, when it was decided to shift gears and move attention away from Syria. This was, of course, well over a year *before* Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, after which the wooing of Syria into the "anti-Gulf coalition" mandated full exoneration of Syria. After August 1990, Bush was to whine that Syria had taken a "bum rap" in the Lockerbie affair.

The most sickening parts of Goddard and Coleman's account, are those that demonstrate how the Syrian track was covered up. Ultimately, Coleman's own conclusion is that more was at stake than just wooing Syria as a "peace partner" in the Middle East, but that there was also an attempt to whitewash the whole Syrian drug nexus, in part to prepare for the succession of President Hafez al-Assad by his drug-trafficking brother Rifaat. Rifaat's image would desperately require a whitewash.

Coleman's explanation may be true, but hardly sufficient. Syrian drug trafficking is an essential component of the prevailing "global system," providing a vast supply of narcotics into U.S. markets, and a bundle of revenues for various "slush funds." To explain Lockerbie at a higher level, one has to understand Syrian drug trafficking, and the Syrian oligarchies, as an integral part of the plans and operations of a powerful and contaminated section of U.S. intelligence, typified by Oliver North and his buddies in the Project Democracy/"neo-conservative"/Anti-Defamation League nexus. That Henry Kissinger so often publicly states his admiration for Hafez al-Assad is emblematic of this. Many aspects of the "Syrian connection" were, in fact, documented by a November 1992 U.S. House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice report, entitled "Syria, President Bush and Drugs—the Administration's Next Iraqgate," which Goddard alludes to in an appendix.

While from the evidence presented it is easy to feel com-

passion when Coleman describes the U.S. Justice Department/FBI/intelligence agency apparatus pursuing him, we would have to go beyond his description of "the octopus" as "that ruthlessly powerful, self-protective oligarchy of senior intelligence, military and law-enforcement bureaucrats who were convinced they knew best, regardless of what the politicians had to say, and who cynically manipulated the machinery of government to cover their tracks." We would have to look at the various "establishment syndicates" at the helms of the larger banks, foundations, and trusts which actually define the policies that the Oliver Norths of this world then carry out.

To get to that higher level, an amazing coincidence should be kept in mind whenever one thinks of Lockerbie. The relevant dates for Lockerbie are from Oct. 14, 1988, when German police authorities first began cracking down on Syrian-linked terrorists in the Frankfurt area, and the Dec. 21 bombing as such. Those dates almost exactly correspond to the "LaRouche case": On Oct. 14, LaRouche was indicted, and on Dec. 16, he was convicted, after one of the shortest such trials in history.

The LaRouche railroad

Extensive research over the years has shown that it was an important faction in the Anglo-American intelligence establishment, typified by the controllers of North and the friends of Kissinger, who were behind the LaRouche "railroad." It is of more than passing interest that late 1988 was the time of the presidential transition of former CIA head George Bush. An "octopus" capable of the travesty of railroading LaRouche, it could easily be argued, is capable of doing anything, perhaps even sacrificing 270 innocent victims—including several of its own intelligence professionals—for the sake of preserving certain "arrangements." And vice versa.

The "red dye" runs through the person of Oliver North, who was one of the operatives deployed against LaRouche. Since Coleman profiles himself, and implicitly at least some high-level elements in the DIA, as opposed to the Iran-Contra deals, there are some useful leads in the book about North's criminal international connections, which take us into the inner circles of the directors of Syrian drug trafficking. Coleman claims that one of his assignments was to blow apart an Iran-Contra arms apparatus that involved North, U.S. televangelist

have been the individual, acting in the
agent in Lebanon, who blew the Iran-Contra story in November 1986, by leaking information of North's activities to the Lebanese *al-Shiraa* newspaper, and thereby triggering the Iran-Contra controversy.

Were Lester Coleman to get a good hearing, Oliver North's ambitions to be the next U.S. senator from Virginia would undoubtedly be shattered. And plenty more "trees in the forest" would begin to fall.