

Behind the GOP/FBI Vendetta vs. Murtha

by Anita Gallagher and Jeff Steinberg

The proposed shutdown of the National Drug Intelligence Center in mid-May by GOP and FBI elements, which was subsequently blown up by the national media, clearly demonstrated that this vital drug intelligence facility had been taken hostage in a hate campaign directed against Democratic Rep. John Murtha, the leading opponent of the Cheney-Bush Iraq War, in whose Pennsylvania district the NDIC is located.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), a former FBI agent, proposed to shut down the NDIC facility in Johnstown, by offering an amendment in early May, to strip its funding from the Intelligence Appropriations bill on the House floor. The White House, which had praised the NDIC's work on Operation Twin Oceans in 2006, proposed in 2007 to shut it down.

The idea of shutting down drug intelligence, in the middle of a crisis of drug proliferation in the United States, and a massive expansion of heroin production out of Afghanistan since the U.S. invasion and occupation of that country, raises questions, such as: What side of the war on drugs is the White House really on, since drugs and terrorism are recognized by every competent authority in the world as completely integrated issues?

Highly placed military and intelligence sources have emphasized to *EIR* the significance of Murtha's courageous, and correct criticism of Bush's failed policies in Iraq and Afghanistan—all the more effective, since they come from a lifelong champion of U.S. military and defense capabilities, who has worked for them in a bipartisan manner in the Congress. Since Murtha's Nov. 17, 2005 introduction of a House resolution calling for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, Murtha's increasingly public role, in the Congress, within the Democratic Party, and in the public media, as the "face" of the opposition to the Cheney-Bush policy, and his direct advocacy of ending the U.S. occupation of Iraq, by a cutoff of funds for additional troops, and enforcement of military preparedness standards, has threatened to rally the Democrats to act to end the Iraq War, as the voters mandated them to do in November 2006.

The White House has utterly failed in its attempt to use the Karl Rove tactic of painting Murtha as a "liberal pinko." Murtha retired in 1990 as a colonel in the U.S. Marines after a 37-year career. Everyone in Congress knows that the Pennsylvania Democrat is the go-to person for the active-duty military, and has chosen to act to save the U.S. military before it is chewed up and destroyed in unwinnable wars. The high regard the military and defense leadership holds for Murtha was evident in his home base, Johnstown, on May 31, at the



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Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.) has earned the wrath of the Republican Administration for his leadership against its Iraq War disaster, and his long-standing fight against Justice Department and FBI corruption and criminality. Here, Murtha (right) receives the Profile in Courage Award from Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library in Boston in 2006.

“Showcase for Commerce,” which the Congressman organized to facilitate national defense contractors networking with qualified entrepreneurial firms and the region’s workforce. Every major defense contractor was there, knowing that Murtha is the point of resistance to the Administration’s military pursuit of militarily unwinnable goals.

From Abscam to the Present

Representative Murtha has been a target of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for more than 27 years. He was targeted as part of the FBI’s original Abscam investigation, a “sting” operation directed at Democratic constituency-based Congressmen, who opposed deregulation of the industrial economy and other schemes against “the lower 80%” of family income-brackets. To this day, the press and right wing persist in slandering Murtha with Abscam, as if he had been indicted, when he was not, despite the elaborate attempt.

Later, Murtha went on the offensive with the Murtha-McDade bill, co-sponsored by Rep. Joseph McDade (R-Pa.), which was passed by the House in 1998. The fight around the bill exposed false prosecutions of elected officials whose concern was the general welfare, and placed penalties on those who brought malicious prosecutions. The FBI was furious when a bipartisan majority of the House passed Murtha-McDade in 1998, which placed serious constraints on the Justice Department, the FBI, and other Federal law enforcement agencies, to prevent the continuing pattern of official criminality which targeted constituency leaders not under the control of the establishment—including

ing, prominently, Democratic statesman Lyndon LaRouche.

The White House point man for the attack, former FBI-man Rogers, won the House seat vacated by Democrat Debbie Stabenow’s successful run for the Senate in 2000, by 88 votes. Previously, while spending five years in the Michigan state senate, Rogers sponsored a bill requiring students’ voter registration addresses to match the address on their driver’s license. Since most students’ drivers’ licenses listed their parents home address, many students were disenfranchised. Michigan also has a law that prohibits any first-time voter (think, “students”) from voting absentee. Without this vote suppression scheme, it is highly doubtful Rogers would be a Congressman today. Other law enforcement sources say that it is quite rare that Rogers, who remained in the FBI only five years, would have quit so soon after going through all the training. Rogers is also a member of the Society of Former FBI Special Agents, one of the groups which vigorously lobbied against Murtha-McDade.

The NDIC Is Indispensable

The National Drug Intelligence Center, which employs 400 agents based in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, produces an annual National Drug Threat Assessment Report. Since the majority of drugs in the United States come from abroad, NDIC’s annual drug assessment provides a crucial *tour d’horizon* of where the drugs originate; where their entry points are; who runs the drug distribution systems; and where the major centers for each illegal drug are located.

NDIC’s 2007 National Drug Threat Assessment is a no-holds-barred assessment of gains being made by major drug-trafficking organizations, and a frank appraisal that illegal drugs are having more and more of an effect on the United States.

EIR’s interviews with professional intelligence people found nothing but praise for the NDIC.

After Sept. 11, 2001, NDIC made its Document Exploitation (Doc Ex) program available to other government agencies, assisting them in rapidly processing huge amounts of data to ferret out important terrorist leads.

When the White House Sang a Different Tune

“I know that this [Operation Twin Oceans] was a serious, time consuming undertaking by your agency [NDIC], and I truly appreciate the efforts of everyone involved. . . . Thanks for the hard work.”

—Executive Office of President George W. Bush, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, commenting in a 2006 letter to the NDIC on its role in Operation Twin Oceans, which seized \$70 million in drug assets.

In 2005, the NDIC was a principal contributor to the U.S. Money Laundering Threat Assessment, the first government-wide analysis of money laundering in the United States.

In 2006, the NDIC conducted 60 Doc Ex missions to investigate illegal drug trafficking, money laundering, and terrorism threatening U.S. national security. In 2006, NDIC also conducted a series of missions in support of Operation Twin Oceans, successfully raiding a drug-trafficking organization that transported multi-ton quantities of cocaine for at least five drug rings. The total value of the seizures of property, ships, vehicles, and bank accounts, is estimated at \$70 million.

The claims that NDIC is redundant within the group of anti-drug agencies (the Department of Justice, the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency, to name just a few), and that intelligence can be gathered by the El Paso (Texas) Intelligence

Center, are false. The NDIC was created in 1993, *explicitly to remedy* the problem that the activities of all the organizations involved in anti-drug activity lacked overall intelligence-sharing and coordination. That is the mission of the NDIC. The El Paso center, established in 1974—almost two decades before NDIC—has never done this job; its intelligence function is operational, as befits the entity manning a front-line drug entry point into the United States.

Given that the NDIC headquarters in Johnstown doubles as the Continuity of Government Headquarters for the Department of Justice, NDIC's \$39 million budget is money well-spent—as opposed to the estimated \$700 billion the Bush Administration has squandered to date, transforming Iraq and Afghanistan into ungovernable zones where terrorism and illegal drugs proliferate.