[Posted 13 November 2002] Just before Labor Day 2002, I was on the road to Texas. I had to visit my employer's Houston office, and didn't want to fly because our government was looking for a reason to start an oil war against Iraq. (At the time I didn't realize the next target was Bali, to drag Australians into the fray.) So I felt safer in my car than in a plane.

I planned to see some sights on the drive south to make the trip less monotonous. One of the "tourist" sites on my list was Mena, Arkansas, to see its famous drug-trafficking airport. This is where some of my Democratic friends get irritated with me -- when I mention the Mena connection between Bill Clinton and George Bush the Elder. Clinton was involved in Contra cocaine trafficking, although not controlling it like Bush. A portion of the cocaine was flown into the US through the airport in Mena when Clinton was governor. Some of this is mentioned in Gary Webb's famous book *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras, and the Crack Cocaine Explosion*, but an acquaintance has advised me to read Terry Reed and John Cumming's book *Compromised: Clinton, Bush, and the CIA*, for more information on the specifics of Mena's end of the operation.

"Anyway Mena has an airport and it looks from the outside like an ordinary, normal airport. The thing that separates Mena's airport from any other is the fact that there are row upon row of hangars --buildings which house aircraft refitting facilities. Now aircraft refitting is an industry that is in demand by two principal paying customers. One of them is the CIA, and the other one are drug smugglers."

- Mark Swaney, 1991 interview on WBAI, Pacifica radio, New York City

Now don't get me wrong -- I'm for drug legalization, and I have a number of good reasons for thinking that way. However, I have a problem with a government that wants to lock people up for using a product that the government itself is supplying.

As I drove through western Arkansas and approached Mena, I noticed how rustic and impoverished the countryside was. Then came Mena itself -- a run-down little town with a lot of activity for a population of less than 6,000 people. I stopped at a convenience store to ask where the airport was. After a man gave me directions, I asked him if the airport was very busy these days. He seemed to think awfully hard for such a simple question before telling me no. Trying to let him know that I was a historical tourist, I said, "Not since Ollie North stopped his operation, huh?" Curiously enough, he just gave me a nervous laugh.

I was rather surprised when I approached the airport and found a threatening sign, pictured here. So I took several pictures as I'd originally intended, and hit the road to Texas. Little did I know that the CIA is probably still using the airport. Well, the excerpt below can explain it better than I can, and so will the pictures I took that day...
"Now Mena has the second or third largest --I don't know which, but one of the largest aircraft refitting facilities in the United States. And as such it was --long before the Nicaraguan episode happened, it was a base of CIA covert operation and remains to this very minute a base of CIA covert operation."

- Mark Swaney, 1991 interview on WBAI, Pacifica radio, New York City

Here's a larger excerpt from the same autumn 1991 WBAI-New York radio interview (quoted above) with Mark Swaney:

Paul DeRienzo: Buddy Young, let's keep his name in mind because I want to come back to him. Let's jump now to the sight in Arkansas that was used as the landing sight, the airport in Arkansas in the town of Mena Arkansas --that was determinates of a lot of these Iran-Contra resupply flights.

Mark Swaney: Yes, in fact Terry Reed has stated in that same article that you have that it was the "hub" of the Contra resupply effort. Many people are not aware that Arkansas was very heavily and very deeply involved in the Iran-Contra affair all during the time that Governor Clinton ???? Governor of the state. And there were numerous stories written about it in the press. Well the story about Mena is that Mena is a very small town in the middle of the the Ouachita mountains in Southwestern Arkansas and not coincidentally it happens to be in Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt's district, the Third Congressional district. John Paul Hammerschmidt just happens to be one of George Bush's very closest friends. He was George Bush's Presidential Campaign Manager for Bush's campaign in '76 and again in 1980. The two people are very close. Anyway Mena has an airport and it looks from the outside like an ordinary, normal airport. The thing that separates Mena's airport from any other is the fact that there are row upon row of hangars --buildings which house aircraft refitting facilities. Now aircraft refitting is an industry that is in demand by two principal paying customers. One of them is the CIA, and the other one are drug smugglers. And the reason is, is because if you're a CIA guy and you're going to do covert actions overseas -- they're almost entirely relying on air transport of some kind. Particularly if you're going to covertly resupply an army that's over a thousand miles away.

Paul DeRienzo: Hasenfus' plane was based there.
MARK SWANEY: Pardon me.

PAUL DeRIENZO: Hasenfus' plane, the plane that was shot down, was based in Mena Arkansas.

MARK SWANEY: That plane was based there formally before Barry Seal [Adler Berriman Seal] was murdered just a few months before it was shot down. That was Barry Seal's own personal airplane. But anyway what you need to do, if you're a CIA or a drug smuggler is you need an airplane that can do things that normally airplanes of the civilian variety are not allowed to do. Things like have cargo doors that open to the inside of the airplane so that you can make in-flight drops - so that you can drop things out of the airplane while it's flying -- which is illegal on a commercial or civilian type of aircraft. You need to do things like install advanced navigational equipment sometimes even ???. You need things like roller matts to put down on the floor so that you can roll the crates forward in the fuselage of the airplane to kick them out. You need to be able to modify a civilian aircraft that is not legally allowed to have such capability so that it does have those capabilities.

PAUL DeRIENZO: And this was done in Mena -- a smalltown airport.

MARK SWANEY: Right. Now Mena has the second or third largest --I don't know which, but one of the largest aircraft refitting facilities in the United States. And as such it was -long before the Nicaruguan episode happened, it was a base of CIA covert operation and remains to this very minute a base of CIA covert operation.

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"I don't know what the CIA's job is, other than selling drugs and weapons."

- "Al", former CIA agent, 1997

Pam remembers Gary Webb

[Posted 14 December 2004]

The news of Gary Webb's "suicide" a few days ago was a blow to investigative journalists and truth seekers everywhere. Although some speculated that perhaps he was depressed over his treatment by his old employer The San Jose Mercury News, after they killed his 1990s newspaper stories on the CIA's role in the crack cocaine trade, it seems unlikely. Webb was able to take that story and spin it into a successful book, and the CIA later admitted that evidence of their own corroborated Webb's claims. And Webb's bad treatment by that particular employer was almost a decade ago. Most likely, Webb was "suicided," another victim of the cheesy CIA hit man squad that is the Bush family. Aside from the elder George Bush being involved with the JFK assassination back in the 60s, a number of other people have committed "suicide" at convenient times for the Bush family, such as James Howard Hatfield, author of the book Fortunate Son, or Margie Schoedinger, the African-American woman originally suing George W. Bush for drug rape. But today isn't the day to talk about scumbags like the Bush family. Instead, Webb should be remembered for his courage, and most of all his incredible hard work. I couldn't believe the size of the book Dark alliance when a friend first gave it to me. It was larger than a bible, crammed full of facts that Webb personally investigated. He'd interviewed everyone significant -- Norwin Meneses, "Freeway" Ricky Ross, both from their jail cells -- even people he couldn't interview.
In an effort to get an interview with Danilo Blandon, the one major drug dealer that Webb couldn't reach due to Blandon's DEA informant status, Webb convinced an attorney to ask his questions of Blandon while Blandon was on the witness stand, much to the horror of FBI agents who didn't want the story uncovered.

I even asked a former military/intelligence man who claimed to be involved in the Central American operations at the time to read the book, since he claimed to know about much of it first hand. (He said that he was involved in capturing Noriega before the US military arrived, and that his military file is so highly classified that only the level of US President could declassify it.) After he finally read the book and I asked his opinion of it, he had no complaints -- said he already knew all about it because he lived it. He did say that in a few cases, he thought Webb made assumptions that didn't necessarily go quite so far in reality, but obviously he didn't get to personally interview all of the people who Webb had access to.

The volume and quality of Webb's work was outstanding, unassailable. That's why the mainstream press paid him little attention -- giving the book more attention would encourage people to read it, and the right-wingers in charge of the press these days sure didn't want people seeing the amount of evidence Webb had to back up his claims.

And here's something curious that happened just after Webb's death. I wasn't going to mention it, because the site was only down for a day. However the news of Webb's "suicide" has now convinced me that it was no accident. This particular page, mena.pamrotella.com, was changed Sunday to include numeric references to the individual photos -- the | 01 | 02 | links that you see up above. I inspected the page after I changed it, and it seemed to be fine. However, when I checked the page Monday for a new link to the Main Caverns Gallery in its navigation bar menu, this page had changed to the Peace (Flower) Gallery. At first I thought that maybe I'd made a mistake, but I do remember going over the page after it was changed Sunday, and it seemed to be OK. Then after hearing of Webb's "suicide," I thought that maybe the CIA changed it. Perhaps this was the weekend they were scheduled to start attacking people who had dared reveal their dealings at Mena, or perhaps they wanted to put flowers on the page as a sort of symbolic memorial to Webb. Who knows -- it could have been Webb from beyond the grave, signaling his passage & memorializing people who had died in the Contra/cocaine wars, and the writing of its history. I'm sure if there's a place where souls meet after they pass on, Webb will be hard at work, interviewing Barry Seal right away...

I'm grateful for Gary Webb, one of few men brave and dedicated enough to seek out the truth and give us our true history.

Links on Gary Webb

As usual, rens.com and whatreallyhappened.com are following this story (although I didn't read the news over the weekend, and first heard about it on WBAI -- the Pacifica network of radio stations has followed Webb's story since it broke as a newspaper series in the San Jose Mercury News back in '96), while the mainstream press largely ignores it. I'll copy some of the links from rens and wrh over the next few days, to save them for my readership over future months and years, but in the meantime, here's an old interview with Webb:

http://www.wethepeople.la/webb2.htm

This is Michael Ruppert's article on Gary Webb. Ruppert is a kindred spirit to Webb -- he is a former LAPD narcotics detective who witnessed his CIA girlfriend arranging huge cocaine shipments for the government. Like Webb's phone message slip from a
CIA drug dealer’s wife, this was "the big one" -- Ruppert's defining moment in his career. Ruppert turned toward investigative reporting, and remains one of the best sources on the TRUTHFUL politics of drugs and oil in this country.

Evidence Begins To Indicate Gary Webb Was Murdered

A Personal Experience with Gary Webb (this is a lady he referenced in his book)

Links on Mena & the Contra/cocaine wars

http://www.drugwar.com/cv7.shtm
http://www.idfiles.com/mine-sweeper.htm
http://vander.hashish.com/articles/drugs/crimesmena.html
http://www.larouchepub.com/lar/1996/foreword_1st_bush.html
http://www.madcowprod.com/Big2ndIssue!/mysteriousmenaa.html
http://mysite.users2.50megs.com/coverups/arkansas.html
http://www.wakeupmag.co.uk/articles/ciadrugscenamer.htm
http://www.wethepeople.la/seal2.htm
http://www.ncoic.com/clinton.htm
http://www.larouchespeaks.net/pages/bush_dope_6.html
http://www.assumption.edu/WebVAX/Nation/Cockburn24Feb92.html
http://www.wakeupmag.co.uk/articles/ciadrugsclinton.htm

http://www.assumption.edu/WebVAX/Mena/Cummings25Mar96.html

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