Tucked away in the western part of Arkansas is a little town known as Mena. A town of 5,400 people that harbored the airport for one of the busiest drug smuggling operations in the world. When a C-123K military cargo plane crashed in Nicaragua on October 5, 1986 with weapons and CIA employees on board, it was discovered that the plane and its contents came from the Mena airport.

The entire incident unraveled what became known as the Iran-Contra scandal. Mena was used as a training ground for the contras and a pipeline for illegal drug smuggling.

It all started in 1984 when Congress cut off funding for the Nicaraguan resistance. CIA station chief in Costa Rica, Joe Fernandez, sent a confidential message to the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force), authorizing them to seek "alternative funds". They were told that they would have no interference from authorities if they tried to enter the U.S. by air or sea. The alternative funds would be in the form of drugs for weapons.

Key operatives in Iran-Contra were George Bush, Oliver North, Dewey Clarridge, John Pointdexter and Caspar Weinberger. The entire operation however, would have to have bi-partisan efforts. This would require the cooperation of former CIA operative and then Governor, Bill Clinton.

Cocaine was obtained from Colombia and moved to Panama where it was protected by Panamanian defense forces. Next, drugs were moved through Costa Rica, where the shipments were personally guarded by the Minister of Public Security. The final destination was U.S. territory. The flights were handled by the FBI and CIA and met no resistance.

The major traffic point was Mena, Arkansas, where the weapons production and training of Contras took place, and where shipment of guns and trained Contras originated. Planes returning from Central America would be carrying cocaine. It was easy to load drugs on the planes that returned to the U.S. after delivering weapons to the Contras. The distribution within the United States was handled by the Mafia.

In order to have a free license for such activity, they would have to have the blessings of the highest office in the state of Arkansas. That would come from Bill Clinton, then Governor. Clinton who had been a CIA operative since his days at Oxford University, put his seal of approval on the operation, but not without a price. Clinton made deals to launder CIA money through his scam loan agency, Arkansas Development and Finance Authority. In return, he retained 10% of all the money laundered, and through the ADFA financed local companies, including the Park-O-Meter company in Russelville, Arkansas, to manufacture guns for the Contras.

The CIA chose Arkansas because it was like the banana republic where politicians could be bought for money. It was a state with a single party and no opposition. Anything could be achieved with money. In fact, the Arkansas Crime Syndicate, headed by Bill Clinton, became so deeply involved, that the CIA became concerned that they would be exposed.

**KEY PLAYERS**

Drug king pin, Adler B. (Barry) Seal was a key player at Mena. He made more than $50 million smuggling drugs into the United States from South America between 1977 and 1986. He became a key witness in the
federal government's war on the powerful Colombian cocaine cartel. His C-123K cargo plane that crashed in Nicaragua, played a major role in exposing the Iran-Contra affair. Seal used the Mena airport for storage of planes and repair.

In 1984, Seal turned Government informer after being indicted in Florida on smuggling quaaludes and laundering money. In March of that year, Seal struck a deal with the Justice Department and the DEA to work under cover. He made four trips to Nicaragua that year, allegedly to document the complicity in cocaine trafficking.

Seal acquired the C-123K he dubbed the "Fat Lady", in June 1984. The purchase of the cargo plane was for a DEA undercover operation that ultimately involved the CIA. This produced the first documented evidence of the communist Sandinista government's involvement in cocaine trafficking. Seal agreed to have hidden cameras installed on the plane. This led to photos of key Nicaraguan government officials loading the plane with cocaine.

Seal was a trusted courier for cartel leader Jorge Ochoa-Vasquez, who Seal said was pioneering a new cocaine distribution route through Nicaragua with the help of the Sandinistas. The resulting sting operation made drug enforcement history and blew Seal's cover as an undercover informant. A $500,000 contract on Seal's life soon followed. On Feb. 19, 1986, Seal was getting out of his white Cadillac in the parking lot of the Salvation Army Community Treatment Center in Baton Rouge when he was shot to death by a Colombian wielding a small machine-gun. Seal was murdered shortly before he was expected to testify about the Nicaraguan sting operation against powerful Colombian drug czars under indictment in Miami.

Sharlene Wilson was another key figure at Mena. Wilson flew cocaine from Mena to a pickup point in Texas. Other drugs, she and others say, are stuffed into chickens for shipping around the country. Wilson also serves as "the lady with the snow" at "toga parties" attended, she reports, by Bill Clinton.

THE LAUNDRY BANK

Most of the drug money had to be laundered. There would be no better way to do it than at Mena's First National Bank. Realizing a small gold mine from the drug smuggling operations, Mochtar and James Riady purchased the bank in 1985. Now part of the Chinese Lippo Group, millions of dollars could be washed without scrutiny. Mochtar had first hand experience at this, as he built his financial empire with gun and drug running in the East Indies before World War II.

THE BAG MEN

It was during Clinton's first bid for office that we find Jerry Parks and Vince Foster making numerous trips between Little Rock and the Mena airport. Parks, a Little Rock private investigator, was hired by Vince Foster to head up Clinton's security detail at the Clinton campaign headquarters. Foster himself, was a partner with Hillary in the Rose Law firm. Clinton's run for the presidency would require lots of cash that could be used for any number of payoffs to top officials and other illicit activity. Shortly after Jerry Park's murder, Parks wife related one instance to the London Telegraph....

"In 1991, Mrs. Parks discovered what must have been hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash in the boot of her husband's Lincoln car after he had made a trip to Mena airport in western Arkansas with Foster."

"It was all in $100 bills wrapped in string, layer after layer," she said. "It was so full I had to sit on the trunk [boot] to get it shut again. I took the money and threw it in his lap, and said 'Are you running drugs?' Jerry said that Vince had paid him $1,000 cash for each trip; he didn't know what they were doing, and he didn't care to know; he told me to forget what I'd seen."
According to the Parks family, Jerry was keeping a file on all of this and other illicit activity. Shortly after he was murdered, gangland style, a team of police officers - including federal agents from the FBI, the Secret Service, the IRS and the CIA - searched Parks house, taking everything they could find. Parks's computer was purged by an expert, and 130 tapes of telephone conversations were confiscated.

MURDER AND COVER UP

On August 23, 1987 two boys were found dead on a railroad tracks near Mena. The bodies were Kevin Ives, 17 years old and his friend, Don Henry, 16 years old. Their deaths at the time were ruled accidental by Clinton-appointed state medical examiner, Dr. Fahmy Malak. The presumption was, that the boys fell asleep on the tracks and the train ran over them. What initially appeared to be a grossly incompetent investigation was actually an orchestrated cover-up. Residents reported small, low-flying airplanes coming in at slow speeds over the tracks in the middle of the night with their lights off just prior to revving up and flying away. Linda Ives, Kevin's mother became suspicious of the boys deaths with all of these rumors.

After fighting the Arkansas justice system for several years she won exhumation and re-autopsy. An out-of-state examiner said the cause of death was clear: murder by beating and stabbing before they were placed on the railroad tracks. Malak was exposed as an incompetent fool, yet Governor Bill Clinton supported him, in spite of his being a political liability.

The murder case was assigned to police investigator John Brown. From the get go, the case file was in shambles. Key crime scene photographs were missing. The entire list of any evidence was gone. It also appeared that no one from 1987 to 1993 had interviewed anyone of any significance in the case. John Brown's investigation was shut down and he resigned, but not before the following pieces could be put together.

Apparently, the boys were deer hunting that night. They had no idea that the tracks were used by Mena pilots as a site for dropping off drugs and money, and that a drop had gone missing three nights previously, causing panic at Mena. The concern was not the missing $400,000, but the missing transmitter that was in the case with the money. If someone found this, it would be traceable right back to Mena. In a classic case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, Kevin and Don stumbled right into a police protected drug drop site, where law enforcement officials and drug smugglers were waiting to see who might show up. The boys were chased down and taken to another location. At that point they were beaten and stabbed. Then there bodies were placed on the track in hopes that all evidence of the murder would be distorted by the train mangling the bodies.

A US Senate subcommittee in 1989 called the available evidence about Mena sufficient for an indictment on money laundering charges. But the feds scraped a five year probe of Mena and interfered in local investigations. The state police were taken off the case. Clinton refused a request from one of his own prosecutors to pursue the matter any further.

In spite of the evidence, every investigator who has tried to expose the crimes of Mena has been professionally destroyed. After six investigations, no one to date has been indicted for the train murders or any other crime that has occurred at Mena.

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