

'Tells the Facts and Names the Names' **CounterPunch**

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■ **Their Masters' Voice**

"We go to industry and we ask industry, 'What is it we can do to make your job easier and to help you in this competitive world we have,' rather than writing legislation and having industry comment on what we write."

— Rep. Dan Schaefer (R-Colorado), quoted in *Energy Daily*, March 31, 1995.

Give Me Your Stun Guns Tales from the Torture Trade

Answering President Clinton's urgings to "compete and win in the global market place" are companies like Nova Technologies of Austin, Texas. But this is no world-wide "barn-raising", to use Clinton's bucolic imagery about the "information superhighway". Nova Technologies manufactures stun guns and exports its merchandise under the seal of approval of the Commerce Department, as does Premier Crown Corporation, maker of a 26-inch electric shock club with what the export license calls a "hot" center.

The list of such companies maintained by the Commerce Department is secret. The Department fears that export of torture devices might arouse public clamor, and conceals its supervision of this dirty business under the preposterous excuse that it is protecting "proprietary information". But our own researches, as well as material passed to us by the Federation of American Scientists, reveals that the United States has provided a host of repressive Third World regimes with "crowd control" equipment that can be used to inflict torture.

A Freedom of Information Act request filed by the Federation found that between September of 1991 and December of 1993, the Commerce Department issued 350 licenses, worth up to \$27 million, to companies exporting torture and police equipment. The licenses cover category 0A82C, which includes "saps, thumbcuffs, thumbscrews, leg irons, shackles, and handcuffs; specially designed implements of torture, straitjackets, plastic handcuffs, police helmets and shields; and parts and accessories".

Another 2,000 licenses, worth \$117 million, were issued under category 0A84C. That grouping covers everything

from electric shock batons and cattle prods to shotguns and shells.

Companies don't even need a license to export either 0A82C or 0A84C equipment to NATO countries — including Turkey and its torture-loving police and armed forces. The Commerce Department's "Export Administration Annual Report" for 1994-1995 states that for other countries, applications for licenses "will generally be considered favorably, on a case-by-case basis, unless there is evidence that the government of the importing country may have violated internationally recognized human rights". The Federation's Lora Lumpe tells **CounterPunch** that "by bundling controversial items (like thumbscrews) together with non-controversial ones (like helmets) into broad categories, Commerce effectively frustrates public oversight".

The Commerce Department refuses to say precisely what equipment it approves for sale abroad, claiming that this is "proprietary information" of the companies involved. Mark Hanshaw, a Commerce spokesman, claims that most of the licenses the Department grants are for shotguns, and fingerprint and polygraph equipment. "The vast majority of items exported are for legitimate police purposes, just like the folks in our country might find it necessary to use [such equipment] under certain circumstances", he warbled reassuringly to **CounterPunch**. "The situation is rather benign if you look at the actual facts."

But we have in our possession a secret list of licenses issued by the Commerce Department which stretches back for the last decade — a list denied to Lumpe's Freedom of Information Act request.

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The Croat in Dole's Office

What nation, without a word of reporting, comment, or rebuke from the media:

- rallied to the cause of a documented anti-Semite;
- armed his forces in the largest secret transfer of military equipment since Iran-Contra;
- helped draw up plans and gave the final okay for the eviction of 170,000 people from their homes?

The answer, of course, is the United States, in supervising the onslaught of President Franjo Tudjman's Croatia on the Krajina, with consequent killing and ethnic cleansing, the largest of the entire war thus far. These feats were cheered on, or at least excused, by the vast majority of liberals in Western Europe and the US.

The most ardent public supporter of Tudjman's Croatia in the US has been Senator Bob Dole. Hungry for both campaign funds and for a foreign policy card to flourish in his stumbles towards the Republican presidential nomination, Dole has become a hero to the legions of

fanatic Croat nationalists who see Tudjman as a latter-day Ante Pavelic, the leader of a pro-Hitler puppet state in the Second World War. Pavelic's *Ustashe* followed the orders of the Franciscans and of Croatia's minister of the interior, Andrija Artukovic, in murdering some 700,000 Serbs, 30,000 Jews and an unknown number of gypsies, most of them in the death camp of Jasenovac.

Guiding Dole through the intricacies of Balkan politics and linking him to Tudjman's agenda has been his staff assistant Mira Baratta. This 35-year-old woman was singled out for praise from the floor of the chamber by Senator John Warner on the day in late July when Dole helped terminate the (entirely bogus) arms embargo on Bosnia.

Baratta's grandfather was a Nazi officer in Mostar, and a supporter of Pavelic. For years her father, Pero Radijelovic, ran a weekly Croat radio program in Los Angeles in which he imparted information supplied by his daughter, coyly labeled "exclusive information from a very

special source". Radijelovic has hailed Pavelic as "the greatest man in Croatian history" and he acted as master of ceremonies at a banquet for Tudjman in Los Angeles. The honorary chairwoman of this event was Artukovic's widow; Artukovic himself was extradited from Los Angeles to the Yugoslav federation in the 1980s and condemned to death for war crimes. He died in prison.

The importance of Balkan money to Dole's campaign finances may be judged by the boasts of former Congressman Joseph DioGuardia at a banquet of the fiercely anti-Serb American-Albanian lobby in 1987. As reported by Mark Lupesina of the Yugoslav magazine *Inter-view*, DioGuardia said, "I have raised a big bundle of money for Dole's PAC." In a speech at the banquet, Dole acknowledged those present for their very substantial contributions.

Baratta guided Dole in a trip to the former Yugoslavia in 1990, and supplied him with prompts during interviews, as well as public statements such as his press release lauding Tudjman's Croatia as "an example of democratic freedom", in contrast to the "Bolshevik" government of Serbia. ■

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(*Guns, continued from p. 1*)

Among the "benign" items okayed by the Commerce Department:

- Air Parts International's export to Yemen of shock batons with high voltage.
- Creative Security's export of electronic stun guns to Panama.
- Criminal Research's export of shock batons to Saudi Arabia.
- Jonas Aircraft and Arms's export of saps — lead bludgeons covered with leather, and banned by most US police departments — to Egypt and shock batons to Saudi Arabia. In 1992, Jonas was accused of having illegally shipped weaponry to South Africa's apartheid regime.
- Nova Technologies's export of electronic stun guns to the Philippines.
- Premier Crown Corporation's export of twenty-six inch shock batons with hot center to Saudi Arabia.
- Smith & Wesson's export of shock batons and mace batons to both Saudi Arabia and Yemen.
- Transtechnology Corporation's export of riot shields — "with Arabic inscription" — to Yemen.

- Tri County Police's export of shock batons to Thailand.

Between 1991 and 1993, Saudi Arabia was the final destination for some \$5 million worth of 0A82C exports — almost twenty per cent of total sales in that category — and the same amount in 0A84C exports. Ian Baird, Commerce's deputy assistant secretary for export administration, confirmed that last year the Depart-

The Commerce Dept. approved the sale to Saudi Arabia of a gun that shoots two darts charged with 50,000 volts.

ment authorized the sale of Taser guns to Riyadh. The Taser shoots two darts charged with 50,000 volts of electricity, and has been linked to at least nine deaths when used by US police departments.

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