

OUR LITTLE SECRETS

DYNCorp COMETH: OMEN FOR VENEZUELA?

The following contract was announced by the US Department of Defense on January 15: "DynCorp, Int., Fort Worth, Texas, is being awarded a \$119,751,602 contract to provide for all personnel, equipment, tools, materials, supervision, and items and services as necessary to perform forward operating locations, base operating support services in support of the U.S. Southern Command's aerial counterdrug surveillance mission in Aruba, Curaçao, and Ecuador. At this time, \$25,709,541 of the funds has been obligated. The period of this contract is January 15, 2002 through December 31, 2002. Solicitation was posted via the electronic posting system in May 2001, and there were three proposals received. Negotiations were completed December 2001. The contractor will perform this effort at various locations worldwide. The Air Combat Command Contracting Squadron, Langley Air Force Base, Va., is the contracting activity (F44650-02-C-0002)."

For more than 50 years DynCorp, based in Reston, Va., has been a worldwide force providing maintenance support to the U.S.

military through contract field teams. As one of the federal government's top 25 contractors, DynCorp has received nearly \$1 billion since 1995 for these services. Aruba, as CounterPunchers are no doubt aware, is off the northern coast of Colombia where the oil fields and most of Occidental's holdings are concentrated, nowhere near the southern department of Putumayo where the coca eradication operation is taking place. Curaçao, a colony of the Netherlands, is 35 miles off the coast of Venezuela, also far from the coca eradication operation. Venezuela has not yet been announced as a target of the anti-terrorist war, but its lack of accommodation to foreign oil corporations and its friendly relations with Cuba and Iraq, plus much recent internal tumult over the leadership of populist Torres has persuaded many that it is a ripe target for destabilization.

Earlier in January, the Colombian government announced its criminalization of the demilitarized zone assigned to the FARC and an all-out attack on the rebel insurgency.

DYNCorp AND SEX SLAVES

DynCorp, please note, is the former employer of Ben Johnston, a Texan who blew the whistle a bit more than a year ago on the behavior of some of his erstwhile colleagues. According to a detailed story by Kelly Patricia O'Meara in *Insight* magazine, a Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization Act (RICO) lawsuit has been filed in Texas on behalf of the former DynCorp aircraft-maintenance technician. He serviced Apache and Blackhawk helicopters for DynCorp in Bosnia, where the company has deployed 181 personnel during the last six years.

"In the latter part of 1999", O'Meara cites the suit as alleging, "Johnston learned that employees and supervisors from DynCorp were engaging in perverse, illegal and inhumane behavior [and] were purchasing illegal weapons, women, forged passports and [participating in] other immoral acts."

Johnston, the suit alleges, "witnessed coworkers and supervisors literally buying and selling women for their own personal enjoyment, and employees would brag about the various ages and talents of the individual slaves they had purchased."

According to O'Meara, "Rather than acknowledge and reward Johnston's effort to get this behavior stopped, DynCorp fired him, forcing him into protective custody by the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) until the investigators could get him safely out of Kosovo and returned to the United States."

Johnston told O'Meara that his "main problem was [sexual misbehavior] with the kids, but I wasn't too happy with them ripping off the government, either. DynCorp is just as immoral and elite as possible, and any rule they can break they do. There was this one guy who would hide parts so we would have to wait for parts and, when the military would question why it was taking so long, he'd pull out the part and say 'Hey, you need to install this.' They'd have us replace windows in helicopters that weren't bad just to get paid."

Johnston was appalled enough by the drunkenness and sloppy work, but the exploitation of local children and women was what put him over the edge. "I heard talk about the prostitution right away, but it took some time before I understood that they were buying these girls. I'd tell them that it was wrong and that it was no different than slavery, that you can't buy women. But they'd buy the women's passports and they [then] owned them and would sell them to each other."

"None of the girls," continues Johnston, "were from Bosnia. They were from Russia, Romania and other places, and they were imported in by DynCorp and the Serbian mafia. These guys would say 'I gotta go to Serbia this weekend to pick up three girls.' They talk about it and brag about how much they pay for them, usually between \$600 and \$800. In fact, there was this one guy who had to be 60 years old who had a girl who couldn't have been 14. DynCorp leadership was 100 percent in bed with the mafia over there. I didn't get any results from talking to DynCorp officials, so I went to Army CID and I drove around with them, pointing out everyone's houses who owned women and weapons."

O'Meara reports that "According to CID, which sought guidance from the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate in Bosnia, 'under the Dayton Peace Accord, the contractors were protected from Bosnian law which did not apply to them. They knew of no [U.S.] federal laws that would apply to these individuals at this time.'"

However, CID took another look and, according to the investigation report, under

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Paragraph 5 of the NATO agreement between the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia regarding the status of NATO and its personnel, contractors "were not immune from local prosecution if the acts were committed outside the scope of their official duties".

The CID case was closed in June 2000 and turned over to the Bosnian authorities. DynCorp has denied all Johnston's allegations.

CHOMSKY TO TURKEY, HITCHENS TOO?

Now comes the news that Turkey's terrorism prosecutor is targeting Fatih Tas, the publishers of writings by Noam Chomsky. Chomsky is planning to fly to Turkey for the publisher's first court appearance on Feb. 13. He has already written to the offices of the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, pointing out that recent amendments to Turkish law were supposed to have provided greater freedom of expression, not less of it.

We assume that Christopher Hitchens, who has charged Chomsky with being a terror-symp, will be heading for Turkey to testify for the prosecution.

AUSTRALIAN REFUGEES: SEW OUR LIPS

Here's a dispatch from Australia by CounterPuncher Vanessa Jones, whom we last met when she gave a diverting account of being married to a Muslim and living in Melbourne.

Jan. 22: Tonight as I type this, after my own children are tucked up in bed, 64 locked up refugees have sewn their lips together at the Woomera Detention Centre in the arid, isolated Australian desert town of Woomera in South Australia, in protest at the time they've had to wait for the processing of their refugee applications. Another 202 detained refugees have been on a hunger strike, 18 have been treated for dehydration, and 6 have deliberately wounded themselves last night by swallowing shampoo and were rushed to hospital vomiting or unconscious. Three men apparently tried to commit suicide by hanging themselves with bed linen.

The media get access to the opinions of these families via their children (yes, one third of the detainees are kids, bused out daily to school) and the children cry, talking in broken English to the media before starting lessons.

The hunger strikers are Afghan, Iranian,

Iraqi and Palestinian asylum seekers. Some refugees have been there, held in by caged wire in the blazing hot sun, for several months and are expected to wait probably another year for refugee processing outcomes. They're not criminals, but people simply applying for refugee status. Previously, frustrated detainees have set fire to and vandalized the Centre in desperation at the time taken in processing their visas. The Australian government, which recently got re-elected partly due to their treatment of asylum seekers, has chosen this time scale. (There is a South Australian election coming up.) Now they say the refugees are trying to elicit sympathy via their actions and that this will not speed up their processing.

Some people I speak with have the idea that Australia can't keep letting boat loads of people in. They say: It's us or them. Once we have arrived we cannot let anyone else in the door. It is for us alone and, basically, stuff anyone else who wants to enjoy it or contribute to it.

The artist David Wojnarowicz exhibited in New York in December 1990 at Exit Art gallery. The catalogue of the exhibition shows a photograph of possibly himself with

"I'd tell them that it was wrong and that it was no different than slavery—that you can't buy women. But they'd buy the women's passports and they [then] owned them and would sell them to each other."

his lips sewn together. A political comment, as were many of his paintings and prints, which reached the art world and beyond before his death from AIDS.

On the same soil as I stand typing this, 64 are trying to sleep, hungry and thirsty with their lips sewn together, and another 202 are on hunger strike, having already tried fire and vandalism to get their message across. Imagine sending your children off to school, out of a detention centre you yourself cannot leave, telling them what needs to be articulated, in all its politically gruesome nature, and helping them organize notes written in a foreign language (English) and encouraging graphic drawings (their form of documentation of the event, since the media have very limited and controlled inner access), and expecting them to say it to a crowd of journalists, things you'd normally screen your own kids from on TV, while you sit in a detention centre with your lips sewn to-

gether or on hunger strike. In the stinking hot sun in the heat of summer. Not a work of art but reality. Surely this is desperation.

Bonnie Sparrow, a former pediatric registrar at Woomera Detention Centre, has said, "I've never seen so many depressed and traumatised and disturbed children as I have in the 2 weeks that I just spent there. I saw a 16-year-old who attempted to hang himself. I saw a 14-year-old girl who cut her wrists. And I saw another 14-year-old boy who tried to choke himself...I've never been to a more miserable place."

For years Woomera was a test site for British weapons of mass destruction.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

What do you do, that is, in the case of an Indian Point nuclear power plant evacuation if you don't have a car? Daniel Wolff, author of Change Gonna Come, the best biography of the great Sam Cooke, sends us this memo on nukes, cars and class.

Many residents of Westchester and Rockland closest to the nuclear power plant will hear the sirens, get in their cars, and do their best to escape the area. (For the mo-

ment, let's not discuss the likelihood of traffic jams.) But do our elected officials have plans for poorer residents who don't own vehicles? In the area around Indian Point, many of these families are black or brown and/or non-English speaking.

According to the "Planning for Emergency" booklet put out by Westchester, Rockland, Orange and Putnam counties in conjunction with the NY State Emergency Office and Con Edison, should there be "nuclear emergencies" at Indian Point that force an evacuation, your Emergency Alert radio station will let you know.

You should "remain calm", "ignore rumors" and gather "the items you would need for a three-day visit". Then, if you have a car, you should "close the windows and air vents ... until you have left the emergency area" and "offer a ride to anyone you know who may not have a car".

(OLS continued on page 6)

Remember Taung-Min Lin, the Tipton Kangaroo Rat Killer?

Rep. Pombo: Too Dumb to be Dangerous

BY CHRIS CLARKE

In January 1997, a month of record flooding in California, I was touring the wetter parts of the Central Valley and Delta with a friend, when I saw something I thought would make a great photo. Problem was, I would have had to pull over onto I-5's narrow shoulder, in heavy traffic in fog, to take the shot. I decided not to risk our lives.

What I saw was a flooded field, with what looked like about five feet of water on it. In the middle of the field, about chin-deep in the flood, was a sign saying "This land available - Pombo Real Estate".

I thought of that sign this week as I read that Richard Pombo, Tracy Representative and scion of the real estate family, is one of several candidates for the chairmanship of the House Resources Committee.

Pombo is one of the shock troops of the 104th Congress, cut from essentially the same cloth as Don Young, Helen Chenoweth, Rush Limbaugh and Newt Gingrich. His family made its pile by helping farmers buy and sell land, usually to developers.

With Central Valley land being cut up, fenced off, plowed and paved the way it is, a huge percentage of its native species are in trouble, so the Endangered Species Act is going to be a major obstacle to those who would subdivide the last acre of what was once North America's Serengeti.

And sure enough, Pombo is a copper-lunged - if comically inept - opponent of the ESA, and any other federal intrusion into his family's God-given right to turn over real property. (Federal intrusion is fine, of course, in the form of the huge flood-control projects that allow the Pombos to turn historic floodplain into eight-acre ranchettes.) In an educated society, Pombo would be considered not much more than a buffoon. It's a truism to refer to politicians as liars. But it's hard to find a clumsier liar than Pombo.

In March 1997, Pombo attempted to pin the above-mentioned January flood

in the Central Valley on the Endangered Species Act, charging that levee repair work had been delayed to protect the valley elderberry longhorned beetle. In fact the feds had long exempted disaster-related work from ESA considerations, and the ESA had no effect on levee construction.

Then there's the time he testified before the Senate Environment Committee that he had suffered untold financial damage because his ranch had been declared critical habitat for the San Joaquin kit fox. An alert reporter determined that this had not, in fact, happened, and Mollie Beattie, former head of the Fish and Wildlife Service, said as much in a public forum. Pombo blinked, saying it "may have been one of his neighbors' ranches". Finally, after having it pointed out to him that no critical habitat had been declared anywhere for the fox at

tal take" permits. They visited the farm to provide informal warnings rather than the legally-required citations. Lin repeatedly refused to comply.

When the case finally came to court, Lin was let off with a \$5,000 fine, no admission of wrongdoing on his part, and a six month ban from farming - at which point he'd be allowed to kill k-rats to raise edible bamboo, if he got the appropriate permits from the state and feds.

The case of Taung-Min Lin is illustrative, but what it illustrates is just how easy it is to violate the Endangered Species Act and get away with it.

And yet Richard Pombo still, seven years later in a letter to the Tracy Press, holds up the case of Taung-Min Lin, pointing out that "twenty armed federal agents stormed his farm, arrested Mr. Ming-Ling [sic] and confiscated his tractor for allegedly [sic] running over a few

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that point, he caved.

And then there's the celebrated case of Taung-Min Lin, a Kern County farmer who for a time in 1994 became a Wise Use poster boy. Lin, accused of violating the ESA by destroying habitat of the endangered Tipton kangaroo rat and killing five of the rats, was paraded around as a victim of jackbooted Federal environmentalism, a poor immigrant farmer, who only wanted to introduce the United States to the benefits of traditional Asian crops, persecuted for killing critters.

Unfortunately for Pombo and other Wise Users who latched on to Lin as an issue the feds had made every attempt to clue Lin in as to how to farm legally, with minimal hindrance from federal regulations in jackboots or any other footwear. They sent him letters explaining how to obtain inexpensive "inciden-

Tipton kangaroo rats". Not a word about the months of what amounted to taxpayer-subsidized legal counseling given Lin as he refused to comply with the laws of the land.

I'm not in the habit of giving advice to the GOP. Still, common decency requires that I point out that if Dick Pombo is handed the gavel of the Resources Committee, the Republicans will have made our job quite a bit easier. Having been redistricted into the relatively liberal Tri-Valley area east of Oakland, Pombo is going to have a hard enough time holding on to his seat. Put him in a position where we will be obligated to publicize what he says and does, and he's history. CP

Chris Clarke is editor of the excellent Faultline, California's Environmental Magazine, at <http://www.faultline.org>