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Cocaine plane trail is open challenge for Obama administration

Posted by **Bill Conroy** ([.../.../.../users/bill-conroy.html](http://www.narcosphere.com/.../users/bill-conroy.html)) - January 11, 2009 at 7:05 pm

A twin-propeller Cessna 402C aircraft was seized near **Carepa** (<http://www.maplandia.com/colombia/antioquia/carepa/>), Colombia, just across the border from Panama in mid-December of last year while it was in the process of attempting to transport about 850 kilos of cocaine to a suspected destination in Central America — and an ultimate arrival point in the United States.

The story was not reported in the United States, but rather appeared as a short item in news publications in Panama and the Dominican Republic. The Cessna, according to those news reports, had flown out of an airport in Panama to pick up the payload of white powder in Colombia.

This incident would likely have gone down as simply one more aborted drug run in the trail of thousands that bring the lucrative product to the U.S. each year if it were not for one small fact: the Cessna sported a U.S. tail number and FAA registration history that connect it to a number of other "cocaine planes" that have apparent links to covert U.S. intelligence operations focused, at least in part, on Venezuela and the government of Hugo Chávez.

To trace the trail of this Cessna, it's necessary to keep a couple numbers in mind, since they are the keys that open up this Pandora's box. The first is the tail number, N811PW and the second is the aircraft's unique serial number, 402C0078 — which is referenced specifically in the story published in the Dominican Republic newspaper **Diario Horizonte** (<http://www.diariohorizonte.com/view/articulo.aspx?articleid=22014&zoid=3>) [Daily Horizon].

With those numbers in hand, Narco News requested from the Federal Aviation Administration the **full registration history** ([.../.../.../userfiles/70/N811PW.FAA.Reg.pdf](http://www.faa.gov/.../userfiles/70/N811PW.FAA.Reg.pdf)) of the Cessna 402C and discovered that just prior to the date it was seized in Colombia (December 13, according to the report in the Panama news publication **La Prensa** (<http://www.panama-guide.com/article.php/20081215152412874>)), the Cessna was owned by a Floridian named Roberto Gomez — who changed addresses in the state three times in the three years he owned the aircraft.

Gomez, for his part, says he can't talk about the Cessna because there are still "questions pending on it." Gomez claims he is a simple airplane broker and added that the "area [Venezuela] is very hot."

He declined to answer whether the feds are investigating or talking to him about the seizure of the drug-laden Cessna in Colombia.

Gomez purchased the Cessna in June 2005 from a Rantoul, Kansas, aircraft salvage company named Dodson International Parts Inc., the FCC records show.

However, in a stroke of good fortune for Gomez, on Dec. 12, the day before the Cessna was seized on its cocaine-running mission, the FAA confirmed its deregistration due to the fact that it had been sold to buyers in Venezuelan. That curious coincidence is compounded by the fact that the same pattern of a U.S. registered aircraft being sold just prior to it getting busted in a drug run plays out in a number of other cases that Narco News has investigated over the past year.

Here's the list of such **adventures**



(<http://www.narconews.com/Issue51/article3031.html>) :

- In April 2006, a DC-9 jet owned by a Florida company (Royal Sons Inc. of Clearwater)

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was apprehended in Mexico with 5.5 tons of cocaine onboard only days after it was sold to unknown Venezuelan purchasers. The passenger-class jet with tail number N900SA was acquired by Skyway Communications Holding Corp., the parent company of Skyway Aircraft Inc. in Clearwater, Fla., in November 2004 and later sold to Royal Sons — whose president was a shareholder and major creditor in Skyway Communications. Skyway Communications' CEO, James Kent, according to U.S. Security and Exchange Commission **records** (<http://www.secinfo.com/d11Q1u.2e8.htm>), served previously in a number of government contract positions supporting national communications and intelligence projects for the Department of Defense, the National Security Agency and the Department of the Navy.

- A Gulfstream II corporate jet crashed in Mexico's Yucatan in late September 2007 with some 4 tons of cocaine onboard. The jet's tail number, N987SA, has been linked by European investigators to past CIA rendition flights and it was owned just prior to its crash landing by a Florida duo named Clyde O'Connor and Greg Smith. O'Connor and Smith purchased the ill-fated Gulfstream II, according to a **bill of sale**



(<http://www.narconews.com/docs/donnablue-sale.pdf>), about a week before it crashed from a Florida company owned by two Brazilians — one of whom was Joao Malago.

- Another Florida company, also called Skyway Aircraft Inc. but based in St. Petersburg, exported a total of at least nine aircraft to Venezuela buyers between October 2003 and January 2008, two of which were later linked to drug-running operations (and one of which, when apprehended, was sporting a false tail number linked to the CIA). The owner of Skyway Aircraft in St. Petersburg, Larry Peters, is a **business partner** (http://atlanticalcohol.com/Atlantic_Alcohol_Company_Profile.pdf) with Joao Malago in another Florida company called Atlantic Alcohol. Both companies operate out of the same office in St. Petersburg, according to public records. Another principle of Atlantic Alcohol holds a government security clearance and has worked as a consultant for NASA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

But the intersection of cocaine planes, businesses and government operations does not end with those facts. The recent apprehension of the drug-laden Cessna 402C brings yet another company into the picture.

Harvesting Parts

The Kansas company Dodson International Parts, which sold the Cessna cocaine plane to Gomez, has also done business with one of the owners of another cocaine plane linked to U.S. intelligence agencies.

Clyde O'Connor, who owned the Gulfstream II when it crashed with 4 tons of cocaine on board in Mexico in 2007, previously owned another jet, a Hawker corporate jet that was used by CIA asset **Baruch Vega** (<http://node/1802.html>) in covert missions targeting narco-traffickers in Colombia in the late 1990s.

The co-owner of the Gulfstream II jet, Greg Smith, owned the Florida company (Aero Group Jets) that leased the Hawker to Vega. Smith also served as a pilot for numerous undercover and/or covert U.S. government missions involving the jet, according to Vega.

The Hawker business-class cruiser, with the tail number N230TS, FAA records show, was bought and sold total of five times between Feb. 9, 2001, and June 16, 2005, through a series of three companies in which O'Connor is listed as an officer or "member." In other words, O'Connor was essentially moving the Hawker jet back and forth between companies he controlled, according to the FAA records.

Information on where the Hawker jet was during the four years that O'Connor's various companies owned it was not available.

However, in June 2005, one of the those companies, O'Connor's Core Investments, sold the Hawker to Dodson International Parts, FAA records show. By coincidence, that is the same month and year that Gomez acquired the Cessna from Dodson International.

Dodson International emerged from a Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization in December 2004, court records indicate. It lists as one of its affiliates a company called Dodson Aviation. The president of both companies is Robert Dodson Jr., according to the bankruptcy court records.

Dodson Aviation made headlines back in 2004 in relation to another jet that it sold to some African purchasers.

The **Kansas City Star** (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/org/news/2004/040311-seized-plane.htm>) reported at the time:

La interferencia rusa en las elecciones americanas tiene más sentido cuando sigues el dinero (<http://2017/02/la-interferencia-rusa-en-las-elecciones-americanas-tiene-m-s-sentido-cu.html>)

Demanda pendiente busca exponer las conexiones neonazis de Trump (<http://2017/01/demanda-pendiente-busca-exponer-las-conexiones-neonazis-de-trump.html>)

more (<http://2017/01/70.html>)

A Rantoul, Kan., firm says it faxed to the American Embassy in South Africa on Wednesday sale documents for an airliner seized by Zimbabwe authorities claiming it ferried mercenaries.

The nearly 40-year-old plane was seized by President Robert Mugabe's forces on Sunday. The government says that instead of carrying just a crew of seven as claimed, the plane had 64 persons aboard along with supplies that might be construed as military material.

A tail number from the plane suggested that it was registered in the United States to Dodson Aviation in Rantoul. The company, however, said the federal registry is lagging behind its sale of the Boeing 727-100 turbo jet.

ot;>Company director Robert Dodson Sr. [Robert Dodson Jr.'s father] said the sale was completed March 1, after weeks of negotiations with Logo Logistics Co., a firm he believed to be a South African diamond mining company.

Subsequent reports in the **f** (<http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-03-12-shackled-simon-mann-names>) **oreign press** (<http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-03-12-shackled-simon-mann-names>) indicate that former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's son, Mark, was implicated in the plot — which was intended to overthrow the government of Equatorial Guinea. Mark Thatcher pleaded guilty in South Africa in 2005 to charges related to the aborted coup d'état and received a four-year suspended sentence as part of a plea bargain.

Dodson International Parts President Robert Dodson Jr. says his company is a legit airline salvage company. He says it buy planes and parts them out for the most part, about a 100 a year, and maybe sells four or five planes a year — so aircraft sales are a small part of the business.

Dodson also says he doesn't recall the particulars of the sale of the Cessna to Gomez, though he did not dispute the fact that Dodson International did own and eventually sell that aircraft. As far as the Hawker jet Dodson acquired from O'Connor, Dodson says it has since been harvested for parts.

"That Hawker was repossessed by a bank, or at least it was being forced into repossession, and we got it from the bank, and we parted it out," he says.

Finally, Dodson addressed the plane seized in Zimbabwe by saying his company bought the Boeing 727 through a bid process via the U.S. General Services Administration and then resold it to a South African company called Logo Logistics, which said it planned to use the aircraft to transport security personnel for mining operations. After the plane was sold to Logo, but before the FAA had updated the records, Dodson says, it was seized in Zimbabwe "and the next thing we know is it [the aircraft] is involved in some kind of coup attempt."

However, Vega, who has been involved with covert and undercover missions for not only the CIA, but DEA and the FBI as well, claims Dodson has a history of being "involved in U.S. government operations."

Another interesting revelation that reverberates with the echoes of covert U.S. intelligence operations is Dodson's confirmation that he operates a separate company in Arkansas called **Mena Aerospace Inc**



(http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/corps/search_corps.php?DETAIL=196773&corp_type_id=&corp_name=Mena+Aerospace&agent_search=&age)
 . (http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/corps/search_corps.php?DETAIL=196773&corp_type_id=&corp_name=Mena+Aerospace&agent_search=&age)
 , located at the **Mena Intermountain Municipal Airport**.
 (<http://www.menaairport.com/index.html>)

In fact, one **plane-spotter Web site** (<http://ghostbase.fotopic.net/p47227031.html>) even spied an aircraft owned by Dodson International on the runway of the Mena airport in 2006. That aircraft is currently registered to Dodson International, according to **FAA records** (<http://registry.faa.gov/aircraftinquiry/NNumSQL.asp?NNumbertxt=191RD&cmdndfind.x=14&cmdndfind.y=9>) , but was owned in the early 1990s by **Ariana Afghan Airlines** (<http://www.airpics.gr/reg/N191RD>) .
 (<http://www.airpics.gr/reg/N191RD>)

The Mena airport has been the subject of much **controversy** (http://whatreallyhappened.com/RANCHO/POLITICS/MENA/walsh_gets_evidence.html) over the years, since it allegedly served as a drugs and arms transshipment point for

the covert U.S. intelligence agencies' effort (popularly known as Iran/Contra) to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua in the 1980s.

But again, Dodson insists the company he operates in Mena has only one purpose.

"Mena Aerospace is a maintenance company in Arkansas, where we have access to a big runway to park large jets, so we can harvest parts," Dodson says. "The company is still open, with about four employees. But it's a separate company [from Dodson International]."

Ongoing Operation

Clearly, the cloak-and-dagger/plausible-deniability intrigue that surrounds the question of whether the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies are, in fact, players in the narco-trafficking business leaves most folks feeling like they are trying to find their way through a house of mirrors.

But over the years, more than one employee in this fun house has come forward out of as sense of conscience or self-preservation to sort out the maze. Normally, attempts are made to quickly discredit these individuals, often through character assassination or trumped up charges.

One such individual is **Tosh Plumlee** (<http://toshplumlee.info/>), who has been accused of everything from cashing bad checks (a charge he claims is bogus) to being a crackpot or even a CIA disinformation agent — when his information doesn't jibe with the pundits of the conspiracy-theory media cult.

But the public record shows that some members of the U.S. Congress have taken seriously Plumlee's allegations concerning CIA and Pentagon drug-running operations.

Plumlee is a former CIA contract pilot who claims to have delivered thousands of kilos of cocaine a month into the United States in the early 1980s while working as part of the covert Iran/Contra operation. After he became troubled by his mission (not out of patriotism, he says, but out of the fear he would be set up by his employers), Plumlee contacted then-U.S. Senator Gary Hart and blew the whistle on the covert operation.

The following is from a **letter** (<http://toshplumlee.info/pdf/sengaryhart.PDF>) sent by Hart in 1991 to U.S. Sen. John Kerry:

In March of 1983, Plumlee contacted my Denver Senate Office and met with Mr. Bill Holen of my Senate Staff. During the initial meeting, Mr. Plumlee raised certain allegations concerning U.S. foreign and military policy toward Nicaragua and the use of covert activities by U.S. intelligence agencies. ... He stated that he had grave concerns that certain intelligence information about illegal arms and narcotics shipments were not being appropriately acted upon by U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Mr. Plumlee's stated purpose in contacting my office was to attempt to initiate a congressional investigation of these allegations.

.... Mr. Plumlee raised several issues including that covert U.S. intelligence agencies were directly involved in the smuggling and distribution of drugs to raise funds for covert military operations against the government of Nicaragua. He provided my staff with detailed maps and names of alleged covert landing strips in Mexico, Costa Rica, Louisiana, Arizona, Florida and California where he alleged aircraft cargoes of drugs were off-loaded and replaced with Contra military supplies.

Plumlee was eventually called to testify before Congress on a number of occasions, only to find that the Congressional committees hearing his testimony ordered it classified — which meant if Plumlee later spoke about it publicly, he would be violating the law. And as history has shown, Congress failed to do little more than blow smoke over the Iran/Contra scandal and to this day — despite the detailed investigative reporting of journalist **Gary Webb** (<http://www.narconews.com/darkalliance/>) in his Dark Alliance series — the dirty little secret of narco-trafficking by U.S. intelligence agencies is considered the stuff of whacky conspiracy theories by the mainstream media.

Despite the risk of crossing the line with respect to violating his now-classified truth telling, Plumlee appeared on former DEA agent **Mike Levine's New York radio show** (<http://www.expertwitnessradio.org/>) in 2003 and offered listeners the following warning concerning what he claims is the continuing covert activity on the part of U.S. intelligence agencies in trafficking drugs:

It's still going on. The reason I said that is that ... I hope your listeners remember that someone who has been very active in the drug war said that this stuff is still going on, very secret, very hush hush, very coded. There's too much money involved.

U.S. intelligence agencies, the CIA as well as its frequent partner in operations, the Pentagon (the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, etc.), carry out covert operations through an elaborate chain of proprietary companies, legitimate businesses (some of whom might not even realize they are being used at times); front

companies and cut-out networks and assets. Its all designed to provide the operations with cover and plausible deniability. The goal is to achieve a desired outcome that is very visible, such as the overthrow of a foreign government deemed unacceptable to hegemonic U.S. interests.

However, the methods and the sponsors of the covert action must remain in the shadows, or its effectiveness as a strategy is undermined, if not neutralized.

In the case of the cocaine planes tracked by Narco News, the fact that so many of them (most owned at one point by U.S. companies or individuals with links to past government operations) wind up in the hands of "Venezuelan purchasers" prior to making their drug runs, might simply be a coincidence. On the other hand, it also could be a bit of light creeping through the shadows of the covert world pointing to one target of the operations.

Vega says countries like Venezuela or Cuba provide the perfect cover for a U.S. government operation if the sponsors are seeking to conceal its U.S. roots from the targets.

"If you go through those countries [not deemed friendly to the U.S.], then the corrupt politicians and traffickers you're dealing with are less likely to assume it's a U.S. operation," Vega explains.

Attorney Mark Conrad, a former high-level supervisory U.S. Customs agent who has an extensive background in the intelligence world, offered the following insight into the cocaine planes saga in a prior interview with Narco News:

Even though it looks as if you are unraveling odd connections you may be only seeing a small part of what is going on — or you may be seeing what you are expected to see, missing something else.

My guess — and that is all that it is — is that this has something to do with operations in Venezuela — either to finance ops, or to divert attention from Agency ops in Venezuela to destabilize Chávez. ... It is not in the U.S. interests for Chávez to create another Cuba on some of the largest oil field reserves in the world.

If, in fact, as Plumlee suggests, U.S. intelligence agencies are continuing to employ drug- and arms-smuggling tactics as means of carrying out covert strategy, and in this decade it is Venezuela that is a primary target in Latin America, then there must be a base of operations in or near Venezuela, or at least logic would seem to dictate that conclusion.

That place, ideally, would be a location where the worlds of legitimate business, narco-trafficking and government operations all intersect, to assure cover as well as access to assets and logistical support. This place would be like a modern-day Casablanca, though the character played by Humphrey Bogart in that film would likely still be a fiction — or possibly a composite of an isolated resistance movement.

Narco News queried CIA asset Vega about this premise, and he agreed that the island of **Curacao** (http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&q=curacao&um=1&ie=UTF-8&split=0&sa=X&oi=geocode_result&resnum=1&ct=image), located just off the northwestern coast of Venezuela and a protectorate within the "kingdom" of the Netherlands, meets the test of a Casablanca of the drug war in this case. Its economy is driven by tourism, oil refining, finance, narco-trafficking and money laundering; the island also is home to a **Forward Operation Location** (<http://www.ciponline.org/facts/fol.htm>) (FOL), essentially a U.S. military base that also is staffed by personnel from the DEA, the Coast Guard and U.S. Customs. The FOL is charged, in part, with carrying out anti-narcotic surveillance and missions.

Curacao's role as a major staging area for U.S. intelligence operations targeting Venezuela also seems to be confirmed by a leaked CIA memo that was the subject of a 2007 report in the publication *Venezuela analysis*.

From the **story** (<http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/2914>) :

On a scarier note, an internal CIA memorandum has been obtained by Venezuelan counterintelligence from the US Embassy in Caracas that reveals a very sinister - almost fantastical, were it not true - plan to destabilize Venezuela during the coming days. The plan, titled "OPERATION PLIERS" was authored by CIA Officer Michael Middleton Steered and was addressed to CIA Director General Michael Hayden in Washington.

... Operation Tenaha [Pliers] has the objective of encouraging an armed insurrection in Venezuela against the government of President Chávez that will justify an intervention of US forces, stationed on the military bases nearby in Curacao and Colombia. The Operation mentions two countries in code: as Blue and Green. These refer to Curacao and Colombia, where the US has operative, active and equipped bases that have been reinforced over the past year and a half in

anticipation of a conflict with Venezuela.

'Here's looking at you kid'

But any theory, especially one that attempts to envelope a covert intelligence operation, has to be assaulted with the facts and stand the test. In the case of the Cessna 402C, it seems that test is met, in part, as there is a Curacao connection as well.

Narco News discovered a social networking site on the Internet that features photographs of the Cessna and its crew at an airport in Curacao. The photograph was taken on Nov. 22, according to the Web site, about 21 days prior to that same aircraft being picked up in Colombia attempting to transport a payload of 850 kilos of cocaine.



Because it is possible the individuals shown in the photograph were not connected to the plane's drug run in Colombia on Dec. 13 of last year, Narco News decided to obscure the faces of the plane's crew in the adjacent photo and to not publish the Web site address.

However, the photo is important because it does place the U.S. registered Cessna (tail No. N811PW) in Curacao prior to its seizure on drug-running charges in Colombia, a fact that, along with all the other facts linking that plane and other aircraft to U.S. intelligence operations, adds weight to Plumlee's contention that the CIA and Pentagon continue to employ drug-running as one of the "dirty tricks" in their covert operational strategies.

The mainstream media, and the American public in general, now accept the fact that U.S. intelligence agencies, specifically the CIA, employed rendition [kidnapping] and torture as tactics in the war on terror. So how is it possible, despite the mountain of evidence over the years attesting to it, that the same mainstream media is still in denial over the fact that U.S. intelligence agencies are up to their eyeballs in the narco-trafficking business?



This is a question that the incoming Obama administration, and particularly his nominee to head the CIA, former Clinton insider Leon Panetta, must address honestly with the American people, it seems, if they are to have any credibility on this front moving forward.

And the stakes, at least in the opinion of one former CIA case officer, are significant for the American people. **Leutrell Osborne** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YU0WVcbOTp4>), who oversaw spies and assets for the CIA in more than 30 countries on three continents during his 27 years with the agency, says if he could tell President-elect Barack Obama anything, it would be to focus the Agency on counterintelligence and do away completely with covert action, which is defined as anything involving dirty tricks -- assassinations, state-sponsored terrorism, drug running, coups, psy-ops propaganda, etc.

"I'd like to get to Obama and help him, to let him know what he needs to cut out," Osborne says.

The reason covert operational tactics need to be eliminated, Osborne explains, is because they are not effective and have been the source of most of the CIA's problems over the years. He says the blowback against the United States from those covert operations is always more damaging than any benefit attained — with 9/11 being the extreme example of such blowback.

In the case of U.S. intelligence agencies playing in the narco-trafficking world, we only need to look to our streets and prisons, the increased flow of heroin from Afghanistan, and south of our border to Mexico and its escalating murder rate, to understand the impact of the blowback.

But absent real change on this front spurred on by a united citizens effort, we'll have to be content individually with the wisdom that Humphrey Bogart's character, Rick, offers in **Casablanca** ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casablanca_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casablanca_(film))) :

... It doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't

*amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world. Someday you'll understand that.
Now, now... Here's looking at you kid.*

Stay tuned....

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