

DRUGS.

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41 EAST 42ND STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y. 10017, 697-5100

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DRUG TRAFFIC

JOHN WINGATE: What does the CIA have to do with narcotics from Southeast Asia? This story coming up in one minute.

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Alfred McCoy is a twenty six year old graduate student at Yale University. He has written a research book on the relationship between the CIA, the Central Intelligence Agency, and what he says is the international traffic of heroin. He's on the telephone up at New Haven in Yale University.

How much research did you do about the CIA and trafficking in heroin? Alfred McCoy.

ALFRED MC COY: I began work in about January, 1971, and it's-- I've done some preliminary work for several months before that. And so when I add it all up, it comes to about eighteen months of total research. I'll bet I spent almost two months in Europe, interviewing former French intelligence personnel, and people in the French police and generally political observers who know a good deal about the French underworld. I travelled for four months in Southeast Asia. In Laos, Thailand, Northern Burma, very briefly in Northern Burma, and in Hong Kong. And then I spent several months travelling about the country, doing interviews with former USAID, United States Agency for International Development, and CIA personnel.

WINGATE: Now it's your contention, Alfred, that heroin has moved from Southeast Asia into this country with the aid, knowledge, collusion and even the financial support of the CIA?

MC COY: What I will say is simply this. In Southeast

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Asia one of the more opium growing tribes is the Meo Tribe of Northern Laos. And beginning in 1960 the Central Intelligence Agency formed an alliance, a military alliance with the leaders of the Meo Tribe. One of the traditional prerogatives of the leaders of the Meo Tribe is to control that tribe's opium traffic. And the CIA, beginning in the mid-1960's, provided extensive, comprehensive air transport, moving the opium out of the hills of Northern Laos, into the regional marketing centers, Vin Chan(?), Avidro(?), the administrative capital of Laos was one place where the opium was coming in on Air America Continental Air Service aircraft, aircraft which are chartered and in some cases controlled directly by the CIA. And then the other place that it was coming into was Lohn Chang(?), which is the CIA Headquarters in Northern Laos. And the CIA was absolutely, there was no doubt that they were aware that this was going on.

First of all, their pilots were carrying it on a daily basis. They were aware that the major cash crop of their allies, the Meo Tribe, was opium. They were aware that the pilots were carrying. And also in their very own headquarters, Lohn Chang, beginning in about 1967, to the best I can determine, there was a very very large opium refinery built there, operating at the northern end of the valley.

I interviewed former USAID personnel, who said they saw the refinery operating openly. It was processing opium into morphine, and as you know, morphine is the substance which is used to manufacture heroin. It was coming into Lohn Chang on Air American Continental aircraft, and it was going out on World Laotian Air Force aircraft, having been refined into morphine.

WINGATE: Now your book is to be published by Harpur and Row, correct?

MC COY: Correct. Hopefully.

WINGATE: Is it true that the CIA demanded from your publisher, and got the right to get that book in its hands prior to the publication date?

MC COY: The CIA was given the book last Thursday, and it will-- It has it right now. An agent from the Central Intelligence Agency arrived at Harpur and Row, picked up a copy, and signed for it, and took it down to Washington, D. C. to be reviewed. And ostensibly, they're going to have their response, their objections to the book to Harpur and Row this Thursday.

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WINGATE: I understand that by the way Seymour Hersch reports in today's New York Times, that your book, Alfred McCoy, its findings have been corroborated in a secret cabinet level report on drug traffic, and he says this report has been suppressed by the government. Do you know anything about that?

MC COY: No. My report was done. I heard about it in about February or March, and I tried to get a copy of it, and I found it just really supremely difficult. I went to a number of sources that provided me with quite detailed information, and he just simply said it was enormously difficult to get, and they simply wouldn't be able to do it for me. The fact that Hersch has gotten it is remarkable, and it's a real contribution.

WINGATE: So apparently there is a cabinet level report, which is a sequel to your book, saying the CIA is involved in heroin traffic.

MC COY: The CIA is simply one part. They play a certain role in the traffic, right?

WINGATE: Right.

MC COY: Probably more important in the overall structure, and very definitely more important is the role of the Thai, Laotian and South Vietnamese governments. And I feel, you know, criticizing the CIA solely for its alliances with corrupt local officials involved in the traffic, and the kind of tacit and overt support the CIA has given the narcotics traffic, is perhaps unfair. The State Department and the United States Agency for International Development, in many cases, serve an equal or even greater share of the blame. The State Department, for example, has never been willing to use its diplomatic leverage on our allies, Thailand, Laos and South Vietnam, to force them to get out of the narcotics traffic seriously. They have provided aid, diplomatic support. They concluded military alliances, but they have never ever been willing to make this a serious part of our whole influence in what we're giving Southeast Asia.

WINGATE: But the point is there is apparently a high level government report about this, and that's been totally suppressed, and only Seymour Hersch of THE NEW YORK TIMES knows about it, right?

MC COY: Right. That's to the best of my knowledge. The report deals in depth, as Hersch says in the article, with corruption in Southeast Asia, the governments in Southeast Asia, our allies.

WINGATE: Alfred McCoy, would do me a favor and come back

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tomorrow at six fifteen, as we continue a two part series on what you say is the connection between the CIA and the State Department and the international heroin traffic?

MC COY: Fine. I'd love to.

WINGATE: I have often asked questions on this story, and let me ask it of you. If, my question has been to many a guest, if the federal government with all its power wanted to, could it really knock out the drug traffic? What do you think?

MC COY: In Southeast Asia?

WINGATE: Yeah.

MC COY: Absolutely no question about it. In Laos, for example, we control over fifty percent of the entire governmental budget and a hundred percent of the military budget. In Thailand we provide enormous quantities of aid. In South Vietnam, if we cut off our aid to the South Vietnamese Government tomorrow, both indirect and direct, the government would collapse.

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WINGATE: Tomorrow we'll have the second part of those charges of federal government involvement in the narcotics traffic that comes to this country from Southeast Asia. There must be something to this story. If, as said, the government has a cabinet level report, a report that has been suppressed. If this book finally is published, the book now reportedly in the hands of the CIA, then the greatest-- It's not reportedly in the hands of the CIA. The CIA has the book. They wanted it, and they got it. Then the most impartial investigation in American history involving not one politician, no Democratic, no Republican, but involving people, I don't mean a blue ribbon panel. We'll get nowhere with a blue ribbon panel, should be set up to find out what's going on. It would be so ironic as to be unspeakable if the Puerto Rican kid, call him Jose Gonzales, if the kid from Great Neck, Abe Feinstein, if the kid from Scarsdale, Billy Smith, if all three of these kids, could die by an overdose, did so because of federal willful and criminal negligence.