

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL  
11 January 1983

By JACK MALTBY  
SEVIERVILLE, TENN.  
COCOA TRIAL

One of four men charged with smuggling \$200 million worth of cocaine from the jungles of South America to East Tennessee was a gun runner who was not involved with drugs, a defense lawyer claimed in opening arguments Tuesday.

Attorney Frank Rubino told an eight-man, four-woman jury that Gerald Hemp was not involved with the ill-fated scheme to smuggle 614 pounds of nearly pure cocaine into East Tennessee in March 1981.

Hemp is the last suspect on trial in the failed attempt to smuggle the nearly pure cocaine into East Tennessee in the dead of night on March 23, 1981. His trial began Monday, and testimony began after an eight-man, four-woman jury was picked and opening arguments completed.

"They were running guns, going to Cuba to buy the guns and then take them down to Managua to give to the guerrillas," Rubino said. "Mr. Hemp, the proof will show, throughout his his lifetime, had been in contact with the CIA, and has been a gun runner to South America."

Rubino used the same tactics that defense lawyers in November 1981 tried to use for Charles Leslie Kageler Jr., 25, formerly of Lubbock, Texas, who was convicted of helping fly the twin-engine airplane that landed at Sevierville Airport in March 1981 with 614 pounds of cocaine aboard.

Rubino did not address how Hemp came to be in Sevier County if he was running guns from Cuba to South America.

The bearded Hemp, 44, formerly of Gatlinburg, eluded authorities for 18 months before he was finally arrested in Florida last Sept. 30. He has been held under \$50 million bond at the Sevier County Jail.

Of the other three men at the airport that night, Charles Leslie Kageler Sr., 54, is dead, his body found floating in the Atlantic Ocean off the Florida coast last summer. His son, the younger Kageler, is serving his prison term.

A third suspect, C.D. Newell, 52, of Kemah, Texas, who allegedly flew the cocaine-laden plane, is expected to testify against Hemp in exchange for a reduced sentence.