

~~OPA FILE~~ ~~WNC / UGA~~

OCA 0193-88

10 March 1988

NOTE FOR GENERAL COUNSEL

FROM:

STAT

SUBJECT: Congressional Testimony -- U.S. v. Noriega

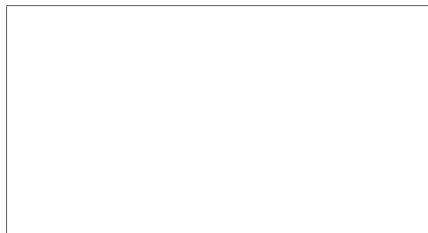
1. Russ, I have learned from Rob Roth who has been in contact with Ed Walsh of DOJ that Mr. John Martin, Chief of the Internal Security Branch at Justice, has expressed concern over the pending scheduled testimony of the DDI before the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control regarding the charges against General Noriega. (I understand that the hearing is scheduled for 16 March 1988.)

2. Mr. Martin has asked for a copy of the letter from Chairman Rangle to the Director requesting testimony from an Agency official (see attached), and has further advised us that any response to the Committee, as well as prepared testimony should first be coordinated with DOJ's Office of Legislative Affairs.

3. Finally, I also understand that the DDI's Executive Assistant has requested guidance from us on how the DDI may respond to any questions concerning the Noriega indictments.

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Attachment

CC:

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Deputy Director of Congressional Affairs

88-00804

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U.S. House of Representatives

SELECT COMMITTEE ON
 NARCOTICS ABUSE AND CONTROL
 ROOM H2-234, HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING ANNEX 2
 WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6425

COMMITTEE PHONE 202-226-3040

February 23, 1988

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The Honorable William H. Webster
 Director
 Central Intelligence Agency
 Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Judge Webster:

As you know, the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control conducted hearings in June 1986 on the serious allegations that appeared in the press concerning General Manuel Antonio Noriega, Commander of the Panama Defense Forces and de facto leader of Panama. The news reports alleged that Noriega was extensively involved in drug trafficking, money laundering and other illegal activities.

At that time, the State Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency told us that they had no evidence to support these allegations. None of our witnesses had any idea where the allegations came from. Further, the importance of "maintaining stability" and "protecting our interests" in Panama was repeatedly emphasized whenever we asked probing questions. (See attached report of the public portion of the hearings.)

As recently as the mid-year update of the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (published in September 1987), the Department of State touted the Panamanian Government's efforts on narcotics control.

On February 5, 1988, however, General Noriega was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury in Miami, Florida. The charges read like the newspaper reports 2 years ago: money laundering; conspiracy with narcotics traffickers; over \$4.6 million in pay-offs; and other illegal activities. According to the reports, the Department of Justice claimed that the evidence was "overwhelming".

Now, this raises a lot of questions about the administration of our foreign policy, the coordination among Federal agencies, and the possible distribution of misinformation by the U.S. government -- some have gone as far as to allege a cover-up.

The Honorable William H. Webster

February 23, 1988

Page Two

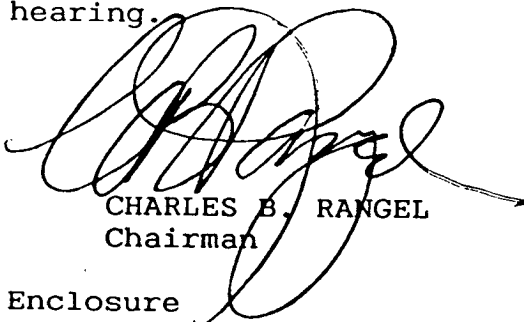
The Select Committee would like to invite you to testify at a hearing on March 16 to clarify exactly how these indictments came about; when the allegations became evidence; when and why it was decided to reverse the strategy of closing an ear to "rumors" and of cooperating with Noriega for the sake of our "national interests".

Most importantly, we would like to avoid supporting other governments whose highest leaders are part of the illegal international narcotics trafficking network. This is extremely important right now, in view of the current allegations of corruption at the highest levels of government in Haiti, Honduras, The Bahamas, and to a certain extent the situation in Nicaragua. We would like to address the situations in these countries in our hearing as well.

We would appreciate a brief, private, off-the-record meeting with you in advance of the hearing. Given the extremely sensitive nature of this subject, this should be a mutually beneficial meeting. Please work with Edward H. Jurith, the Select Committee Staff Director, to arrange a date and time. He can be reached at 226-3040.

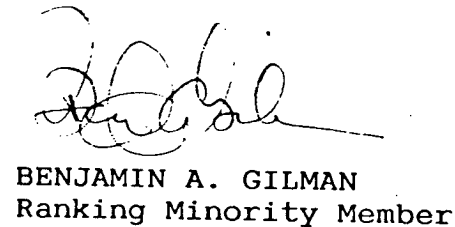
We would welcome any letters, memoranda, or other documents you have in support of your testimony for insertion into the hearing record. In accordance with the Rules of the House of Representatives, we ask that you deliver 75 copies of your testimony to the Select Committee by the close of business at least two full business days before your appearance. We also request that you not release your statement to the press prior to the hearing.

We look forward to an extremely important and informative hearing.



CHARLES B. RANGEL
Chairman

Sincerely,



BENJAMIN A. GILMAN
Ranking Minority Member

Enclosure