

Defense lawyers admit: Abscam defendants took payoff

NEW YORK (AP) — Government tapes introduced the names of two congressmen and senators yesterday at the initial trial growing out of the Abscam scandal. Four defendants are accused of accepting a \$50,000 payoff from FBI agents posing as representatives of an Arab sheik.

One of those named in the tapes was Rep. Michael "Ozzie" Myers, D-Pa., one of the defendants in the Brooklyn federal court trial that opened yesterday. Another was Rep. Raymond Lederer, D-Pa., under indictment in another facet of the Abscam case.

The third member of Congress named in the tapes was Sen. Herman Talmadge, D-Ga., who is not among those charged in the Abscam bribery-conspiracy case involving the phony sheik's efforts to solve a hypothetical immigration problem.

Another of the current defendants, Angelo Errichetti, mayor of Camden, N.J., was quoted on the tapes as telling FBI agent Anthony Amoroso, posing as a representative of the phony sheik, that he had succeeded in "getting" Talmadge and Lederer.

When asked what Myers could do for the sheik, Errichetti was quoted as replying, "He'll do anything."

Anything you want.

The Camden mayor also said he was working on "getting" two congressmen from Georgia involved and had succeeded in setting up talks with two Florida congressmen. None of these was named.

In a subsequent meeting, Errichetti reported Myers was "all set" and was advised that "on the rest we'll go one right after another."

In opening statements, defense attorneys told the jury that the defendants Myers, Errichetti, Howard Criden, a Philadelphia attorney, and Louis Johnson, a Philadelphia city councilman, did accept the \$50,000 payoff on behalf of the phony sheik, but did nothing criminal in return for the money.

"All the defendants did was take the fat Arab's money," said Criden's lawyer, Richard Ben-Veniste.

"They never used their offices. They never did anything on his behalf because they never were supposed to."

Defense lawyers delivered their opening statements to the jury in a Brooklyn federal courtroom presided over by U.S. District Judge George C. Pratt.

Earlier, the prosecution claimed that the \$50,000 had been accepted in return for a promise that Myers would introduce a special congressional immigration bill on behalf of the sheik, who actually was an FBI agent.

Prosecutor Thomas Puccio, head of the federal Organized Crime Strike Force in Brooklyn, said six audio and four video tapes would be offered in evidence against the quartet of defendants.

In his opening turn before the jury, Ben-Veniste said the entire sting operation was contrived by a professional con man named Melvin Weinberg.

The government admits that over a three-year period Weinberg received \$93,000 as a paid informant.

Ben-Veniste gave what he characterized as Weinberg's eight-step sting operation, beginning with informant getting the government to drop a three-year term against him and then commence paying him \$5,000 a month.

The second step was "to make the Arab the biggest, fattest cat you ever did see," Ben-Veniste continued. "They set him up to be a billionaire."

The third step was to tell Criden that the Arab was interested in investing in a casino venture in Atlantic City but that first he needed to meet some people in high places. The job of finding these important people was given to Criden and Errichetti, the defense lawyer added.

The fourth step in the sting, Ben-Veniste went on, was for Criden's law partner, Johnson, to contact Congressman Myers.

At that point, Ben-Veniste claimed, Weinberg told the defendants that when they met the Arab's representatives they should "come on strong, promise

him everything," realizing, however, that they would never have to produce.

"The fifth step was to put them on television," the lawyer told the jury. "You're going to see on camera what happened, and it's going to look terrible. But it's exactly what Weinberg wanted."

The defense lawyer said that "because Weinberg can't resist it, because he's such a con man, a crook, he hit on these men for kickbacks" — the sixth step in the sting.

For the seventh step, according to Ben-Veniste, Weinberg got a literary agent and obtained a book contract, then began leaking details of the FBI undercover probe to the news media.

The lawyer claimed that the publicity increased the advance for the book deal and that Weinberg had assumed that the defendants would plead guilty and that he would not have to testify at a trial.

Ben-Veniste said, in telling the jurors that they were the eighth step in the sting scenario, that Weinberg would definitely be called to the witness stand by the defense, if need be.

"You're going to write this last scene," Ben-Veniste declared. "You will decide if Mr. Weinberg and his Abscam is the good guy or the bad guy."

In opening remarks Plato Cacheris, Myers' attorney, told the jurors that in order for them to convict the defendants the government must prove more than the mere acceptance of money, that it must prove criminal intent.

"Mr. Myers was never influenced and never performed any acts for these people," he declared. "He said, 'I can do this, I can do that,' never intending to do any of it."

Errichetti's attorney, Raymond Brown, said "absolutely nothing was done" on behalf of the so-called Arab.

At one point, Brown quoted Weinberg as saying, "Just blow your horn as loud as you can, it's all bullshit."



U.S. Rep. Michael Myers, D-Pa., leads the way into U.S. District Court in Brooklyn, N.Y., followed by Mayor Angelo Errichetti of Camden, N.J. They are two of four men charged with taking bribes from FBI agents posing as Arab sheiks seeking special favors.



The morning after Delegate Aldolpho Leon, New Nogales, Ariz., dozes during platform committee reports at the Democratic National Convention in New York yesterday. Could it be that this Carter supporter celebrated the President's victory on the closed convention issue Monday night a little too much?

Kennedy gains economic platform victories

Continued from Page 1.

decided to take up the remaining platform issues Wednesday.

"We talked a while, we checked with our delegates and they all felt it was a good way to do it," Strauss said. "Good unity... we want a good convention."

Earlier, Kennedy won approval on a rollcall vote of a platform plank saying jobs would be the "single highest domestic priority" of the next Democratic administration. But he lost a plea for national health insurance.

The convention also went on record in favor of cutting off party funds for candidates who oppose the Equal Rights Amendment and against restrictions on federal funding of abortions for poor women. Both planks were victories for feminists.

But the convention did not finish the platform and rescheduled another session of debate on it for today.

When it came to the jobs planks, however, Kennedy invoked historic Democratic links to the little man and visibly moved delegates from both camps.

"Let us pledge that employment will be the first priority of our economic policy," he said. "Let us pledge that there will be security for all who are now at work. And let us pledge that there will be jobs for all who are out of work."

Moore said Carter's "reservations" probably will include language from a compromise plank drafted by Carter aides, several black leaders and union officials yesterday that was withheld from the floor in a unity gesture.

The compromise makes no mention of specific numbers of jobs or dollars but says Carter would work on several fronts to end "unacceptably high" unemployment.

Democrats pay tribute to Humphrey

NEW YORK (UPI) — Democrats paid tribute yesterday to the memory of Hubert H. Humphrey and, in his name, appealed for the party unity that they denied him in 1968.

Vice President Walter Mondale, his protege, and Secretary of State Edward Muskie, his running mate, led the tributes, but it was his wife, Muriel, who warned to the delegates at the Democratic National Convention.

Mrs. Humphrey, petite and white-haired, was attending her first convention alone and confessed: "I almost decided last time one out, but I couldn't. I just couldn't."

"There was no way," he added. "I love his party and I love his country too much."

Mrs. Humphrey appealed for party unity recalling, as did other delegates, that the failure of liberals to back Humphrey cost him the 1968 election which he lost to Richard Nixon.

As the Minnesota delegation flashed cards saying "Minnesota Remembers HHH," Muskie told the convention, "It was proud, oh how proud I was, to be his running mate in 1968."

"But we lost," continued Muskie, in a year in which many Democrats argued "it made no difference" who was elected. "Now we know what a difference it would have made," Muskie said and added that this year the Democrats must "remember 1968."

Introducing Muriel Humphrey to the crowd, Mondale said, "Muriel didn't stand behind Hubert, she stood next to Hubert. She was his partner; his ally, his colleague, his confidant."

Joining Mrs. Humphrey and Mondale at the end of the memorial, which included a film of Humphrey's life, was Hubert H. Humphrey III, their son.

Since Humphrey's first convention in 1948,

there have been very few where he did not play a major role.

• Humphrey, the young mayor of Minneapolis challenging the Democrats to take the stand on civil rights in 1948.

• Humphrey, the young senator who had lost to John F. Kennedy in his first bid for the presidential nomination in 1960.

• Humphrey, eagerly accepting Lyndon Johnson's long-awaited invitation to become the vice presidential candidate in 1964.

• Humphrey, the victor in the most turbulent convention of modern times in 1968.

• Humphrey, making one more attempt at winning the nomination and relinquishing it to old friend George McGovern in 1972.

• And Humphrey, already suffering from cancer, discarding thoughts of another race and, as an elder statesman, embracing Jimmy Carter.

News briefs

Dogs die, but vaccine scarce

By The Associated Press

A new, highly contagious intestinal disease called parvovirus is killing thousands of dogs across the United States and the only laboratory licensed to produce the needed vaccine has a backlog of orders for five million doses.

"It's like when the whites man brought measles to the Indians," said Dr. Joe Smith, a veterinarian in Little Rock, Ark. "It wiped out whole tribes of Indians."

While the federal agencies don't keep statistics, outbreaks of the disease — first discovered following a collie show in Louisville, Ky., in 1978 — have been reported in growing numbers from coast to coast this summer.

In Arkansas, Smith estimated 1,200 dogs had died in the past two months, though the state health board had only officially counted 240.

The disease is primarily spread through the feces or vomit of dogs.

Anderson files ballot petitions

HARRISBURG (AP) — Campaigners for John Anderson filed petitions with the Department of State yesterday to put the independent candidate for president on the ballot in the November election.

If the petitions are approved, Pennsylvania will become the 35th state in which Anderson has won a ballot position for the November election.

Campaign officials said the petitions contained 119,000 signatures of registered state voters, well over the 40,000 required by state law.

Following the filing, Jane Fowler, Anderson's campaign coordinator in the state, said the expected renomination of President Carter by the Democrats "will give us a real boost."

"All of the polls show Carter trailing badly," she said. "Kennedy's withdrawal means we'll get started 72 hours earlier in looking for supporters among the Kennedy people," she said.



Rep. John B. Anderson Fowler said that beginning Sept. 1, Anderson's state campaign expects to spend \$10,000 a week, not including funds spent on television advertising.

Judge stops rape-record ban

PITTSBURGH (AP) — State Supreme Court Judge Henry X. O'Brien has refused to issue an across-the-board ban on defense attorneys who seek the records of rape counseling centers.

The full court is expected to decide whether to take up the issue later this month or in September.

Until then, O'Brien said he will decide on a case-by-case basis whether to delay a trial when defense attorneys seek such information.

Defense attorneys say they need to know whether a rape victim gives differing accounts of the assault to police officers and rape counselors. Counselors argue that the interviews should remain confidential.

O'Brien, meanwhile, also decided to delay a decision in the case of a 26-year-old Duquesne man charged with raping a West Mifflin woman. The defense attorney had asked for interview notes taken by the Center for Victims of Violent Crime.

TMI must furnish information

HARRISBURG (AP) — The operators of the Three Mile Island nuclear plant must provide computer tapes to show whether maintenance was improperly deferred for the plant's undamaged Unit 1 reactor, a three-member federal panel ruled yesterday.

"The hearing board of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is interested in whether work orders went undone to avoid a shutdown (of Unit 1)," said Ivan Smith, panel chairman and chief NRC administrative law judge.

"That is a serious, serious matter."

Smith said he didn't want raw data dumped on the board and directed the plant operator, Metropolitan Edison Co., to produce the maintenance records in the most concise fashion possible.

"Get somebody down here from your computer programming," he told company attorneys. "You know what we want. Tell us how to ask for it."

The board said it wants to know why the leak occurred in the cooling system of Unit 1, why it was not stopped sooner and what steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence.

The Unit 1 reactor has been shut down ever since a March '79 accident crippled its sister reactor, Unit 2, at the central Pennsylvania generating plant.

The board also said it wants more details on a June leak that dumped 10,000 gallons of radioactive water onto the floor of the reactor's containment building.

Bolivia may be cocaine haven, officials say

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Administration officials yesterday said there are established financial links between the new Bolivian military junta and drug traffickers and they fear the nation could become a sanctuary for the cultivation of cocaine.

Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., asked a Senate foreign relations subcommittee to investigate possible links between the Bolivian military government and the international cocaine traffic.

"The cultivation of coca (the plant which is the base of cocaine) is already there, and has been for centuries," the officials said, "where the growers will have a freedom and license to operate."

officials told United Press International. "We were on the verge of establishing a program of limiting its cultivation, when the military threw the government over."

The officials spoke on the basis of no further identification. They said the military, which had actively cooperated with the wealthy coca growers previously, appears to have received direct financial payments from the narcotics traffickers.

"The country will be a sanctuary," the officials said, "where the growers will get hundreds of thousands of dollars from the 'Santa Cruz Mafia' which controls the growing and selling of the coca plants."

The officials said that in light of the cooperation between the cocaine traffickers and the Bolivian government, "it may be that for the first time, the drug trade has purchased itself a government."

DeConcini said news reports since the July 17 coup are virtually "unanimous in characterizing the present regime as little more than an appendage of the criminal organizations which dominate the flourishing international cocaine trade."

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