

DeLay Scandal Goes International

Texas Grand Jury has brought two indictments against Tom DeLay

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A Texas Grand Jury has brought two more indictments against Rep. Tom DeLay, in addition to an earlier criminal conspiracy indictment. The latest two indictments are for money laundering. GOP apologists for DeLay contend that Travis County District Attorney Ronnie Earle is a Democratic activist bent on a vendetta against DeLay. They have no comment on the fact that it was two separate 12-member Grand Jury that brought the three indictments against DeLay.

However, what throws cold water on the entire GOP spin strategy is the fact that the U.S. Department of Justice is participating in a criminal probe of DeLay for his political fundraising activities in Great Britain, an investigation that includes DeLay's May 2000 meeting in London with Lady Margaret Thatcher, the former Tory Prime Minister.

The investigation involves DeLay's possible support for legislation in return for free trips abroad, including a May 2000 golf trip to St. Andrews, Scotland. DeLay's May 2000 meeting in St. Andrews with Scottish Tory Member of Parliament Brian Monteith and other Scottish Tory leaders are also being investigated. Monteith is an acquaintance of indicted GOP lobbyist Jack Abramoff. A leaked British Home Office document states that the U.S. Justice Department requested the Home Office's assistance in a criminal probe "involving high-profile American and UK-based individuals, including a leading congressman and former prime minister Margaret Thatcher."

In August 2004, Thatcher's son, Sir Mark Thatcher, was placed under house arrest by South African police for his involvement in a plot to overthrow the government of oil-rich Equatorial Guinea in a coup d'état that involved British, Angolan, and South African mercenaries and British, Lebanese, and American financial backers. The Boeing 727-100 used to fly the mercenaries to Equatorial Guinea via Zimbabwe (where it was impounded) was bought from Dodson Aviation, an Ottawa, Kansas company, just a few weeks prior to the planned coup. One of the largest investors in Equatorial Guinea's oil industry is Dallas-based Triton Energy, a firm that is close to George W. Bush. It has been a significant contributor to the Republican National Committee.

Thatcher was nabbed by South African police in Cape Town prior to his fleeing to Texas. His Texas-born wife Diane Burgdorf Thatcher, the conservative daughter of a Dallas millionaire car dealer, and their two children had already left South Africa for Texas. Thatcher had been under investigation by a special South African anti-corruption squad, code named the "Scorpions," since 1995. In 1994, Thatcher fled Texas for South Africa after he was charged with racketeering in a \$6 million civil action. In January 2005, Thatcher pleaded guilty to violating South Africa's anti-mercenary laws and was fined \$505,000 and allowed to leave

for Britain. The United States denied Thatcher a visa to join his family in Texas. Last month, the couple announced that they were divorcing due to an “irretrievable breakdown.”

It is doubtful that the Justice Department, under Republican Alberto Gonzales, would participate with Earle in a criminal probe of the former House Majority Leader if there was not a criminal predicate for such an investigation.

It is also commonplace for Federal and state prosecutors to share information when their investigations are targeting the same individual or group of individuals. The Justice Department probe of DeLay involves the possible laundering of money from Britain to DeLay’s Republican political action committees (PACs). Those same PACs are part of Earle’s probe of the illegal laundering of corporate money through the Republican National Committee.

The DeLay probe now includes prosecutors and investigators from the Travis County District Attorney’s Office, the U.S. Justice Department, the British Home Office, the London Metropolitan Police, and the Scottish Police Services. GOP charges that the investigation is a Democratic plot are laughable and inane.

In addition to state charges, DeLay also faces possible criminal charges in relation to his dealings with convicted GOP lobbyist Jack Abramoff as well as the latest revelations about laundering political campaign money from Britain. If convicted on the Texas money laundering charges alone, DeLay faces up to life in prison.

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