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DarkAlliance

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Photos and Images

The Bonita Store restaurant.

Outside this restaurant, eight miles from the Mexican border, Danilo Bandon

was taped by the DEA bragging about the thousands of kilos of cocaine he'd sold to the black gangs of Los Angeles since 1981. **Mercury News photo by Gary Webb** [11K JPEG](#)



The bunker outside of Nicaragua that Norwin Meneses was storing cocaine in when Nicaraguan police arrested him in 1991. **Nicaraguan police photo**

[19K JPEG](#)



Evidence photo of 100 kilos of cocaine that the Drug Enforcement Agency and Oscar Danilo

Bandon tried to sell "Freeway" Rick Ross in his arrest. **DEA photo** [15K JPEG](#)



"Freeway" Rick Ross, now in prison in San Diego, created a mass market for crack in inner-city Los Angeles and elsewhere, thanks to the connections of his cocaine suppliers -- a group of men connected to a CIA-run guerrilla army. **Mercury News photo by Patrick Tehan** [4K JPEG](#)

A few years before Rick Ross got involved with cocaine, he wielded a racquet for his high school tennis team. A college scholarship fizzled when it was learned that he couldn't read.

Photo from Dorsey High School yearbook
[8K JPEG](#)



Norwin Meneses' application for a false Nicaraguan passport that was introduced in the Nicaraguan government's case

against him. **Mercury News photo by Gary Webb**
[26K JPEG](#) | [Detail: 11K JPEG](#)



1323 Oddstad Blvd., Pacifica, Calif. DEA operative Danilo Blandon testified that when he was

running drugs for the Nicaraguan Contras, he picked up kilos of cocaine at Norwin Meneses' home on Oddstad Blvd. in Pacifica. **Mercury News photo by Jason M. Grow**
[11K JPEG](#)



8 Bellevue St., Daly City, Calif. In 1981, DEA agent Sandra Smith followed two Los

Angeles drug dealers to this Daly City home and discovered the cocaine pipeline used by the Contra army. **Mercury News photo by Jason M. Grow**
[10K JPEG](#)



The man the Nicaraguans call the King of Drugs -- Norwin Meneses -- is a millionaire businessman, an ex-Freedom Fighter and, according to one federal source, a long-time CIA operative. **Mercury News photo by Gary Webb** [9K JPEG](#)



Rialto house. In 1986, drug agents raided Danilo Bandon's house, which overlooks a Rialto country club, but came away empty-handed. Bandon moved and sold the residence to a Los Angeles narcotics officer, who was later convicted on cocaine charges. **Mercury News photo by Gary Webb** [8K JPEG](#)



Evidence photo of Rick Ross' truck at time of capture. Trying to escape a DEA trap into which he had been lured by Danilo Bandon, Ross crashed his truck into a hedgerow after a brief chase in National City, Calif. **DEA photo** [13K JPEG](#)



The political chief of the CIA's Contra forces, Adolfo Calero, third from left, and cocaine smuggler Norwin Meneses, right, during a 1984 meeting of an anti-communist group in San Francisco. The other men are local FDN supporters. [14K JPEG](#)





Sound clips

July 21, 1990

Conversation outside Bonita Store restaurant between John Arman and Oscar Danillo Bandon in San Diego. Bandon talks with Arman about his work with the blacks in Los Angeles and how much crack has been sold.

[[78K AIFF](#) | [233K WAV](#)]

BLANDON: These people have been working with me 10 years.

ARMAN: (interrupts)

B: I've sold them about 2,000 or 4,000. I don't know. I don't remember how many.

Bandon and Arman discuss who Bandon's contacts are in Los Angeles.

Note: Strong language used in excerpt.

[[103K AIFF](#) | [308K WAV](#)]

BLANDON: These ... these are the black people.

ARMAN: Black?!

B: Yeah. They control LA. These are the people that control L.A.

A: I don't like niggers.

B: Well ...

A: They pay cash though?

B: Yeah, they pay cash.

Bandon convinces Arman that the only people he deals with are black cocaine dealers.

[[86K AIFF](#) | [260K WAV](#)]

BLANDON: All the time, just with them. I don't deal with anybody else, just with them ...

ARMAN: Is it really dry right now or something? ... Or they're still buying?

B: They buy all the time. They buy, all the time.

June 13, 1991

Bandon and Arman discuss how customers don't "appreciate" the beauty of the powder cocaine they are selling since the customers were turning it into crack.

[[55K AIFF](#) | [164K WAV](#)]

ARMAN: And they don't care how good it looks. That's what's terrible. I got the best-looking stuff and they don't want good stuff.

BLANDON: Yeah, they don't care.

March 7, 1996

Alan Fenster, defense attorney for Rick Ross, asks Danilo Blandon where he was "running his operation."

[[137K AIFF](#) | [412K WAV](#)]

FENSTER: So you were running his Los Angeles operation, isn't that correct?

BLANDON: Yes. Now remember, we were running, just ... whatever we were running in L.A., it goes ... the profit was going to the Contra revolution. I don't know ...

F: I'm glad you reminded me of that.

Fenster asks about a conversation between Blandon and Norwin Meneses, his contact person for the Contras.

[[74K AIFF](#) | [224K WAV](#)]

FENSTER: He (Meneses) said, "Hey, I'm selling drugs and I want you to help me" ...

BLANDON: Yes.

F: ...in so many words. Is that right?

B: To raise the money for the Contra revolution.

Blandon explains why he was raising money for the Contras by selling drugs and how Col. Enrique Bermudez was his contact with the Contras. Unable to express himself in English, Blandon turns to the translator.

[[100K AIFF](#) | [301K WAV](#)]

TRANSLATOR: "There is a saying that the ends justify the means."

BLANDON: And that's what Mr. Bermudez told us in Honduras. OK? So we started raising money for the Contra revolution.

When Fenster asks about Bermudez working for the U.S. government and helping Blandon in Los Angeles and coordinating contacts with the Contras, Assistant U.S. Attorney L.J. O'Neale objects.

[[101K AIFF](#) | [305K WAV](#)]

FENSTER: When you met with Mr. Bermudez, did you meet also with members of the United States government?

BLANDON: No sir.

F: He was already working for the United States government when you met him, isn't that correct?

O'NEALE: Object...

JUDGE: Let me sustain the objection at this point.

Other Readings

Crack cocaine

Cocaine: A Major Drug Issue of the Seventies, Hearings before the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, House of Representatives, July 24, 26 and Oct. 10, 1979, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980. (Congress' first warnings about crack.)

Cocaine 1980, Proceedings of the Interamerican Seminar on Coca and Cocaine, edited by Raul Jeri, Lima, Peru, 1980. (Collection of studies by North and South American cocaine experts, containing the first reports of cocaine smoking.)

Cocaine and Federal Sentencing Policy, U.S. Sentencing Commission, Washington, D.C. May 1995. (Study recommending equal prison sentences for cocaine crimes.)

Cocaine Smoking, Ronald K. Siegel, New England Journal of Medicine, Vol. 300, No. 7, pg. 373, February 1979. (First article published in U.S. regarding crack.)

Cocaine Smoking, Ronald K. Siegel, Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, Vol. 14, No. 4, Oct.-Dec. 1982. (Historical study done for National Institute on Drug Abuse.)

Crack cocaine, Hearing before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Governmental Affairs, July 16, 1986, U.S. Senate, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986. (An example of the Congressional panic over the crack "epidemic.")

Developing Price Series for Cocaine, Jonathan P. Caulkins, Rand Institute, Drug Policy Research Center, 1994. (Study done for the DEA to help agents determine historical cocaine prices in U.S. cities.)

Land of Opportunity. William Adler, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1995. (Story of poor Arkansas farm kids who move to Detroit and become crack kingpins.)

Drugs and U.S. Policy

Cocaine Politics, Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991. (First book to document the strange links between the cocaine trade and the U.S. government.)

Out of Control, Leslie Cockburn, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1987. (Investigation of Contra-linked cocaine operations in Florida and Costa Rica.)

Pipe Dream Blues, Clarence Lusane, South End Press, Boston, 1991. (How the drug war has affected black America.)

Powderburns, Celerino Castillo III and Dave Harmon, Mosaic Press, Buffalo, 1994. (Memoirs of former DEA agent who discovered cocaine flights by Contras in El Salvador.)

The Big White Lie, Michael Levine, Thunder's Mouth Press, New York, 1993. (Memoirs of former DEA agent and his run-ins with the CIA.)

The Case Against the General, Steve Albert, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1993. (A chronicle of the Manuel Noriega drug trafficking trial.)

The Underground Empire, James Mills, Doubleday & Co., New York, 1986. (Examination of U.S. efforts to combat foreign drug lords.)

Sandinista Revolution

Nicaragua in Perspective, Eduardo Crawley, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1979. (History of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua.)

The Agony of a Dictatorship, Oleg Ignatiev and Genrikh Borovik, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1990. (Day-by-day account of the fall of Somoza by two Russian reporters.)

The Nicaragua Reader, Peter Rosset and John Vandermeer, Grove Press, New York, 1983. (Collection of essays and articles on 1979 revolution.)

The Contras

Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua 1981-1987, Roy Gutman, Simon and Schuster, 1988. (Study of U.S. government's role in the Contra revolution.)

Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua, Stephen Kinzer, Anchor Books, New York, 1992. (Story of the Contra revolution by the New York Times reporter who covered it.)

Commandos: The CIA and Nicaragua's Contra Rebels, Sam Dillon, Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1991. (Thorough examination of the CIA's role in creating the Contras.)

Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s, Martha Honey, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, 1994. (A look at how the Contra war affected Costa Rica.)

Iran-Contra: The Final Report, Lawrence E. Walsh, Times Books, New York, 1994. (Report of Independent Counsel's investigation.)

The Iran-Contra Connection, Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott and Jane Hunter, South End Press, Boston, 1987. (Study of covert operations during the Reagan Administration.)

Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family, Shirley Christian, Random House, New York, 1985. (History of the Contra revolution.)

Shadow Warrior, Felix Rodriguez and John Weisman, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1989. (Memoirs ex-CIA agent who worked with the Contras.)

The Tower Commission Report, Times Books, 1987. (Report of Presidential board assigned to investigate the Iran-Contra scandal.)

Under Fire, Oliver L. North, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1991. (North's version of the Iran-Contra scandal.)

Washington's War on Nicaragua, Holly Sklar, South End Press, Boston, 1988. (U.S. involvement in Contra revolution.)

With the Contras, Christopher Dickey, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1985. (Well-reported book on the first years of the Contras.)

L.A. Gangs

Uprising, Yusuf Jah and Sister Shah'Keyah, Scribner, New York, 1995. (Transcripts of interviews with gang leaders.)

Gang Involvement in Rock Cocaine Trafficking, Final Report, Malcolm W. Klein, Cheryl L. Maxson and Lea C. Cunningham, National Institute of Justice, Washington, D.C., April 1988. (Study by USC sociologists for the U.S. government)

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