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U.S. indicts Bradley Bryant on Georgia fraud charges

Since the fall of 1979, a complex news story has been unraveling like a bizarre tale of espionage.

In bits and pieces, it has been learned that persons with links to the U.S. intelligence community may have secretly engaged in illegal drug dealing, gun-running, theft of high-level military hardware and aiding terrorists.

This is another in a continuing series of reports on this still unfolding saga.

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Former Main Line businessman Bradley Fred Bryant was indicted on nine counts of fraud yesterday by a federal grand jury in Philadelphia.

The indictment, listing six counts of mail fraud and three counts of wire fraud, charges Bryant, 38, with defrauding the International Harvester Corp. of \$347,000 by financing the sale of nonexistent and price-inflated industrial equipment through a Bryant-owned IHC subsidiary, Bryson International.

The profits from the financing of the equipment were funneled to various corporations controlled by Bryant, according to the indictment.

The alleged fraud was discovered, the indictment said, when Bryson International filed last year for bankruptcy.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen V. Wehner, who has been assigned as prosecutor of the case, declined yesterday to comment on why the case is to be prosecuted in Philadelphia rather than Savannah, Ga., where the alleged fraud occurred.

William McAvee, chief of the criminal prosecutions division of the U.S. attorney's office in Savannah, would say only that "an agreement to transfer the case to Philadelphia came during a meeting between our office, the U.S. attorney in Philadelphia, and the FBI. Beyond that I can make no comment."

However, The Bulletin has obtained a confidential U.S. Justice

Department investigative report written March 21, 1980, by William W. Hamilton, then special agent in charge of the Savannah FBI office, to William T. Moore Jr., a former U.S. attorney in Savannah.

Hamilton wrote: "The bankruptcy (Bryson International) proceeding had a major impact on Savannah and many other companies operating throughout Georgia. Among these are International Harvester Corp., operating out of Atlanta, which lost approximately \$6.4 million.

"Another major impact was felt by the Citizens and Southern Bank of Savannah which lost an estimated \$500,000."

Hamilton's dispatch went on to list seven other major Georgia companies which lost an additional \$1.5 million through Bryant's extensive and complex business dealings in Georgia.

Hamilton's dispatch said, "The extent of Bryant's criminal activities are many and far-flung. It is doubtful that all of his criminal activities can ever be successfully investigated to an extent that would reasonably assure successful prosecution."

Bryant, formerly of the 400 block of Dorset road, Devon, Chester County, is scheduled to appear Dec. 10 before a U.S. magistrate in Philadelphia for arraignment on yesterday's federal fraud charges.

He is currently being held in federal prison in Elgin, Ill., in \$1 million cash bail on charges of selling drugs to undercover agents.

He has also been indicted with 15 other persons in a U.S. Justice Department investigation into the thefts of sophisticated and sensitive military equipment from the secret U.S. Naval Weapons and Testing Base at China Lake, Calif.

The China Lake investigation was prompted by a series of articles published in The Bulletin last December. The series detailed Bryant's mysterious business activities, including an international bodyguard service he operated from an office in the King of Prussia Mall, Valley Forge.

Bryant and his associates provided security for Nevada drug kingpin Jimmy Shagra.

His association with Shagra, who has since been imprisoned, eventually led Bryant into international drug trafficking in Colombia, South America, according to Justice Department records obtained by The Bulletin.

Besides his other current problems with federal authorities, Bryant's name has also surfaced as a possible CIA operative in the current U.S. Justice Department probe of international arms smuggling ventures by two ex-CIA agents, Edwin Wilson and Frank Terpil.

Wilson and Terpil recruited U.S. government employes at China Lake to provide training to international terrorist organizations at a special school operated near Tripoli, Libya, by Libyan dictator Moammar Khadafy.

The Bulletin articles detailed the arrest of Bradley Bryant, his cousin, retired Air Force Master Sgt. Larry E. Bryant and Roger Dale Barnard, inside a suite of rooms at the Airport Sheraton Hotel, Philadelphia.

Police in raiding the suite, believed they were thwarting a drug trafficking operation but, instead of drugs, police discovered inside the suite a cache of silencer-equipped handguns, thousands of dollars in new \$100 bills, pamphlets on the art of escape, evasion and disguise, brochures listing poisons used by the CIA, and a book, entitled: "The Top Secret Radio Frequencies of the U.S. Government."