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SUBJECT Frank Terpil

BOB EDWARDS: International arms dealer, Frank Terpil, had everything -- real estate in Washington and London, a Rolls, a Mercedes and enough cash in Swiss bank accounts to live without working for the rest of his life.

His business, selling the skills he had learned while working for the CIA in the early 70's.

But, in 1980, Terpil's business fell apart after arranging to sell guns to two undercover police officers in New York. He was arrested and indicted, but fled the country before his trial. He's been a fugitive now for three years.

A few months ago, reporter Jim Hogan got a call from Terpil. They had met before. Terpil wanted to talk. They spoke together in Eastern Europe and again on an island in the Caribbean. Those interviews appear in this month's Penthouse magazine, and are heard this week in our series on Terpil.

Here's Part II, prepared by Jim Hogan.

FRANK TERPIL: I think my lifestyle had been on a con-temporary basis with an up and coming young Washington million-aire with all the assets and all the fine things that go with it -- a big house, the right cars, the right address, office buildings, all the respectable amenities that go with the life-style in the Washington area.

JIM HOGAN: Even before Frank Terpil became a fugitive, he was a man in motion. He moved with the movers and shook with the shakers because in the end he loved making deals. Deal were what he had instead of values, and they rewarded him with sick veneer of respectability, whether the deal involved a Libyan assassination contract, combat boots and basketballs for Uganda, or florescent saddles for camels in Saudi Arabia, the deal was the same.

What is so shocking about Terpil is not so much the deals that he made as the thoughts that lay behind them.

NEW For example, when upwards of a thousand people committed suicide in Jonestown, most Americans reacted with horror, but not Frank Terpil. When he learned from a friend in the State Department that the U.S. Government intended to bring the Jonestown victims home for burial, Terpil saw a unique business opportunity, the possibility for he and his friend at State to make a quick killing in the casket business.

While that deal fell through, other deals were made, and they often depended upon who Terpil knew, a pal in the CIA, a crooked congressman, a manufacturer of exotic explosives, or a demolitions expert in the Army who wanted to make a few extra bucks and didn't care how whe did it.

The same could be said of Terpil's partner, former CIA officers Edwin T. Wilson. Wilson's huge estate in the Virginia countryside was, until the indictments came raining down against him, a magnet for U.S. Senators and high-ranking CIA and Pentagon officials. Today, the Wilson is the subject of a grand jury investigation into the alleged corruption of public officials.

According to Terpil, more than one politician was bribed in an effort to procure lucrative defense contracts and other favors.

Whatever one may say about Frank Terpil, and there is much to be said, all of it obvious, the fact is that he could not have prospered without the help of friends in high places. Unlike the fugitives, they remain in business.

TERPIL: American politics is so [bleeped] it's unbelievable. When they shake their finger at somebody else, they really should be looking in their own backyard.

HOGAN: It wasn't just money that was at stake. It was countries and armies.

✓ In one case, Terpil says Libya was able to purchase the order of battle for Chad. That is to say, a complete

description of the country's defense forces. Libya was able to do so with the help of Ed Wilson and his contacts in the intelligence community. The result: a bloody invasion that saw an American enemy attack an American ally using the best intelligence the U.S. taxpayers dollars could provide. Without the order of battle, the invasion might never have taken place.

I'm Jim Hogan, for National Public Radio.