

Brought to Justice: Operation Leyenda

DEA Museum Lecture Series, October 29, 2013

Sean Fearn: Good afternoon and welcome. On behalf of all of us here at the DEA Museum, my name is Sean Fearn. I'm the Director of the Museum. And, we are pleased to continue, as part of the museum's regular lecture series, a program this afternoon, uh, that is both timely and topical.

As DEA pauses, not only here in Washington DC, but around the country this week to celebrate Red Ribbon, it is incredibly important that we remember from where Red Ribbon began. As part of our introductions this morning I'd like to welcome - excuse me, this afternoon - I'd like to welcome to the podium the administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Ms. Michele Leonhart.

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Michele Leonhart: Thanks, Sean. Well, thanks all of you that joined us this morning. Thanks for coming back. And, I see we've got some distinguished retired agents, uh, who've joined us as well. And, uh, it's an important week. It's an important day for us. Uh, Red Ribbon - uh, for anybody who has served at DEA, Red Ribbon, uh, you immediately think of, uh, Kiki Camarena and his sacrifice.

And, so it's a very important year for us, to celebrate, Red Ribbon. Uh, when unexpectedly, without any announcement, in August, Kiki's - the mastermind behind his kidnap, torture and murder, was released from prison in Mexico.

It's important to have this, because we need to remember all those lessons that we learned from those that were in leadership at the time. And, you know, I remember

as a young agent when we lost Kiki. But, I also remember years later, having served out in California, just the legacy of Operation Leyenda.

So many of the things that we learned back then are - are being put in place without even thinking about it now. So, I wanted to welcome you, and to say thank you for being here. Rest assured, the DEA is doing everything possible to get that killer back in custody. And, then we will do whatever we need to do to, to try to get him to the United States.

But, I am up here not only letting everybody know of our commitment that continues since the Jack Lawn days. But, also to say thank you for the - the three panelists for being here. And, we had Mr. Lawn here this morning. He kicked off our Red Ribbon Week ceremony. He had great words. Ran into people in the elevator. People were very choked up and emotional.

Because, you cannot talk about Kiki and what was going on after his murder without getting emotional. And, I know, Jack, they are very thankful that you came. And, you were the one that spoke this year.

Jack Taylor, I just want to say a few things about Jack. Here at DEA, people who - who, probably, Jack, have never met you - you can tell the old - the old dinosaurs versus the newer ones. Some of us still call a project here at DEA the 5th Floor Project. We still call it Jack Taylor's Shop. And, you've been long gone, but it lives on. So, it's a privilege to have you here.

And, then obviously, with our - our favorite author, thank you so much, for being here Elaine. And, I will tell you a story that, before our agent graduations, I - I go through and I read some of the essays that they do. And it's what - you know, why - what made them come to DEA? And, it wasn't once, it's more than once, that I have read that they learned about DEA because they read a book called Desperados.

And, that is what brought them to DEA. And, I don't know if anybody told you that. But thank you for everything we've done to portray the incident - portray our organization the way you have. And, it's why we had people turn out this afternoon. Because, you know, we're not going to forget Kiki. We're never going to forget, his sacrifice.

We won't forget his family. And we need to remember what was done by this agency to get those responsible put away. So, thank you, all of you, for being here today. And, we are looking forward to hearing from our panelists. Thanks.

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Sean Fearn: I'm going to ask our panelists to join me up on stage in a moment. Just a quick note for those who are joining us live via our webcast, you have now the opportunity to send in questions. I hope there are difficult ones for Mr. Taylor, in particular.

By sending them via email, if you click on the bottom left corner of the webcast window, there's a little, question bubble. And, you can submit those questions to us. For those of us joining in the auditorium, there will be a period toward the second half of the lecture, where you will also be able to ask questions.

All we ask is that you please wait for a microphone to get to you from the aisle, so that we can both hear your question and those watching from around the world can hear your question.

So, some 20 - almost 29 years ago, Kiki Camarena is kidnapped in Guadalajara, Mexico. A task force that later becomes known as Operation Leyenda is formed. We, at the Museum, felt it was incredibly important, particularly during Red Ribbon Week, and in light of Caro Quintero's release, to bring together individuals that lived all of this experience firsthand. We looked for a large breadth of individuals. But, quite frankly, as

all of you know, there is an active arrest warrant out for Caro Quintero, who was prematurely released from prison.

And, so the prosecutors in Los Angeles said to us, there are some folks that we'd rather you not have speaking, because what they say would be discoverable. And, therefore used against them, potentially, if it in any way wavers from what they said 28 years ago.

That's not to say that our panel today is not a group of experts. And, will provide a wonderful overview of the program, but to those who are part of Operation Leyenda who can't be with us today, we send special greetings to you.

And, with that let me ask former Administrator Jack Lawn, retired Special Agent Jack Taylor, and author Elaine Shannon to please join me up on stage for the panel.

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Sean Fearn: Let me, for the benefit of - of those in those in the audience and also those watching that may not have heard of - of your backgrounds. Just, for a moment each of you, both to our assembled audience, and to the webcast viewers.

To my immediate left is John C. "Jack" Lawn. And note that he was the 4th Administrator of DEA from 1985 - 1990. Prior to that Jack served as the Deputy Administrator under Francis "Bud" Mullen. Prior to that a Special Agent with the FBI. And, before that a Captain in the United States Marine Corps. A 27 total years of government service.

And, that wasn't enough. When Jack left DEA he went to uh, become Vice President and Chief of Operations for the New York Yankees. Don't worry, next year, Jack, next year. To my right are some Red Sox fans, so we're going to leave it at that.

Then, after the Yankees, CEO of Century Council, and he is now an instructor at Duke University in North Carolina.

To his left, retired Special Agent Jack Taylor. Also a veteran of the Marine Corps. A Special Agent for DEA for 27 years, serving, in among places New York, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Headquarters for both OPR and as a Deputy Chief of Intelligence. He then went on to serve as a Senior Advisor for Security and Public Safety for the State of Maryland. And, is a founding partner of the firm Professional Risk Management, Incorporated that specializes in consulting both the business and law enforcement. Welcome, Jack.

Jack Taylor: Thank you.

Sean Fearn: And, then to his left, Elaine Shannon. Elaine, I can't find anywhere in my notes that you're a veteran of the Marine Corps, however -

Elaine Shannon: I wish.

Sean Fearn: - a veteran independent journalist. Elaine has extensive experience covering terrorism, arms and drug trafficking, espionage, and transnational criminal networks. She is an author of three bestselling books, including the New York Times bestseller that Administrator Leonhart mentioned, *Desperadoes*, with the subheading: *Latin Druglords, US Law Men, and the War America Can't Win*.

She went on - which, by the way, that book went on to become the basis for Michael Mann's uh, NBC miniseries "Drug Wars: the Camarena Story". She has consulted to numerous films, most recently including *The Kingdom*, and *Public Enemies*. She has been honored by Harvard, the New York State Bar Association, and the Inter American Press Association. And, is working, currently on a book on narco terrorism and the global heroin trade. I'm sure you'll tell us a little bit about that later.

I'd like to start, Mr. Lawn, with you. And, take us back, if you would please, uh, one of the purposes of - of today's program is to recount the events of 1985 and beyond. So, February 7th, 1985, Enrique S. Camarena, often fondly referred to as Kiki, leaves the US Consulate in Guadalajara, Mexico. He is late for lunch with his wife. And, is never seen alive again.

Can you take us through the subsequent hours and days as word comes from both Guadalajara and Mexico City?

Jack Lawn: So, Sean, if I may, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to preface my response to that by setting the stage for what life was like in 1983-1984, prior to the abduction of Kiki Camarena by law enforcement officers. Elaine, in our prior conversations, talked about the period before uh, Kiki's kidnap, Elaine was in Colombia.

And, Colombia was a very violent country in those days. And, I thought I would start by just painting a picture of what drug law enforcement is like - was like. What we are involved in is a violent business. And, the violence in Colombia was the preface to what happened in Mexico. By January of 1985, we didn't realize how severe the problem was in Mexico.

And, we will talk about that later, I am sure, when we talk about lessons learned. But, in February 1982, two Special Agents flew into uh, Cartagena, Colombia. And, they had uh, as they flew in they checked into a hotel in Cartagena. And, they had to picture - they had a picture of a drug trafficker. As they checked into the hotel, they said well, since this trafficker spends a lot of time in this part of the country, I'll ask the clerk at the desk if he could recognize the photograph.

The clerk said immediately, I don't know who that is. The two agents went up to their room. Later in the evening, there was a bang on one of their doors. An individual who identified himself as a police officer said he wanted to talk to the agents. Both

agents were taken out, placed in a car. And, as the car left Cartagena, the driver of the car took a weapon and fired a shot through the leg of one of the Special Agents.

He then said to the second agent who was in the back seat, if you get a chance, get out of this car, because they're going to kill us. The second agent rolled out of the moving car, uh, was chased down and was shot twice. As he fell to the ground, uh, an individual came up, put a gun to the back of his neck and fired again.

Uh, the agent pretended to be dead. Although, I'm sure - I'm sure he was scared to death. And, feigned uh, dying. They left him. The agent arose, walked to uh - uh, a chapel. Asked for help from a chaplain. Nobody would help him. He caught a cab to go back to the Embassy. And, found out that his partner had also escaped when they were looking for uh, for this agent. Agent Kelly McCullough.

Uh, in 1984, the Minister of Justice, uh, Lara Bonilla, Minister of Justice for Colombia, was assassinated. He was assassinated, because we were in the process of seeking uh, extradition for drug traffickers out of Colombia. So, the answer was, the traffickers would just kill the Minister of Justice.

That, obviously, was not enough to do. So, the trafficking organization then attacked the Supreme Court of Colombia. Uh, you know our Supreme Court. Just think of a terrorist organization attacking the Supreme Court in Colombia. They killed 11 of these Supreme Court Justices. Destroyed thousands of pages of documents. Assuming that these were documents which could be used for extradition purposes for the individuals, the traffickers who would later be sent to the United States.

In the meanwhile, all is quiet in Mexico. Uh, in Guadalajara in 1984, a young agent, Kiki Camarena, was warned. He was working an investigation against a major trafficker, Felix Gallardo. And, was warned uh, that they had better cease their investigation. Or, there would be trouble with the traffickers in Guadalajara.

There was another operation ongoing, Operation [Pedrino]. Uh, the agent involved in Operation Padrino, on one morning left his house and was preparing to put his children on a bus for school. And, his house was machine gunned. Another lesson uh, for DEA not to pursue the drug traffickers in Colombia.

In the meanwhile, two major marijuana fields, uh, and it's interesting. We talk about the marijuana fields in Mexico, and Kiki's investigation. Because, of some issue now with the Attorney General and the Justice Department on marijuana. But, two major fields of marijuana were ceased. And, in those particular - one was 200 tons of marijuana. The other, in Zacatecas, was 150 tons. We're talking tons of marijuana. The value of one of those fields, as far as the traffickers were concerned, was about 2-1/2 million US dollars.

So, the traffickers saw a desperate need to do something to quell the enforcement activities of - of DEA in Mexico. Assuming that all of their problems uh, were caused by Kiki Camarena. Kiki had, in face, put in for a transfer from Guadalajara in November of 1984. Delayed his transfer until he could get another agent to come in to take his place. Because, he didn't want the agents in Guadalajara to be without a fellow agent.

So, he had delayed his departure. Uh, when the amount of marijuana was determined, the head of the - Mr. Reagan's White House dealing with narcotics issues, said it was impossible. There could not be that much marijuana growing without the State Department knowing about it.

The State Department did have an official who was assigned uh, to our [Spray] program in Mexico. He could not believe that there could be a field of that magnitude ongoing and growing in Mexico. The individual with whom we worked in the State Department said the same thing. How could this happen? There could be such major growth of marijuana without the United States knowing about it?

In 1984 also, there was a money laundering case, a DEA case in Los Angeles uh, where we seized uh, almost 4 million dollars. Again, from the accounts of Felix Gallardo. In the meanwhile, four US citizens, four innocent people, who were distributing Bibles in Guadalajara, were picked up. Because, for some reason, the traffickers thought that these individuals were uh, cooperating with DEA. These four Jehovah's Witnesses were just doing what they thought was the right thing. They were kidnapped. They were murdered.

Two young men happened into a restaurant in Guadalajara, to celebrate the departure of one of the young men who was studying medicine in Dallas, Texas. Caro Quintero was having a party in this restaurant, saw these two young men, said, those are DEA agents. Kill them.

The two young men were picked up, tortured for several hours with ice picks, and uh, were murdered. Uh, again, premonitions of what was to come. So, that uh, set the stage. And, then to respond to - to Sean, on February 7th, uh, Kiki and his wife had been talking about his departure, about purchasing furniture for the new apartment in San Diego, and Kiki said to his wife Mika, let's meet for lunch and we'll talk about our transfer.

And, how much we will look forward to putting people in jail in San Diego. And, not having them sprung because they were working for drug traffickers who were corrupting law enforcement in Mexico.

As Kiki left the Consulate, moving toward his truck he was stopped, and at least two of the individuals were Guadalajara police officers. Uh, and, they told Kiki that the Chief wanted to see them. And, that Kiki should get in the car. And, go with them immediately. Uh, Kiki said, well, first let me call my - let me tell my boss where I'm going. Because, he wanted me to know he wouldn't be at lunch.

And, they said no, you come immediately. Interestingly enough, when our catalyst here, Elaine, was in Guadalajara, the truck was still there. Kiki's truck was still there, and the truck was unopened. So, Kiki never did get to the truck.

Bud Mullen, who was the Administrator of DEA uh, thought he had a good relationship with the Mexican Federal Judicial Police. He called the head of the Mexican Federal Judicial Police, and said, an agent has been kidnapped. We need your help.

The head of the Mexican Federal Judicial Police, Manuel [unintelligible], said help will be coming immediately. Uh, as most of you know, uh, who watch NCIS, in a kidnapping case, 48 hours are critically important. 48 hours had passed, no uh, help was forthcoming. And, then when the Mex Feds would - when the Mexican Federal Judicial Police arrived - they arrived uh, without transportation, without radios, and without motivation to do anything to assist us.

On Saturday, February 9th, we learned that uh, another drug trafficker, one we wanted to talk to about Kiki's - uh, Kiki Camarena's kidnapping, was in a hotel in Mexico City. The Ambassador - or United States Ambassador, Ambassador Jack Davin, calls the Head of the Mexican Federal Judicial Police, and says, that DEA wants to talk to, Juan [unintelligible]. And, he's in a given hotel.

For some reason the Mexican Federal Judicial Police did not arrive until two days later. Obviously, they had other things to do. And, by then the - Juan [unintelligible] had disappeared. Bud Mullen then, realizing that uh, we're not to get the help that we thought we might get from the Mexican Federal Judicial Police, calls his friend the Commissioner of Customs, Willy VonRaab. And, said, Willy, we need the help of the Customs Service.

Uh, Raab said, certainly. We will shut down the border. The Commissioner of Customs shut down the border of all the border crossings from Mexico into the United States. That was not met with wild applause at State Department. Willy was called up.

And, told by the Secretary of the Treasury, that his job was in jeopardy. And, that the next time the Customs Service wants to go to war with somebody, they should tell - Willy should tell his superiors first.

In the meanwhile, Kiki is taken to a home owned by uh, Caro Quintero. And, is tortured for several days. We learned from our friends in the intelligence community that the interrogation of Kiki Camarena is uh, on tape. That the individuals who were questioning uh, Kiki Camarena did so on tape.

And, this was standard practice, of course, of law enforcement in Mexico. But, there was also something involved. And, that is the number of people who were on the trafficker's payroll in Mexico City, in Guadalajara, wanted to know what DEA knew about their activities.

So, they would say well, ask Camarena about Jack Lawn. Or, ask Camarena about Jack Taylor. And, this would be on tape, so that subsequent meeting, they would learn what - what Caro - what Kiki Camarena had said. Kiki did leave some help for us, though. Uh, during part of the interrogation, in responding to a question he said, yes, Comandante. No, Comandante.

So, we knew that at least one of his interrogators was a Comandante whom we later uh, determined to be a Comandante with the Mexican Federal Judicial Police. Uh, the plot thickens, as we say. DEA was then told where the house was located, where uh, Kiki had been taken and - and tortured.

Sean Fearn: This is the house on Loppe de Vega.

Jack Lawn: This is the house on Loppe de Vega. Uh, one of the people with whom Kiki Camarena had worked, was a Mexican citizen uh, a Captain Zavala. Two hours after Camarena was kidnapped, Captain Zavala was kidnapped. Uh, he, too, was tortured. And, uh, in subsequent meetings with the Mexican government, when we

urged them to find someone to help us as far as the investigation was concerned, I warned them about Zavala.

And, the Mexican government said, we have no interest in Zavala. Zavala being a Mexican citizen. Zavala was a traitor to our government. So, uh, with that comment we knew that our support from the Mexican government would not be strong.

Sean Fearn: And, Jack, if I can interject, just to clarify things, Zavala was a contract pilot that was helping Camarena fly flights to identify locations of these super giant marijuana plantations.

Jack Lawn: He was the pilot on the one operation, where Kiki found the - the uh, the major marijuana growth in Zacatecas. And, so therefore he, too, had to be punished uh, for the work he had done in the amount of monies that was taken from the - from the drug traffickers.

Uh, we - Bud Mullen told the head of the Mexican Federal Judicial Police, we will pursue this uh, as long as we can determine - until we can determine who kidnapped Kiki, why, and we will then bring those people to justice. And, the head of the Mexican Police said, well, suppose we don't find Kiki or the bodies, the what? And, Bud Mullen said, well, you know how the US feels about MIA's?

And, you have to understand, if we don't get Kiki back and he has been killed, we need his body back. Suddenly, bodies were showing up throughout Mexico. And, we were being told, this is probably Camarena. That's probably Camarena. None of those bodies, indeed, were Kiki Camarena or Captain Zavala.

Then, the Mexican Federal Judicial Police came to our office and said, we have found a letter. And, the letter tells us that uh, Kiki Camarena is being held at a ranch - a [bravo] ranch about 70 miles outside of - of Guadalajara. The Mex Feds - the Mexican Federal Judicial Police, were going to show up there. And, they said, we'll go out in the

morning. Come with us while we raid the [bravo] ranch, and rescue Camarena and Zavala.

In the morning, when the agents arrived for their departure, the Mexican Federal Judicial Police had already left. They had left earlier. And, by the time that DEA arrived on scene, the family of the [bravo] ranch, all the members - the male members of the family - had been killed, including one individual who was shot uh, lying in bed.

The Mexican Federal Judicial Police said, case solved. We have uh, determined that the [bravo] people were involved in gun running and in drug trafficking. And, that's the reason they - they kidnapped Kiki Camarena. But, we know - and then, two hours later, at 6:00 in the evening, on that particular evening, uh - uh, a young man on a bicycle passed a culvert. And, saw uh, some two bundles in the bottom of a culvert. And, these were two bodies wrapped in plastic.

Immediately, the government of Mexico told us that this was Camarena and Zavala. And, yet the agents on scene who worked with Kiki Camarena said, they could not identify that it was Camarena's, because of the decomposition. And, yet, uh, again, the answer was case solved. You have uh, you have what you wanted. You have the body.

Uh, an autopsy was performed uh, in Mexico. There was no evidence gathered. Again, if you watch NCIS, when people do autopsies they collect evidence. There was no evidence collected in the - in the case of the autopsies of either Camarena or of Zavala.

Sean Fearn: Performed - autopsies performed by the Mexicans ?

Jack Lawn: Performed by the Mexican government. I the called Mexico City, and asked for the shrouds. I asked for the ropes that might have tied the two bodies.

Anything at all. Uh, so we could identify soil samples. Any pieces of evidence at all that would help us with the investigation.

And, uh, the response I received was, we destroyed everything that we found uh, because uh, it was putrefied. Everything smelled badly. When a body is buried for a month, normally that would be the case. So, again, uh, evidence was destroyed.

In the meanwhile, we had an FBI forensic team come down to uh, search the place where the interrogation took place. Uh, the Mexican Federal Judicial Police wouldn't allow the forensic team into that home uh, for two days, while they repainted and cleaned up the scene. Again, destruction of a crime scene.

So, at that point we knew we were in great trouble. And, we knew that if the case were to be resolved, it had to be resolved by our investigation, our collecting evidence, and our presenting information to grand juries within the United States.

Sean Fearn: And, this was all within the first couple of weeks.

Jack Lawn: This was in the - before March - within a month of uh, of Kiki's kidnapping. So, that's when we enacted the operation. Uh, and uh, at the uh, at the same time, the response we received in the United States was not a positive one. State Department was angry with us. Because, we were interfering with the good relationship between the United States and Mexico.

People in the Justice Department have said that DEA was over-reacting. Uh, other people, senior people in the Secretary of State's office, that - that we shouldn't be making a fuss. We're only losing one person. And, US people are being lost around the world. And, State Department is not making a fuss.

This did not help us to feel better. It strengthened our resolve that we were going to do it if we had to do it ourselves. Later on, we were notified that the tapes uh, which

had been acquired by the Attorney General's office in Mexico, which indeed were evidence of the crime - the tapes had been lost.

And, the Attorney General's office in Mexico called me and asked me, if I could send them copies of the tapes of the interrogation. Because, their tapes were lost. Again, evidence of a crime lost and/or destroyed.

Sean Fearn: And, Jack, if I may, that follows what I recall from reading was rather a lengthy process just to get copies of the tapes in the first place from the Mexicans.

Jack Lawn: Yes. Yes, indeed. It was a -

Sean Fearn: Elaine, would you like to comment about that? I'd -

Elaine Shannon: You better tell that story, or I will.

Jack Lawn: It was not - was not an easy process. But, uh -

Elaine Shannon: The intelligence community, the CIA got the copies of the tapes. Jack Lawn uh, obtained the content from the CIA. They did good work.

Jack Lawn: So - we did have the tapes. The tapes which were so necessary. Because, during the interrogation - three days of interrogation - if any of you are familiar with the Hanoi Hilton, uh, our US prisoners who were captured and tortured, said there's a point at which you do tell the enemy something.

It's not just name, rank and serial number. So, we were very concerned about what it was that - that Kiki might have had to say. Uh, information on, perhaps, individuals who were cooperating with us. Individuals from the telephone company who may have been helping us. Any of the host of issues.

So, it was important for us to - to - to look at the tapes. With that being said, before I turn it over to the Chief Investigator, I wanted to make just one more point uh, in - in response. We were also blessed with one more thing.

And, that was uh, we had a committed reporter who saw that this was a major story. Who decided she was going to find what happened in Mexico, traveled to Mexico herself, traveled to Guadalajara. Uh, I'm sure had many sleepless nights concerned that someone was going to break down her door and, uh - uh, not be kind to her because of what she was printing.

It was because of her work that the citizens of the United States began to see that this is an issue bigger than the DEA, bigger than the State Department. This was an issue which the people of the United States had to have resolved. Uh, Kiki's picture appeared on Time magazine, along with the story by that reporter who is sitting here on my left. And, she will tell us more about that particular story. But, now our investigator to the scene, Jack please.

Jack Taylor: Uh, good afternoon everybody. It's nice to be back. Uh, I'll tell you the uh, I spent 2-1/2 years on this case. And, there are certain people in DEA and in justice that, without uh, whose intervention we never would have gotten to first base.

I joined the case in uh, July of 1986. And, we still had - didn't have - an indictment. And, we still didn't have a venue. We still back and forth between San Diego and uh, Los Angeles as to when the case would be prosecuted. And, what would be the theory of prosecution. Some people wanted to go with a straight out murder case. Other people wanted to go with an 848 uh, conspiracy case, in which a lot more evidence could be brought in.

Uh, without the leadership of Jack Lawn, Rob [Bana], and Ed Meese, this never would have happened. It would have been swept under the rug, but when we had Presidential appointee leadership that wouldn't give up. And - and, I appreciated it.

Because, without that kind of leadership we were dead in the water. But, what did we produce? Uh, we had - I stayed until the end of '88, and we had uh, a trial in Los Angeles in 1988. Uh, Rene [Verdugo], Raul Lopez Alvarez, uh, both convicted of murder related charged in [May 48] case. And, they received life in prison.

Jesus [Felix Cotirez] who was a, uh, facilitator for Caro and Miguel Felix, he got 15 years on a conspiracy, and 5 years with another charge to run consecutively. So, he did 20 years inside. The second trial was in 1990. And, [Ruben Zuno Arse] is a businessman and a government figure. He was also the brother-in-law of the former President of Mexico. And, he had at one time owned 881 [Lopedivega], and he had sold it to Caro Quintero.

So, he also got life in prison. Juan Ramon [Locbysteros], the guy that uh, Mr. Lawn talked about uh, being warned and escaping from Guadalajara uh, when we were trying to get him. Uh, he was also picked up in Honduras. And, I don't know if you guys remember this.

But, they burned the American Consulate down after the US Marshalls grabbed Juan Ramon [Mata]. And, uh, brought him back to the states for trial. So, he also got life. The third guy on the case was a, Jalisco State policeman. And, uh, bodyguard to Caro.

Uh, Juan Bernabe, he also got life. Uh, life was given out to the fourth guy. Mr. Lawn mentioned uh, Philip [Radilic] John Walker. [Radilic] was a uh, a dental student in Guadalajara. And, his buddy Walker was down visiting with him. Uh, these are the guys that Caro saw in the restaurant and, uh, ordered that they be murdered.

And, uh, and they were. And, this guy Javier Vasquez Velasco, he's also doing life now, since he's been in the can for about 25 years. Uh, there was one more trial. It was a retrial of one of these guys who had an appeal issue. But, his - his life sentence was reinstated.

So, this is a very challenging case for everybody involved, particularly the agents because of the emotion involved with uh, the killing of a DEA Special Agent. I mean, all of us know what this is like first hand. So, you had that on top of a very complex case, where you're trying to get evidence out of a country, that they promised us everything. And, they gave us nothing, okay.

They never delivered any evidence. We went down and interviewed uh, the guy in Guadalajara who discovered the bodies in the road. And, he was uh, kind of a deputy sheriff. And, uh, part time deputy sheriff. And, he was a peasant.

And, the prosecutors in Los Angeles wanted him to come to LA and testify about discovering the bodies in the culvert. Well, with the - we had two Mexican prosecutors there with us. They said sure, no problem. We'll be glad to provide the witness. We had the trial. The witness never showed up.

And, but that was typical of, uh, things that they promised us but never delivered. We had uh, agents all across - all across the United States, first of all. We had dedicated people in uh, Los Angeles and San Diego. And, then we had go to people from uh, Houston division. Uh, Arizona, New Mexico. Uh, all of the Latin American officers put this up on the first tier of, when we called, they helped.

So, my compliments go out to the way DEA pulled together under the leadership of uh, Jack Lawn. And, uh, we got a job done that was - wasn't impossible, because we did it. But, it was difficult under any circumstances. And, uh, the dedication of the agents, and the leadership from uh, Jack Lawn, Rob [Bana], and Ed Meese.

Sean Fearn: Jack?

Jack Lawn: If I could just interject as - as Jack talks about the investigation. Uh, I think it's important for - for those of you not familiar with the work the DEA does. Uh, this is a good example. When Caro was finally located, he was located with a 16-year-old Mexican girl whom he had kidnapped.

And uh, she was with him when he arrived in Costa Rica. Uh, they found a house which Caro had purchased for them in Costa Rica. Our agent in Costa Rica went to the Costa Rican authorities, used their terrorist team to - went to the - to break into the uh - uh, their house. Uh, and uh, all the individuals in the house were named Pedro, except the young lady.

And, it was the young lady who said, that's Rafael Caro Quintero. The head of the terrorist group said to our agent in - in Costa Rica, I'm leaving this weapon here. If you want to shoot him as he's escaping, we will understand.

And, that did not happen. Why? Because, we believe in the rule of law.

Sean Fearn: Elaine, you were working uh, separate case, issue, story altogether in Colombia, when you found out about what was happening in Guadalajara. Talk to us about that.

Elaine Shannon: Well, I'm a reporter. I'm not an agent. I don't want to be an agent. You should never trust a reporter who wants to be an agent. You should never trust an agent who wants to be a reporter. We do different things. We are adversaries.

Uh, you can see why I wanted to get to know Jack Lawn and Jack Taylor and the other guys. They have wonderful memories. They never forget anything. Uh, they know all the details. And, it's all black and white. Uh, of course I knew about Columbia.

I had been down there. It was very dangerous. Everybody was very scared. Bad. Came back, didn't know a darn thing about Mexico. When I heard there was an agent missing, at first I thought well, that's sad.

Uh, but this is dangerous work. But, when I talked to Jack and Bud Mullen, I realized that the stakes were so much bigger. Because, obviously, there was a government cover-up. The Mexican government cover-up. And, parts of our government weren't that interested in busting through it.

But, DEA was. Because, I knew DEA to be an institution that is obsessed in a good way with finding the truth. Uh, one thing that reporters and most law enforcement people have in common, is they want the truth, even if it hurts. Even if it's ugly. They want the truth. And, they will not rest.

We had common cause. I ran stories that said, there's concern that this - the government was involved in this. I want to tell one story. We talked about the [Matta via Steros] uh, escape. Uh, aided by the head of the Mexican Federal Judicial Police, Manuel [Ybarra]. I got the story pretty soon after it happened.

And, I also knew that the head of the MFJP was not charged. He probably wasn't going to be charged any time soon. This - my editors were not going to be happy dealing with a senior official who is, uh, being accused, basically, of conspiring in a murder, and cover-up.

Uh, and we didn't have any paper on that. So, I called up Jack Lawn on Saturday, and said, here's my story. The press is rolling Saturday night and Sunday morning. I said, here's the story. Here's what they're going to print. [Ybarra] let Juan Matta [unintelligible] walk out the door right past your guys, and leave the country. Now, and I said I happen to know that if you - if I wanted a story, there's a good chance you're not going to be head of DEA. The White House won't nominate you.

I'm just telling you. I wanted - my interest was not in getting Jack Lawn the job. My interest was knowing that he was going to deny the story, in the interest of getting a job. Or, if I was going to be standing out there with a story looking pretty stupid because everybody denied it all of a sudden. I had to know the truth.

And, he said, Elaine, go with the story. If you don't go with the story, I won't be able to look myself in the mirror. If I don't stand up for my people. So, I went with the story. He did get the job. Because, the White House respected uh, telling the truth. And, that was a great thing.

And, eventually DEA got Juan Matta [unintelligible], but not without a great deal of trouble and risk too many lives.

Sean Fearn: Elaine, if I may, there's a quote from your book that I want to ask you to talk about: The best ally of the drug traffickers has not been corruption. It has been ignorance. What does that mean to you?

Elaine Shannon: I wrote that. That's pretty good. Um -

Sean Fearn: Or, you had a ghostwriter.

Jack Lawn: That's why you said it.

Elaine Shannon: Yeah, I mean, I think too many people think that DEA is about changing people's social behavior. Or, uh, inflicting pain on farmers who just want to support their families. I think, DEA is about organized crime. Uh, I think drugs are about organized crime.

I'm writing another book about uh, how narcotics money supports terrorism around the world. And, as far as I'm concerned, the junkies in New York, and Ireland, and Britain, and France, and Amsterdam, and wherever else they are, are the people

who built the Taliban. Because, that first seed money came from heroin money. Uh, for the Taliban. And, Hezbollah is paid for in great part by cocaine.

Uh, sure, some uh, oil money from Iran. But, increasingly, as you all know, a lot of cocaine. Uh, people who use drugs are contributing to violence and inhuman acts. And, the destruction of states. Uh, I've been in Afghanistan five times. We are seeing that place melt down. And, we're going to see a fail state, I think. But, I think it's going to be a rich failed state, I think, that's shooting out streams of cash to other bad people in the world.

And, I'm very concerned about that, as a citizen of the world. Uh, yes, I think the people need to know what it's really like. They need to know what you know. They don't need to know all your secrets, but they need to understand that this is deadly serious business.

And, it's not about morality, it's not about judgment. It is about big, big money.

Sean Fearn: Jack Lawn, during the Reagan administration, Mexico was the third largest trading partner for the United States. I think the largest source of imported oil at the time. How did these bigger picture issues color how DEA could respond to the Camarena kidnapping, and the investigation?

Jack Lawn: Big business was not an ally of us - of DEA during the course of this investigation. I had a - a phone call from a President of a major United States bank, telling me that he was very concerned. Because, my efforts might mean that his bank would lose 25 billion dollars in assets which they had invested in Mexico. And, did I understand the implications of our conducting an investigation which could hurt big business in the United States?

So, uh, there was not great support from the oil industry. There was not great support from the banking industry. There was not great support from any entity which

had, uh, any monies invested uh, in Mexico. We had people invested in Mexico. And, to us that was substantially more important than dollars.

Sean Fearn: So, immediately after the kidnaping, you send teams of agents. You form a task force. How long before it became Operation Leyenda?

Jack Lawn: The - the task force started immediately. Uh, I was having lunch at the Army/Navy Club when I received a call saying that an agent had been kidnapped. By the time I got to uh, our old headquarters. Some of you may remember, 14th and High Street - uh, by the time I walked back to our headquarters, the task force had been started.

And, we started searching for our very best investigators like Jack, to begin an investigation. And, to begin an investigation unfettered. That is, without any concerns at headquarters that we were stepping on other people's turf. Now, I think it was probably within the first few weeks that Leyenda was actually formed. But, our task force began an hour after we had heard that Kiki was missing, in spite of the fact that the Mexican government had said, he's not missing. He's probably sunning himself with his girlfriend in Puerto Rico.

So, even then we received no support from the government of Mexico. The Mexican Federal - the head of the Mexican Federal Judicial Police, after one of my visits came up, and he said, I know you've just listened to uh, the tapes. And, that's very difficult to listen. While I didn't understand much of the interrogation because it was in Spanish, you could tell by the sound of the voices that Kiki Camarena was beginning to lose his spirit.

And, certainly beginning to lose his life. We found out subsequently they had a doctor on hand who would continue to medicate Kiki so he would not pass out or die until he provided all of the information. The head of the police the said to me, Jack, I know you've had a difficult three hours.

Uh, why don't you and I go out to dinner tonight? And to my favorite restaurant which is five kilometers from Mexico City. And, I said uh, Mr. Ybarra, I wouldn't go five kilometers with you. I wouldn't go out with you for five minutes. I wouldn't go outside the street for five minutes with you.

I went back to the Embassy. Our American counterparts in the Embassy were aghast that I would say something so rude to the head of their great partners, the Mexican Federal Judicial Police. But, it was pretty clear to us internally that we were not going to receive any support from the Mexican Federal Judicial Police.

And, certainly not from DFS - the Department of Federal Security. These were the - the CIA types in Mexico. And, these DFS officers or their counterparts had been involved in a major uh, luxury car case in San Diego, California.

The FBI had opened the case. Interstate transportation of the stolen motor vehicles. Because, 5000 luxury cars had been stolen and shipped to Mexico. And, the work was being supported by members of the Department of Federal Security. So, when we looked for counterparts there were none to be had.

When Caro left in the airplane, the people who protected the airplane all had DFS badges uh, saying indeed that they were members of the Department of Federal Security. Whether they were or not I can't attest. But, at least they had the badges which they bought and paid for.

Sean Fearn: And, for those that aren't familiar with the incident you refer to, where Caro Quinterro was allowed to leave on the airplane, you want to speak about that for a second?

Jack Lawn: We had learned that an aircraft was leaving Mexico City with one of the persons with whom we wanted to speak. This was within days of Kiki's kidnapping. DEA

just went out to the airport. Surrounded the aircraft. As the Mexican Federal Judicial Police arrived, uh, other individuals with the DFS badges said, no, we're in charge of this operation.

The head of the Mexican investigation uh, said he would have to make a phone call. He went into one of a DEA office - it was an office dealing with the uh, eradication program. As the DEA agent tried to accompany him, he said, no, no. This is a private phone call.

The agent said, yeah, but you're walking into a DEA space, space that we're paying for. And, he said no, Senor, you may come in here. A call was made to Mexico City. The plane was then allowed to leave. And, we found out that the call involved a payoff of \$250,000 in order to let Caro Quintero leave the airport. So, again, we knew we were in big trouble. Because, the people behind the kidnapping were not the local traffickers.

Were not the corrupt local police officials in Guadalajara. This was bigger than Guadalajara. This was coming right out of the uh, major forces in Mexico City.

Sean Fearn: Jack Taylor, in light of what Jack Lawn has said, how do you organize an operation like Leyenda? To go after the truth when there's so many walls seemingly in the way?

Jack Taylor: The uh - the non-cooperation was uh - uh, screaming loud that they were doing nothing. So, DEA people on the initial uh - first, a lot of DEA people showed up in Guadalajara in the search for Kiki, before his body was discovered. Uh, shortly after that, the OPR investigators and the, I guess it was either Mr. Lawn or Mr. Mullen, assigned the case to OPR for investigation.

I thought that was a good move. It was uh, it was well done. Because, it served us for the entire time of the investigation. You just have to organize the way you do any

kind of DEA case. You just have to find out - get - name the place. Start looking at phone records. Start looking at bank records. Start following up leads with informants. Debriefing informants.

We debriefed uh, every informant. And, we followed up every lead that came in, even though you said, you know, this guy's been reading Newsweek. Because, that's the information he's supplying us, is out of Newsweek.

But, we went and interviewed the guy even if he was 1000 miles away. We went and did it. And, I can say that the uh, resources that were made available, uh, nobody has an open ended resource, but we - all reasonable expenses were paid. And so it's just basic investigative work. And, dealing with the informants, dealing with the US attorneys, uh, convincing the US attorneys that we have a case.

And, we have a prosecutable case. We didn't get the first indictment until 1987. Okay. So, this was - this was no easy road of hope. With uh, and we came up with a venue. We went to a meeting over at Justice with - the General Litigation section had a theory about how they wanted to go. US Attorney in San Diego had a theory of how they wanted to go. US Attorney Rob Bonner and Jimmy [Goulet] uh, who actually prosecuted the first case, had a meeting with Bill [Weld] who is kind of the Assistant Attorney General referee.

And, this was really a contentious meeting. Went on for about three or four hours. And, Bill [Weld] said to Jack Lawn - he said, I'll let the DEA make the call. So, Mr. Lawn said to me, [unintelligible]. One of the guys with us said, let's go, we're leaving. We got up. We left. And, we talked about it in the car going back. And, the consensus among the four of us was, let's go with LA.

Sean Fearn: Was their approach that much radically different in San Diego?

Jack Taylor: Yes. Yes. LA wanted a drug conspiracy 848 case, which is the continuing criminal enterprise case. The general litigation section wanted the venue to be in San Diego. And, they wanted to go on a straight up murder case which was going to be very hard to prove. Because, we had no cooperating witnesses, down at the scene.

So, those of us that understand the federal conspiracy law, we knew that uh, there's a lot more evidence you can get into a case uh, when you go on a conspiracy.

Sean Fearn: You mentioned before, just a second there, Jack - that it's been hard sometimes to point a finger at people in the middle of an investigation. Were you under pressure? I can imagine great pressure to move this along as quickly as possible.

Jack Taylor: Well, we weren't in - we weren't under any undue pressure. The pressure that we were under really, was, we made it ourselves. We had to perform, and we had to get this thing done. And, uh, nobody ever complained that they were working too hard. You know, everybody did their part. And, most people did more than their part.

Jack Lawn: If I can add, Jack talked about the quality of the investigation. When Loppe de Vega was repainted, we weren't allowed to go in there for - for two days. In the meanwhile, we said to the Mex Feds. Well, there's a swimming pool there. Maybe you should drain the swimming pool. The swimming pool was drained.

One of the - one of our investigators found a license plate. It was a license plate from one of the vehicles used either to uh, take Camarena from the Consulate, or to take uh, Zavala from the airport. We then found the second car, the Atlantic, which was used in the abduction of Zavala. When we got to Loppe de Vega the investigators then looked for hair samples in the drains.

We found hair samples. Our agent in charge in Guadalajara walked into a given room, and he smelled - he said, this is where it happened. I can smell it. We checked

that scene. We found fingerprints. We found hair samples in the back of the car where - where Kiki's body was thrown, and the body of Zavala was thrown.

We then determined where they were buried. And - and, we noted on the bodies, uh, something as simple as the fact that uh, there were no insect bites on the bodies, which means the bodies were not on the surface very long. They were buried immediately after they were killed.

In Zavala's case there's some question as to whether or not he was even dead by the time he was buried. So, the work done by the investigators was paramount to Jack's bringing information to the - to the Grand Jury in - in Los Angeles. I cannot say enough about the work that our investigators did in spite of all the obstacles uh, in Mexico.

Sean Fearn: Elaine, you literally interviewed hundreds of folks as you wrote *Desperados*, both in the US and Mexico. Talk about, you know, what you think - or what folks alluded to - the motivations behind corruption in Mexico.

Elaine Shannon: Uh, motivations behind corruption in Mexico - because they could. They've done it for years. I think that a lot of people down there in positions of power were astonished that the US would make an issue at it on this occasion. Uh, there are agents who are very close to Kiki Camarena, who believed that if the US had made a bigger outcry when the missionaries and the two young men uh, were - disappeared, that might have prevented the traffickers from thinking - and the police - from thinking they could get away with it in the case of Caro Quintero.

The silence of the US government for so very long about the extent of corruption in Mexico was one thing that, I think, killed Camarena. And, killed the truth. I've talked to many agents over the years, not only DEA but state law enforcement, local law enforcement. And, we've got to talk about - FBI did a fantastic job forensically down there.

All the law enforcement agencies pulled together on this one. It was like 9/11. People forgot their rivalries. But, people over the years, beginning in the 50's and 60's, were told uh, by people in Washington or their superiors, don't talk about corruption in Mexico.

And, a lot of people obeyed that. Because, they liked their jobs and they wanted to keep investigating. It's always a tradeoff. When do I want cooperation? And, when do I blow the whistle? It's a trade-off in my business. It's a trade-off in law enforcement. But, at some point, uh, people have to tell it like it is.

I've been pleased to find that, in the case of Afghanistan, where there are problems - severe problems - corruption, government involvement, malfeasance, nonfeasance, everything you can think of, and where some people call it Mexicanistan. Because, there are similar uh, dilemmas of policy and practice.

Uh, people have, I think, told me the truth. Not only DEA, but people in the Embassy. People in the military. They have faced the facts, and I believe, have been truthful with Congress, which was another issue. But, Congress was furious to find out that this was the - uh, Mexican corruption was as big as it was. And, the new reporting requirements to Congress, and the certification systems were put in place. Because, a number of Congressmen just felt that they had been had for many years.

Sean Fearn: Jack Lawn, Elaine brings up a good point. I was wondering - I'd like you to, perhaps, address the issue of, you know, the long ball game that, you know, that DEA was hopefully going to be able to work with the Mexicans post-Operation Leyenda. And, how that squared with what Capitol Hill was asking for at the time, and perhaps, demanding.

Jack Lawn: An interesting question. How, then, do you deal with the people, many of whom were involved in either the cover up of the Camarena case, or the actual

kidnapping? The reality is, there were good - there are good people. Good honest people, some of whom had to deal with uh, another book uh, called The Lead or the Silver, written by the agent in charge of Guadalajara at the time.

When a law enforcement officer is approached by a trafficker, and is told, you can either take the money or you can take the lead, meaning you can be shot, many good people succumb to uh, that tough decision to make. Others, uh, with whom we had worked in the past, had said, we'll continue to cooperate where we can. But, if our superiors tell us that this is going to cost, then we - we have to take the money.

I think an interesting case in point was a year after Kiki's abduction, we had another agent who was working on the street in Guadalajara.

Sean Fearn: Victor Cortez.

Jack Lawn: Victor Cortez. Uh, Victor was picked up on the street, and he identified himself as a DEA agent. They threw him in the car and took him to the police station. And, in Guadalajara, and said to him, tonight the same thing is going to happen to you as happened to Camarena.

Uh, we - we, the agents involved on the scene, had to deal with that when they - when they arrived at the police station. Police officer didn't know anything about an arrest of a - of an agent. They had a confrontation with the police, which is, I guess, a kind way of saying it. And, the police finally uh, allowed the agent to leave after he had been severely tortured with cattle prods.

Fortunately, uh, he had been a weight lifting champion in the police Olympics. A very, very tough young man, who was able to survive all of that torture on a given night. And, when he uh, was released, we had an aircraft ready to take uh, Victor and his family out of Mexico. But, he had to spend the night. And, when I called down they said, don't worry, he's being protected.

I met him the next day in uh, Arizona. And, I went through, how are you feeling? He said, fine. I said, you felt protected last night? He said, yes. I had a few friends from the Mexican Federal Judicial Police, who spent the night with me. So, even with what had happened to him, he knew there were people with whom we could work.

That's the difficulty of what DEA deals with. Uh, we were told, maybe the safest thing is for DEA to get out of Mexico. You can't do that. It might be safer, but we can't get done what is required of us by law to investigate uh, on chapter - on 21, USC.

Uh, many of you may be familiar with Manuel Noriega, the drug trafficker supreme from Panama. During many hearings on the Hill we would ask how we could possibly deal with Manuel Noriega. We knew - we had a good sense - that he was corrupt. We didn't have enough information to bring to a Grand Jury.

But, he was the leader of the country. And, we knew in trying to appease us, he would give us little pieces of good information, which was helpful to us. So, in many cases in law enforcement, you have to deal with the devil to get information.

Our informants are not all former altar boys. So, you must deal with the individual who can help. But, you must also be smart enough, as were our agents, to screen out what is truth and what is not truth. And, it's difficult sometimes to do. But, the particular tragedy of Camarena was the fact that he was picked up by law enforcement officers.

We, in DEA, travel the world. And, wherever you go, you know you're going to have the support of the law enforcement people in that environment. In the late 80's, I was asked by the then Soviet government to travel to the Soviet Union. I went to the State Department and said, the Soviets have asked me to come to Moscow.

Should I go? And, they said, go if you want, but they're not going to tell you what their problem is. And, I said well, they invited me. So, clearly they want to tell me

something. I was met by the KGB. I sat down with the KGB and the GRU. And, they were telling me about their massive heroin problem.

Because, their soldiers were coming out of Afghanistan. So, law enforcement does cooperate worldwide. Even in Mexico, there are good officers who will cooperate if asked. Perhaps not volunteer, but there is a bonding within the law enforcement community, that enables DEA to work the way we do worldwide.

Sean Fearn: Jack Taylor, what was the hardest part of working Operation Leyenda?

Jack Taylor: Well, once we got it focused in LA, Los Angeles, in the central district California, Rob Bonner was the US Attorney, Jimmy [Goulet], it went well after that. But, there was competition to get the case run the way certain people wanted to get it run and all that.

That was difficult to get through. But, that might be a little lessons learned uh, type of thing. But, ultimately, nobody sabotaged - even the people who didn't win their point that day - nobody tried to sabotage success. And, uh, and everybody worked together.

After that. So, we did have cooperation. Um, throughout the Mexican offices, and along the US border offices. And, also the development of uh, Mexican informants was way up on the list of why we could be successful.

Sean Fearn: Elaine, let me ask you about a quote from your book that you attribute to James [Kirkendall], who was Kiki's partner on the streets in Guadalajara prior to the kidnapping. You talked to him as you were writing the book.

And, at one point Kiki was talking to [Kirkendall] and said, you know it's time to go. We're way out front and there's nobody behind us.

Elaine Shannon: Yes. I never will forget when I heard that from [Jaime Kirkendall]. That's his nickname, Jaime. Uh, it's so lonely and so sad. And, yet it's so true in so many places, that DEA is way out front of everybody else. I don't know whether agents still feel that nobody's behind them.

I know there have been times where there have been severe conflicts between the aims of this agency and the aims of foreign policy. And, even the White House. And, the military. But, uh, this was a particularly egregious situation.

Sean Fearn: We're going to talk for a few minutes about lessons learned. And, then we'll open it up to some questions from the audience. Why don't we start with you, Jack Lawn? Looking back now, 20 plus years later, what lessons can be gleaned from Operation Leyenda, both for DEA and the country writ large?

Jack Lawn: Clearly, we had spoken a week ago about this presentation, And we agreed that one of the lessons learned was that at the time, we had a failing. We did not understand the nature of the problem in Guadalajara. We had an agent who had been transferred because his family was machine gunned.

He was not replaced. So, we had three agents who were out in bad country. Reports were prepared, sent to supervisors. The reports did not make it to DEA headquarters. That was a failing on the part of DEA headquarters. We should have known what was going on.

Subsequently, uh, there have been regional meetings where people have brought in - in my case, I had an annual meeting of one agent from each office in the country, so that we could talk about things of concern to one agent in each part of the country, uh, so that I get from an agent's perspective.

Because, I was an agent, and our perspective may have been different from our supervisor's or [unintelligible], or regional directors at the time. So, our failing was that we didn't understand the issues that were being faced by uh, by Jaime, by - by Kiki, by Victor Cortez. And, we have now learned a lesson. And, we have amended what we do to make sure that Kiki Camarena's incident does not happen again. That our headquarters will do a much better job at knowing what's going out. Everything that's in field. And, that the exchange of information is - is uh, more certain to get to the necessary partners.

Sean Fearn: Jack Taylor?

Jack Taylor: Well, I think one of the decisions made early on in this case, that - to assign it to OPR inspectors, was a good decision. During my tenure in Los Angeles, uh, we had two more agents killed there, [Seymour] and Montoya.

And, that office was devastated when those two guys got killed. And, uh, and I understand that. Because, we had similar things happen when I was in New York. So it was good to have somebody come in. Even though I knew Paul Sema he came on the job. But, to have somebody come in who was uh, not involved in the decision making, the chain of command, but was there to objectively try and get things done uh, for the case.

And, that's the same with Camarena. Everybody in Mexico, and the guys along the uh, San Diego, Calexico, - all these guys knew Kiki all his career. They were - they were very, very hurt. So, it's good to bring in a third party into the situation that can professionally assess this. And help calm everything down but get the job done and do - do the investigation.

Sean Fearn: Elaine? Any lessons learned from your perspective.

Elaine Shannon: Uh, so many. This case - Kiki Camarena made a terrible sacrifice. But, I think he's taught us all something. I think he's taught us about intellectual courage as well as physical courage, persistence. Uh, one of the things that impresses me about DEA when I go to various offices and I talk to policemen and officials in other countries, is that nobody ever accuses DEA of getting involved in brutality, torture, uh, underhanded, irregular, illegal activities.

Certainly, some of the uh, whatever you want to call it, extraditions are - are controversial. But, I - except for the case of the Mexican doctor, which was upheld, most of them stick.

I think that is a great credit to this agency, that this agency has learned its values the hard way in some terrible places, in some very dangerous places. And, is, today in places in Africa and Asia, that - and elsewhere, that - that are very scary.

Uh, yet it takes its values with it. It takes American values. Uh, people really do believe in the rule of law. People really do believe that sooner or later they'll find somebody who will tell them the truth in a way that this truth can be told to the American public.

Uh, it doesn't have to be done behind closed doors. It doesn't have to be done in a classified way. None of the material that we're talking about was ever classified, and it shouldn't be. Because, eventually it needs to go to a jury of honest people.

I think, that this whole - the way this case was handled speaks very well for our system of justice. As a journalist, the story isn't over. Uh, for me it won't be over until we see the uh, law enforcement people who were part of this conspiracy brought to justice. And, they have not been. I'd like to see whether the United States is going to demand their extradition as well as the traffickers.

It's easy to pick on the traffickers. They are terrible people. But, the law enforcement people knew better. They took oaths. They should be held accountable.

Sean Fearn: Would either of the Jacks care to comment about the recent release of Caro Quinterro?

Jack Lawn: Well, first I'd like to, if I may uh, have Jack respond. Elaine had mentioned uh, some issues that were - were troubling, but the court supported us. One was the issue, as I mentioned, there was a doctor on scene who kept Camarena alive during the interrogation. That was Dr. [Mischaian].

Uh, Dr. [Mischaian] was, uh, brought by uh, individuals to the United States, to the border. And, then DEA took him to Los Angeles for trial. And, there was a question about his leaving Mexico. Was he, in fact, kidnapped? And, then we spoke about this on the phone. And, the courts ruled in our favor.

Jack Taylor: It went all the way to the Supreme Court. It's Dr. Umberto [Muchain]. And, the Supreme Court ruled that this rendition, as it's called, was legal. And lawful. Uh, they didn't rule on the wisdom. They ruled on the law. And, uh, Judge [Rafitti] - the late Judge [Rafitti] in Los Angeles, who tried all three of these cases - and, was actually, I think uh, an eminently fair jurist.

After the appeal - he dismissed the case against Dr. [Muchain]. Uh, the government appealed it up to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court reversed Judge [Rafitti]. And ordered him to put him back on trial. Well, Judge [Rafitti] put him back on trial, and acquitted him from the bench. Sent him home. And, that was that.

Jack Lawn: Subsequently, we have learned - I had learned uh, from other organizations, how impressed they were that we would go to the ends we went to, in order to resolve this case.

In many other agencies with personnel overseas, they said, would that our organization have the wherewithal to do for us what you did for your agent in - in Mexico. And, we have seen that in some old cases in Colombia, where there were some threats.

And - and, we learned in Colombia. Someone said, no, you better not try to kidnap an agent, because we may have a Camarena case uh, here in Colombia. So, the uh, Camarena legacy, and the legacy of this investigation has helped DEA immeasurably. And, helped individuals who serve overseas immeasurably, in most cases.

Because agencies realize that they can break a few cups in getting the job done which must be done.

Sean Fearn: Let's open it up for some questions from the audience. And, I'll mention while our microphone folks are getting in place, that if you're watching the event live on our webcast, there's a button on the bottom left corner of the screen, that you can use to submit an email question.

We had a hand up here, [unintelligible] down the side? Yeah, if you could let us know if you want your question directed to a particular panelist, or to all three.

Female Voice: My name is [Xonia Estevez], and I am a Mexican journalist. And, I have a question on the recent release of uh, Caro Quintero. I wanted to know what uh, some people have said that this has to do with the fact that the PRI is back in power.

I wanted to get your reaction on that, and how hopeful you are that this guy is going to be uh, arrested sometime soon. And, why was there no extradition request by the United States government to get it back here - to get him back here?

Jack Lawn: A very interesting - interesting question. I - I suspect that there was no extradition request because uh, Caro's sentence was for substantially longer than his current release. So, there was no need for an extradition requested in his case.

Uh, had DEA been notified, let's say by Mexico City, that uh, there was deliberation as to Caro's release, we would have then - uh, I say we, I mean the family - the DEA family, would have taken action to make sure that that had happened.

But, since he was released unexpectedly, uh, that did not happen.

Jack Taylor: Also, that Mexico has uh, in the 20th Century, Mexico has never released - uh, deported a criminal to the United States for prosecution, in my experience. It's only in the last seven or eight years that certain people have been turned over.

But, so there was also no - no extradition treaty with Mexico.

Female Voice: How does the fact that the PRI is back and this guy is out?

Jack Taylor: Once I could uh -

Sean Fearn: The PRI?

Female Voice: PRI.

Sean Fearn: Is there a connection between the PRI coming back into power, and Caro Quinterro being released.

Jack Taylor: I'd be guessing that. I don't know.

Jack Lawn: Again, I don't know. I'd be speaking historically. Historically, the PRI had many issues involving corruption. But uh, I - I am not in a position to talk about the current status of the - of the PRI.

Female Voice: And, are you hopeful that he can be, or he will be, re-arrested? Re-detained?

Jack Lawn: I am quite certain, that he will not have a successful future, yes.

Sean Fearn: Interesting way of putting it.

[CLAPPING]

Sean Fearn: Do we have any additional questions from the audience? Catie, any uh, from the webcast?

Catie: Yes, we do have a web question from David Wilson, retired DEA agent. There has been much recently said in the press that the CIA bears some responsibility for the murder of Special Agent Camarena. That it was linked in some way to the Iran Contra scandal.

These claims come from former DEA Special Agents who claim they had a leadership role in the murder investigation. Please comment on these claims.

Sean Fearn: Who wants to take that one first?

Jack Lawn: As a youth I read Aesop's Fables. This - this is another fable not worthy of individuals who would serve in DEA. Anyone who uh, knows who we are knows this investigation, and should know that when it came to our finding out what happened in this case, it was the CIA who told us about the tapes.

It was indeed the CIA who came at one point and said, we are so proud of what you did in the case of Kiki Camarena. And, we hope that our organization would do like things if something happened to us.

Our, cooperation - our coordination with CIA, in this case has always been above board. In drug cases as I recall uh, so uh, I - I feel it unfortunate that two of our former agents who had come to that conclusion, where, as I understand it, has no basis in fact.

Jack Taylor: There was - there was - during my tenure investigating this case there was absolutely zero evidence of any involvement with the CIA uh, complicit with Camarena's death.

Elaine Shannon: But, if I may follow up, the CIA did have a relationship with the DFS. Uh, this relationship uh, may not have included advance knowledge that somebody was going to kidnap and kill a DEA agent. What do you think, Jack?

Jack Lawn: I don't believe the CIA had advance knowledge, because their personnel is also in jeopardy in countries throughout the world. But, Elaine is absolutely right. When I - I talked about the interstate transportation of stolen motor vehicles with the DFS.

Uh, the DFS, at least in that investigation, was working in Mexico with the CIA. They are counterparts in a number of investigations. Uh, but again, because uh, CIA also doesn't work with angels in the gathering of information, their working with the DFS is not surprising.

Their mission there is to gather intelligence. And, if they can gather intelligence from corrupt people like DFS, they'll certainly do that. But, again, I would be shocked to learn at some point in the future, that CIA had advance knowledge of the taking of Camarena, and did not pass that information on.

They were most cooperative during the investigation. They're good partners with us internationally. And, I think it's - it's shameful that anyone would draw them into this - this investigation at this point.

Sean Fearn: Elaine, this is a question that's actually come in from a web viewer. Is Mexico as corrupt now as it was then? And, it's directed to you.

Elaine Shannon: You know, every - yes, uh, every few years somebody in the US government makes a statement. Well, things are better. Well, that's an easy thing to say. Uh, because it's hard to measure it. It would be very subjective.

I find it a very frightening place. I don't think that the state controls a lot of the territory in Mexico. I think it is quite different from Colombia. I think other countries in the world such as Afghanistan, where DEA has been deeply engaged, have to decide, do they want to be like Colombia and have a rule of law? And, sometimes terrible things happen.

But, there's still our institution. Or, do they want to be like Mexico, where large swaths of territory are controlled by cartels to this day. And, uh, the US government and others just hope that a [Zeta] chief will go to wrong place or make the wrong person mad.

And, so it will be a lucky day when somebody gets arrested, but it won't be usual. Uh, I wish them luck. I don't know whether this has anything to do with parties. But, I'm afraid that - and I see my friend [Dolia] there - great journalist. Mexican journalist. Mexican journalists are in far greater danger than any of us up here on this side of the line.

And, I have the greatest respect for Mexican journalists. It's very difficult to cover these stories. Or, you would know a lot more than you already do about how bad it is in places. Not everywhere, but in many places down there.

Female Voice: I just have another question here. Uh, it's been said, and I think, Mr. Lawn mentioned, that back then they - you see, so the Mexican government sees, like um, a marijuana plantation that was valued at 2-1/2 billion dollars, which was a lot back then. And, still a lot right now.

But, I was wondering if DEA or you have any idea, of what the uh, wealth - net wealth - of these people are? Uh, particular Rafael Caro Quintero. Um, I read somewhere that he has a secret accounts - bank accounts - in Luxemburg, estimated in four billion dollars. Recently the treasury department [unintelligible] his whole family, his former wife and kids, in the kingpin uh, list. Because, they [all] have a lot of assets that apparently reach the billions.

I don't know if Shannon or anyone, I mean, Elaine or anyone of you have looked into the wealth of these people, and how that connects to the fact that he's free.

Sean Fearn: Jack?

Jack Lawn: I have no current information. While I was with the Yankees I didn't have the opportunity to - to do any research on Caro. But, remember, when he wanted to escape from Guadalajara very quickly, \$250,000 were paid. When he bought - wanted to buy that villa in Costa Rica, \$800,000 was paid very, very quickly.

Uh, his - his wealth is staggering. As for the number, I just could not come up with a - with a figure.

Sean Fearn: Jack Taylor, what do you - this is a web question. What do you see as the greatest effect on DEA operations from Operation Leyenda?

Jack Taylor: I believe they're similar to what Jack Lawn said earlier. It's that we don't know how effective Leyenda was, and who was saved. Who wasn't kidnapped, because

the vigorous response from DEA and the relentless pursuit of these people who were complicit in covering his murder.

I think, that they took a big lesson out of this. And, realized that if uh, they're going to go after a DEA agent, you're going to have problems the rest of your life. And, I think that's the main benefit out of this whole effort.

Sean Fearn: If you were to send a message out to the DEA people on the front line who are serving in over 60 countries around the world today, what would you say to them?

Jack Lawn: In law enforcement we have a simple expression - I have your back. I agree with that.

Jack Taylor: Just know where you are. Know what you're doing. And, don't go out on your own. And, you've always got to have a backup. And, I think the agency does have the backs of all the guys, of men and women, overseas, as we do here in the states.

Sean Fearn: Elaine?

Elaine Shannon: I have been fascinated by DEA's ability to make, uh, relationships with other law enforcement agencies around the world. And, I've seen how those bonds are very, very strong. And, result in agents and cops having each other's backs. This transcends language. It transcends culture. It transcends nationality. And, it transcends, sometimes, better judgment and transition uh, in the country of choice.

These relationships last, it seems to me, forever. Beyond the grave. And, I wish had as many close friends as these guys here do.

Jack Lawn: Elaine. Elaine. Could you mention your friend from Afghanistan? Just introduce him?

Elaine Shannon: Sure. Okay, one of our friends - DEA's friends - is here.
[Unintelligible], where are you? There he is.

Sean Fearn: All the way in the back.

Elaine Shannon: [unintelligible] just got off the plane from Afghanistan. He spent seven years running in DEA's Afghan police wiretapping center, in the police compound there. Very dangerous work. He speaks eight languages, and finally got his Visa after many years.

He's 24 years old. He's been working for the US military and DEA since he was twelve. Welcome to America.

[CLAPPING]

And, we hope you like it here, because I don't think you're going to be going back any time soon. Except in one of our uniforms or something like that. Uh, this is what I mean. People gravitate toward this agency. And, learn that there are many intangibles working with DEA. I find this fascinating, because many of us who watch it from the outside want to know how it is that human beings can convince other human beings to take great risks. And, for what gain?

And, it is often thankless. It is often lonely. It is often very cold out there. And, you get a lot of pressure from other agencies and from private citizens, as these folks have said. And, yet they keep going and they believe in it. It's wonderful to meet people who believe in what they do. Because, I meet a lot of people who don't.

Sean Fearn: Elaine Shannon, Jack Taylor, Jack Lawn, thank you for joining us this afternoon for this discussion.

Jack Taylor: Thank you.

Sean Fearn: Uh, Catie Drew from our staff, has a small token of our appreciation for you. And, also, Elaine, Jaime [Kirkendall] himself has sent you some flowers.

Elaine Shannon: Oh, how wonderful.

Sean Fearn: Catie, do you want to present them to them? We're about out of time.

Catie: And, I just have one thing from a - a web question - not a question, a comment. A thank you. I was involved with Operation Leyenda, and confronted Rafael Caro Quintero at the airport. I just want to give special thanks to former DEA administrator Mr. Lawn, and all the DEA agents that worked on this investigation in Mexico and in the US.

Um, he didn't give his name, but thank you all very much.

Sean Fearn: Thank you.

[CLAPPING]

Sean Fearn: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you again for joining us this afternoon. Thank you. And, the speakers will be here if you'd like to talk with them afterwards.

[CLAPPING]

End of recording.