

AT LONG LAST: JUSTICE FOR JOE OCCHIPINTI!

A SPECIAL EDITORIAL BY J. R. DE SZIGETHY

Joe Occhipinti, one of the most decorated Federal Agents in American history, has been granted a Presidential Pardon for the 1991 conviction which claimed he violated the civil rights of reputed law-abiding aliens during his investigation of the illegal drug trade in New York City. This case was one of the most controversial, far-reaching Prosecutions of a law enforcement officer who had dedicated his life to save young people from the dangerous and illegal drugs being trafficked to them by foreigners who had invaded American soil.

This conviction had a chilling effect on State and Federal efforts nationwide to combat the crack cocaine and heroin epidemic of the 1980s. As the drug cartels, foreign and domestic, grew in monetary power they translated that into political power, in part through the hiring of corrupt lawyers. These criminal attorneys acted as facilitators between the cartels, corrupt public figures, and corrupt officials. Thus emboldened, the drug gangs launched a war against America's law enforcement community.

America was shocked in February, 1988 with the public execution of 22-year-old Police Officer Edward Byrne as he sat in his patrol car guarding the home of a law-abiding immigrant from Guyana. That home had already been firebombed twice by a drug gang in retaliation for the immigrant's reporting to the NYPD the brazenly open drug trafficking occurring in his neighborhood.

Later that year, 2 Police Officers, Michael Buczek, aged 24, and Christopher Hoban, aged 26, were murdered on the streets of Manhattan by members of the new drug gangs. In response, Agent Occhipinti formed an alliance with both Federal and local law enforcement officials to protect America's Cops from this growing threat. That alliance included 2 men whom would both later rise to the position of Commissioner of the New York City Police Department; Howard Safir, an Agent of the Drug Enforcement Administration, and Bernie Kerik, then a New York City Police Officer.

One result was the creation by Occhipinti of "Project Bodega," a multi-agency Task Force focusing on the growing number of small businesses in the region involved in drug trafficking, gambling, the smuggling and sale of un-taxed cigarettes, the sale of bootleg liquor, and money laundering. Acclaimed journalist Al Guart would later report that bodegas run by Islamic terrorists utilized a simple scam regarding grocery store coupon fraud to fund terrorist activities, including the first bombing of the World Trade Center.

By that time, Occhipinti had already arrested many deportable aliens engaged in criminal activities from numerous countries, including China, Malaysia, the Dominican Republic, and Yemen. In China, organized crime syndicates sprang up overnight which would recruit impoverished nationals into a scheme whereby the young men and women would be offered a "loan" of thousands of dollars in order to be smuggled into the U. S. illegally. Once here, the debtors could only find employment in the underground economy, working for below the minimum wage, which did not offer the opportunity to earn enough income to repay their original "loan." Such young men and women were virtual slaves to those who controlled them. Some young women and under-age girls were forced into the sex trafficking industry. The leader of one such racket, "Sister Ping," as she was popularly known, was among those arrested by Occhipinti.

Actions such as these were the reasons Occhipinti had already been bestowed with coveted Awards from three different U. S. Attorney Generals during both Democratic and Republican Administrations. He also received hundreds of letters from those grateful for his efforts against illegal alien criminals. One such hangs on a wall in the Occhipinti home, a hand-written letter from a Prosecutor who worked with Joe during Project Bodega. This young man's Uncle, a former Attorney General, to whom he became very close after the death of his father, had been murdered by an illegal alien from the Middle East. His letter was addressed to the Occhipinti's 3 young daughters, reminding them how lucky they were to possess something he did not; a father.

These 3 young girls would soon have their father taken away from them, a consequence of the growing power and influence of the drug cartels.

Unfortunately, as the power of the drug cartels grew, fueled by the billions of dollars in income that increased each year, so too did their access to criminal lawyers. After consultation with such, the stories of some of those arrested by Occhipinti changed, challenging the validity of the search and seizures overseen by the INS Agent. Those duly arrested claimed their civil rights had been violated. Occhipinti maintained, then and now, that his actions were in compliance with DOJ procedures and approved interrogation methods, for which he and others had received extensive training.

Decades before the current national frenzy whereby some public officials demand to “Defund the Police,” Joseph Occhipinti became the “poster boy” for those who demanded to “Defang the Police,” in essence render impotent the law enforcement community's ability to perform lawful search and seizures of drug retailers.

Such was the political climate which resulted in Occhipinti's arrest. Typically, a Federal Prosecution takes many months before the trial of the accused takes place. In Occhipinti's case, he was rushed to trial in a matter of weeks, depriving his lawyer adequate time to prepare his Defense. One of the criminal aliens who testified against Occhipinti before the Federal Grand Jury would later admit on a national television program that he lied – committed Perjury – while under Oath as a “Witness.” The alien was never charged with Perjury, nor was a proper legal review of Occhipinti's conviction performed.

Even though he was not accused of using violence or threats of violence against those he arrested, Occhipinti, upon his conviction, was sent to a maximum security Federal prison reserved for the most dangerous of Federal prisoners. Occhipinti was then placed in Solitary Confinement so that those inmates who hated Cops would not kill him. His wife Angela was suddenly confronted with the task of being the sole provider for their 3 young girls, their future uncertain.

Fortunately, they were not alone. Among the many public figures who came to their rescue was a former Congressman, Guy Molinari, who began to assemble evidence as to how Occhipinti had been framed from over 70 individuals who came forward. One such was Alma Camerana, who was a Police Officer in her native Puerto Rico before she moved to New York City. She was then recruited as an Informant by FBI Agents in Queens, with her mission to approach Molinari, wearing a wire, and convince him to offer her a job in exchange for information she had on the Occhipinti case. She refused and tipped-off Molinari, who then took this story to the Media, under the title: "Guy Molinari Fumes: FBI Tried to Set Me Up!" "It's outrageous!" Molinari said. "If they will do this to me, an elected official, I hate to think what they might do to a member of the general public!" The Justice Department admitted that such an FBI operation did take place, but also claimed that Department lawyers rejected the plan.

Despite this failure, the FBI did not stop in their efforts to set-up Molinari. In 1998, the FBI recruited a member of a Mafia-run stock scam to target Molinari and those within his orbit. The Informant's machinations succeeded in securing Indictments of 3 men, 2 on Perjury charges and 1 on tax evasion charges. This plot ultimately failed, however; none of these men today are convicted felons and the FBI Informant in question today is being held without Bail on Federal sex trafficking and extortion charges.

Guy Molinari had gained national attention in June, 1992, when he resigned in protest from President Bush's Re-Election Committee after Bush refused to grant a Pardon to Occhipinti. Instead, Bush Commuted Occhipinti's sentence, sending him back home to his wife and kids. This was actually fine with Occhipinti, who wanted a new trial to clear his name. He and his legal team were convinced that Federal Prosecutors would actually drop the charges against him if he was granted a new trial, a belief that only intensified as evidence of FBI misconduct in this case continued to be uncovered.

Occhipinti also demanded the appointment of a Special Prosecutor to investigate the criminal lawyers for the drug cartel that had framed him. One such, Luis Beltre, was murdered by his clients whom feared he would “flip” on them once he was Indicted on money laundering charges.

Occhipinti never got his Special Prosecutor, but associates of the President who Pardoned him did. After an investigation of many months by the Inspector General of the Justice Department, evidence was found

implicating several employees of the FBI in crimes that first sought to prevent Donald Trump from being elected President, and, once that occurred, to falsely accuse associates of the President and the President himself of very serious crimes. This report prompted the Attorney General to appoint John Durham as an Independent Counsel to investigate this government misconduct. To date, one FBI lawyer, Kevin Klinesmith, has pleaded Guilty for falsifying an email regarding the former Administration's using the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to spy on Carter Page, an Advisor to candidate Trump. In the email that Klinesmith sent to his Supervisor, he falsely claimed that Page had not been voluntarily passing on information about Russians in the energy business to the CIA, when in fact that was the case. The narrative regarding Page had been turned in the opposite direction, suggesting he and others connected to Trump were colluding with Russians. That false narrative led to the appointment of Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller, whose lengthy investigation did not find evidence of collusion with Russia by Trump associates.

John Durham's investigation continues. Meanwhile, Carter Page has now filed a \$75 million lawsuit against the FBI, the Justice Department, and former FBI Director James Comey.

President Trump has also issued a Pardon to his former National Security Advisor General Michael Flynn. Flynn has claimed he was blackmailed by the FBI into pleading Guilty to making false statements to the FBI in exchange for the FBI's promise that his son would not face Federal charges. Last January, Flynn sought to withdraw his Guilty Plea, and the Justice Department ruled in May that all charges would be dropped. The President then decided to expedite this process with a Pardon.

Central to these developments has been the advice of the President's Legal Counsel Rudolph Giuliani. It was the former Mayor who assisted Joe Occhipinti in his original filings during the first Bush Administration. This time around, Occhipinti's Congressperson, Chris Smith, also came to his defense. Giuliani is also credited with the President's Pardon of his former NYPD Commissioner Bernard Kerik. Kerik has always maintained he had been set-up by an FBI Informant. That Informant was arrested last February on charges he victimized the College roommates of his own daughter in his sex trafficking and extortion scam. One week later, Kerik had his Pardon.

EPILOGUE

This Christmas will likely be the best for the Occhipinti family since the year the girls got that letter telling them how lucky they were to have such a father. Despite all the adversity this family has endured, they know that there are other law enforcement families across America who have suffered even more than they have.

One such is the case of Police Officer Ronil Singh. Growing up on the island of Fiji, Singh loved American television shows about cops and dreamed of being one when he grew up. He did so after immigrating – legally – to America. On Christmas evening of 2018, Singh, his wife, and young son celebrated the Holiday as most Americans do. There was a Christmas tree, with presents underneath. The family photo was taken, commemorating the Holiday. Then, Singh put on his uniform, and his Badge, and reported to work. One hour after Midnight, Officer Singh pulled over a car, suspecting, correctly, that the driver was under the influence of drugs.

The driver was an illegal alien whom had already been deported but returned to America through it's porous border. This career criminal then murdered Officer Singh in cold blood. Said President Trump during an address from the Oval Office: "The life of an American hero was stolen by someone who had no right to be in our country."

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