

# Special Report

## **Cover-up**

in the

## **Death of Ron Brown**

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## **The Brown Cover-up Continues**

At the time of his death on April 3, 1996, Ron Brown was the highest government official to die since the tragic death of White House deputy Counsel Vincent Foster in 1993.

As Commerce Secretary, Ron Brown was a member of the Cabinet. He died while on a military aircraft flying an official government mission. His plane crashed in area of the world where hostilities had been of long duration. At the time of his death, Brown was under criminal investigation. All of these factors would have led federal authorities to conduct (choose one):

- a) a meticulous investigation of Brown's death and the plane crash.
- b) a basic investigation using standard practice and following normal procedures.
- c) no significant investigation.

Had you answered "a" or "b", you would be wrong. The sad truth is that the government took action "c": no significant investigation.

It has been more than two years since Brown's death, and some of the basic questions involving his death have yet to be answered:

Why did the Air Force not follow standard procedure investigating the crash? For the first time in their history of investigations involving plane crashes on friendly territory, the Air Force ignored required procedure and immediately declared Brown's crash an accident.

Why did the Pentagon, on the day of the crash, clearly imply to the press the crash was nothing but an accident caused by bad weather? The Pentagon made this snap announcement hours BEFORE any Americans even arrived at the crash scene. As it turned out, the Air Force report on the crash later stated that the weather was actually fine when Brown's plane was landing and did not contribute to the crash.

Why did the White House ask the military not to conduct autopsies on Brown and the other civilians? The ranking officer present at Dover Air Force Base when the bodies returned from Croatia was Air Force Colonel William Gormley. Gormley stated on a national television show that the White House had been a party to that decision.

Why, when evidence emerged that Brown may have suffered a gunshot wound to his head, was an autopsy not immediately conducted? All of the pathologists agreed that the wound had the appearance of a gunshot wound.

Why were head X-rays destroyed? The military predicates its claims that nothing foul happened to Brown because head X-rays showed no metal in his head. Yet, the military also acknowledges these X-rays have simply disappeared.

Why did the chief of the military's photography unit claim she was told that the X-rays were destroyed to remove evidence of a gunshot? Destruction of evidence in a criminal case is a crime. Why hasn't this been investigated?

These are just some the questions that need answering.

### **The Days Before the Death**

Much of what we know about the circumstances of Brown's death comes to us from Nolanda Hill, Brown's former business partner and mistress.

At the time of his death Brown was under investigation by Independent Counsel Daniel Pearson. Pearson was examining whether Brown and Hill had engaged in several sham financial transactions shortly before Brown became Commerce Secretary. Allegations

had been raised that Hill and Brown hatched a scheme whereby Brown would be allowed to cash out shares in one or more phoney corporations, thereby bolstering his net worth.

During the spring of 1996, the Pearson investigation was coming to a head. Pearson's prosecutors were preparing a noose for Hill, and Brown's son Michael, with the imminent threat of indictment. Pearson's strategy was clear, indict Hill and Michael and have them "flip" and testify against Brown himself.

Brown was not happy about the prospect of all this. According to Hill, Brown met with Clinton just weeks before the fateful crash. Brown was invited up to the White House residence. Clinton was walking around barefoot, Hill said Brown told her.

Clinton and Brown sat on comfortable sofas. Clinton asked what the problem was. Brown explained the problem. He told Clinton he was not going to take the "rap" for the administration.

Brown asked Clinton to get the White House to pressure the FBI agents who worked for Pearson to back off. It was well known among the top people that the FBI who worked for Starr had been co-opted. Brown demanded Clinton get Reno to also pressure Pearson to back off.

Clinton was charming and acquiescent. He promised Brown he would take care of the problem.

Within a week of that meeting, Brown was asked by the White House to head up the Commerce's trip to Croatia. Brown had not been scheduled to go, but a Presidential aide reportedly told Brown, "The President needs an "eyes and ears" to find out what's really going on.

Brown accepted.

Hill says that Brown was frightened for his life in his closing days, as she was. Brown had beefed up his own security. He did so claiming he had received racist threats, but Hill said that was just a smoke screen. Brown feared the White House. Brown was worried about Hill. He warned her about being alone, such as jogging out on the street.

On the day of the crash, Brown called Hill from a special satellite phone at Tuzla airport. He said the weather was dreary, and he felt he might be getting sick. He told her that the moment he got on the plane he would change his clothes.

Hill knew Brown's drill on these missions. He would onto the Air Force plane and find solace in his private VIP cabin. He would change his clothes. Take a shower. Maybe take a nap or read his briefing books. He had a "do not disturb" policy. Stewards were not to bother him. The door was always shut.

So it may have been on Brown's last flight. Hill believes Brown may have been dead before the plane ever left the runway at Tuzla. She hypothesized that an assassin could have boarded the plane under the guise of some official capacity, shot Brown with a silenced gun, and left the plane before it took off. Since Brown was typically left alone, no one would have known he was on board, dead.

One thing Hill knows for sure is that the military hasn't been telling the truth.

She was called in the hours after the death by an assistant Secretary of the Army. He reported Brown's plane went down in the Adriatic. The US rescue forces were on the scene, he told her. Some bodies were recovered, but not Brown's. They were still searching.

Hill was a little surprised to learn on CNN of the mountain crash.

Brown's death didn't end Hill's legal problem, but they did end Clintons. Within a day of the death, Pearson announced he would be closing the investigation and turning the areas relating to Hill and Michael Brown over to the Justice Department.

It was unfortunate Brown died, because he was a central figure in the campaign-cash-for-Commerce scandal. John Huang and Melinda Yee worked under Brown.

The scandal involving the campaign contributions erupted as a result of a civil law suit filed by Judicial Watch, a public interest law firm headed by former federal prosecutor Larry Klayman.

Klayman had filed a Freedom of Information suit against the Commerce Department seeking all of their documents relating to the trade missions and the way the Clinton administration picked who would go on such mission.

Klayman's suit opened a can of worms. He soon discovered that, in fact, the whole Commerce Department had been converted into a sort of cash for policy arm of the DNC.

Significantly, the Clinton administration had moved the control over export of sensitive technology from the Defense and State Departments to Commerce. This meant that Brown's Commerce Department had become the chief controller on many of the nation's most sensitive technological secrets.

A major beneficiary of these changes was the Chinese military. According to Hill, Brown had at least one secret meeting with Wang Jun, the moneymen for China's people Liberation Army. China wanted access to America's encryption technology.

Encryption is the most closely guarded secrets of the nation. If one gains understanding of our encryption, they may be able to gain access to coded communications. Enemy nations that use our technology may develop methods to "break" our codes and gain access to our secrets. Either way, strict safeguards had been placed on the transfer of such technology – until Bill Clinton became desperately in need of cash.

After the Republicans swept to power in the congressional elections in 1994, Clinton seemed headed for electoral banishment in the 1996 Presidential election. Clinton's political guru, Dick Morris, advised Clinton he would need to raise more than \$200 million in soft political money to stage a political comeback.

The Clinton White House was turned into one huge garage sale. The Lincoln bedroom was rented daily, coffee meetings at the White House were sold, as were seats on Commerce Department trade missions.

At about the same time, huge inflows of Chinese money began pouring into Democratic coffers. FBI intelligence reports have confirmed this.

## **Smoking Gun**

Many of the questions surrounding this massive abuse of power have gone unresolved.

Congressional inquiries by both the House and Senate made little headway in exposing the administration's sell-out of national secrets and technology.

The one man who could explain the most, Ron Brown, is dead.

The White House and the press have scoffed at ideas Brown may have been murdered. Such notions were taken seriously by top military officers.

Three ranking officers went on the record after Brown's death to say Brown may have been murdered and the only way that possibility could be excluded would be by an autopsy on his body.

The three officers included Army Colonel David Hause, a trained pathologist who also served as a combat surgeon during the Gulf War; Air Force Major Thomas Parsons who reviewed the available information and came to a similar conclusion, and, of course, Lt. Colonel Cogswell.

Additionally, Naval Chief Petty Officer Kathleen Janoski--who headed the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology's Photography Unit, went public with claims that Brown's head X-rays were purposefully destroyed to hide evidence of bullet fragments in Brown's head.

The military tried to portray the claims of these four as utterly ludicrous. The press, by and large, refused to publish their significant claims.

As further evidence the military was deeply fearful of these allegations is the retaliation and punishment all four of the whistleblowers have suffered.

Lt. Colonel Cogswell was issued a negative job review after going public - his first in ten years of military service. He was also demoted to work in oral (dental) pathology, a field he has no training in. Colonel Hause was transferred to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Major Tom Parsons was also transferred to Andrews Air Force Base. Chief Petty Officer Janoski was stripped of her duties and office as head of the photography unit and transferred to another office at Walter Reed Hospital.

If these military personnel were just making goofy claims, why the retaliation? The truth is that Brown's death is the smoking gun of the whole scandal involving the campaign finances. The administration from the beginning has been fearful of a proper investigation of Brown's death. This should raise a red flag among thoughtful people.

## **Questions Linger About Ron Brown Plane Crash**

By Christopher Ruddy and Hugh Sprunt  
FOR THE PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW  
November 24, 1997

As Attorney General Janet Reno decides whether to call for an independent counsel for fund-raising matters, questions about the death of one of the central figures in the scandal continue.

On April 3, 1996, an Air Force Boeing 737 carrying Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and 34 others on a trade mission crashed into a mountainside near Croatia's Dubrovnik airport. The Air Force quickly determined the tragic event to be an accident.

Brown, who rose from a childhood in Harlem to become the first black to head a major U.S. political party and the highest-ranking black in the Clinton Administration, was eulogized as an American hero during elaborate memorial services. Little noted during this grieving period was that Brown was the major target of an independent counsel probe headed by Daniel Pearson.

Pearson's inquiry had been triggered by allegations that shortly before joining the Clinton administration, Brown received a bribe from a Vietnamese businessman. Also raised in Congress were allegations that Brown's intimate friend and business partner, Nolanda Hill, had passed money to Brown in several sham financial transactions just before he took the Commerce post.

Pearson's inquiry soon widened beyond these allegations into matters directly affecting the Clinton administration. On March 19, 1996, just weeks before Ron Brown would lose his life, Pearson obtained wide-ranging subpoenas calling for records of the Asian Pacific Advisory Council, or APAC, a fund-raising organization affiliated with the Democratic National Committee. More than 20 individuals and entities would receive subpoenas, including Brown and his son Michael; Gene and Nora Lum and their business, Dynamic Energy; the DNC; and several APAC fund-raisers who were brought to the Commerce Department by Brown.

At about the same time, a conservative legal group, Judicial Watch, was investigating the possibly illegal ties of Brown and his Commerce Department to DNC fund-raising efforts. Using a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit, Judicial Watch focused on Commerce's overseas trade missions and whether participants were selected because they had been major donors to the DNC. Judicial Watch had already identified John Huang, a Commerce official and former DNC fund-raiser, as a target of its suit.

Huang had also been APAC's major fund-raiser and was president of the Lippo Group USA, the American arm of the now-famous Indonesian firm headed by Mochtar Riady. Lippo has had longstanding ties to Bill Clinton and alleged links to the fund-raising scandal and the Chinese government. As part of its suit, Judicial Watch had taken a deposition from Huang and was preparing to take a deposition from Brown.

Another curious figure was Melinda Yee of APAC, who became Brown's personal assistant at Commerce. Months later, after the 1996 election had passed, new scrutiny by Congress and the media would place some of these individuals - including Huang, Yee and the Lums - and groups like APAC at the center of a massive, perhaps illicit, fund-raising effort by the Clinton-Gore campaign.

But as of April 3, 1996, these matters had received little public or press attention, and Brown's death appeared to make them irrelevant. Six hours after the official

confirmation of Brown's demise, Pearson quietly announced he was closing his probe of Brown.

## **The Crash**

According to Nolanda Hill, originally Brown was not scheduled to head up the trade mission to the Balkans that ended in his death. She says at the last minute - after Pearson's subpoenas were issued - the White House asked Brown to join the delegation.

Given the later questions about DNC fund raising, his own involvement in that effort, and the timing of his death as the Pearson inquiry was getting into gear, it may have been inevitable that questions would be raised about the plane crash itself.

Hill herself has alleged, with no real basis other than suspicion, that Brown's plane crash was no accident. Her suspicion may also have something to do with the fact that Brown's death left her holding the bag. Pearson's investigation of her was turned over to the Justice Department, where that inquiry continues today. Hill has also alleged that when she was first informed of Brown's death, an Army undersecretary told her Brown's plane had crashed in the Adriatic and Navy divers were already on the scene.

Confusion often reigns when disaster strikes, and later becomes the fodder of conspiracy mills. But legitimate questions about the crash remain outstanding. According to the official Air Force report on the Brown crash - which totals more than 17,000 pages bound in 22 volumes - the government identified three causes.

First, a paperwork foul-up had not alerted Air Force personnel that the Dubrovnik airport and its approaches had never been certified as safe by the Air Force. Second, the approach to Runway 12, the one assigned to the Brown plane for landing, had not been designed properly by the Croatians. And third, according to the Air Force, gross pilot error contributed to the crash. The plane's pilots flew on a heading some 10 degrees to the left of their proper course, driving the jet directly into the side of a nearby mountain, St. John's Hill. The Air Force report suggested the pilots likely used improper timing methods to aid navigation and were coordinating their course based on the wrong ground navigation beacon.

The pilot of the Brown plane was an "evaluator pilot" for the type of aircraft that crashed, the most senior pilot flying that type of plane in the squadron. He had accumulated nearly 3,000 flight hours, and his co-pilot had even more time flying the same plane. Despite the voluminous Air Force report, critics of the investigation have suggested that the inquiry was compromised from the beginning because investigators began with the assumption the crash was simply an accident.

On the day of the crash, and though American rescuers and investigators were hours if not days from the scene, spokesmen at the White House and Pentagon ruled out hostile fire - though the region had been the center of a military conflict of long duration. Almost all initial press reports referred to terrible weather the Brown plane encountered, implying that might have been a cause.

One day after the crash, with no real investigation under way, Secretary of Defense William Perry told the AP that the Brown crash was "a classic sort of accident that good instrumentation should be able to prevent." These initial statements from politicians carried over to the first phase of the Air Force inquiry, which is supposed to treat every military plane crash as suspicious until the investigation is completed.



Air Force procedure calls for a two-step investigation. The first inquiry is called a safety board, which convenes to determine if the plane crashed as a result of accident, hostile fire, sabotage, mechanical failure or some other cause.

The safety board is nonpunitive and secret. It exists not to assign guilt or suggest punishment, but to gather all the relevant details, evidence and testimony from those involved in the crash – to determine why the plane crashed. Information gathered in this phase can't be used in court, which encourages personnel to come forward to admit mistakes.

The second step, according to Air Force regulations, is the convening of an accident/legal investigation, which does assign guilt and exists largely to find out what happened during the crash and its aftermath for legal proceedings. Because of its limited scope, this part of the inquiry can be more stunted in finding the true causes of a specific crash. In Brown's case, the Air Force decided to suspend normal procedures and skipped the use of the primary safety board investigation. The second part of the inquiry, the accident/legal investigation, began immediately after the crash.

According to the Air Force, the only other instance in recent memory when the safety board was skipped followed the crash of two Army Blackhawk helicopters in Iraq in the wake of the Gulf War. In essence, the Air Force assumed the crash was an accident from the beginning.

Air Force spokesman Maj. Ed Worley said the safety board was skipped because of its secret nature and because the Air Force wanted to make "full public disclosure as soon as possible" to the public and Congress. "This was an odd case," Worley explained. "We were flying the secretary of commerce, and a decision was made early on that for the public interest we would conduct an accident, not a safety board. That was our overriding concern and we were not overlooking something."

## **Other Issues**

A number of other unusual facts and anomalies regarding the crash have emerged since issuance of the Air Force's report:

- The weather. Initial press reports stated the Brown plane attempted to land in extremely poor weather, including heavy rains, winds and lightning. Newsweek magazine reported that it was "the worst storm in 10 years." Time magazine reported "the worst storm in a decade was raging." Even Hillary Clinton wrote in her weekly column that the plane crashed "in a violent rainstorm." Yet the Air Force investigation report concluded, "the weather was not a substantially contributing factor to this mishap." Why was the Air Force so sure? Simple. There was no major storm.

According to the report, the weather conditions broadcast by the control tower were basically good: winds were at 14 mph, with only a light to moderate rain. Less than 50 minutes before the Brown plane crashed, an executive jet carrying U.S. Ambassador Peter Galbraith and the premier of Croatia landed at the same airport. The pilot of that plane later said, "I was sure they would land."

The only possible hindrance to landing was scattered cloud cover at 500 feet and solid cloud cover at 2,000 feet. Since Dubrovnik airport sits between the Adriatic on one side and a mountain range on another, clouds frequently blanket the mountainside, making an instrument approach a necessity.

- **Navigation aids.** Brown's plane was probably relying on Croatian ground beacons for navigation. In the minutes before Brown's plane crashed, five other planes landed at Dubrovnik without difficulty, and none experienced problems with the beacons.

But additional questions about the beacons and the crash will remain unanswered because, as the Air Force acknowledges, airport maintenance chief Niko Junic died by gunshot just three days after the crash and before he could be interviewed by investigators. Within a day of his death, officials determined the death was a suicide. The New York Times reported the 46-year-old Junic was "despondent over a failed romance."

A related curious matter was the Air Force report's revelation that a backup portable navigation beacon, formerly stored at the airport, had been stolen before the crash and has never been recovered. Conspiracy buffs have suggested Brown's plane may have been a victim of "spoofing" - aviation slang for what happens when a spurious navigation beacon is used to trick a pilot to change course.

- **The survivor.** Air Force Tech. Sgt. Shelley Kelly, a stewardess, survived the crash for some four hours. Kelly and another stewardess had been seated in a jumpseat at the very rear of the 737. That area was found basically intact after the crash. According to the Air Force, she received first aid from Croatian rescuers but died on the way to a nearby hospital. Her autopsy report states that Kelly died of a broken neck.

## **Brown's Head Wound Raises Assassination Specter**

By Christopher Ruddy

FOR THE PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

December 3, 1997

A circular hole in the skull of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown could have been a gunshot wound and certainly should have prompted an autopsy, according to an Air Force lieutenant colonel and forensic pathologist who investigated the jet crash in which Brown died.

"Even if you safely assumed accidental plane crash, when you got something that appears to be a homicide, that should bring everything to a screeching halt," Lt. Col. Steve Cogswell, a doctor and deputy medical examiner with the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, told the Tribune-Review.

In several interviews, Cogswell repeatedly referred to the wound as "an apparent gunshot wound." However, he also said, "Whether it's a bullet or something else, we don't know."

Cogswell, who has approximately 12 years' experience as a forensic pathologist, contends evidence that Ron Brown might have been murdered was ignored. He said the main evidence of possible homicide was a hole found on the vertex, the very top of the skull. "Essentially ... Brown had a .45-inch inwardly beveling circular hole in the top of his head, which is essentially the description of a .45-caliber gunshot wound," Cogswell added.

The wound, which was documented and photographed in a medical examination at Dover, Del., was "as close to a perfectly circular hole as you can get" in the skull, he said. The fact that the hole was "inwardly beveling" - bigger on the inside of the skull - is also consistent with a gunshot entry wound. Cogswell also cited as evidence of a possible gunshot an initial X-ray that suggested small metal fragments inside Brown's head. The pathologist said the fragments could be what pathologists sometimes call a "lead snowstorm" pattern from a disintegrating bullet.

Cogswell has made no secret of his questions about the plane crash and Brown's death. He has laid out the evidence in the case in a slide show he calls "Mistakes and Failures in Forensic Pathology," which he has presented at professional conferences and to FBI agents enrolled in homicide training courses. Cogswell is in charge of training courses at AFIP.

The Brown crash figures prominently in Cogswell's slide program, which also details some of the more than 100 military and civilian airplane crash investigations he has been involved with since he joined the Air Force in 1991. In investigating Cogswell's claims, the Tribune-Review has obtained photographs and X-rays of Brown's body that show the head wound. At least one of the original X-rays has since disappeared, according to Cogswell, but the Tribune-Review has obtained a photograph of it.

Cogswell arrived at the crash scene after bodies were removed, so he never actually examined Brown's corpse. He bases his questions on discussions with colleagues who did examine the corpse, and on reports, records, photographs and X-rays. After conducting an external examination of Brown's body, Air Force Col. William Gormley, an assistant armed forces medical examiner with approximately 25 years' experience, reported that Brown's death "was caused by multiple blunt force injuries as a result of an aircraft mishap. The manner of death is accidental."

Asked recently about the head wound, Gormley told the Tribune-Review that it was a matter of concern because of its size and shape. But he said his examination showed it

definitely wasn't caused by a bullet because it didn't completely perforate the skull and there was no exit wound. The institute's chief forensic scientist, who was present during the examination, says evidence at the crash site ruled out the possibility of a gunshot.

## **Croatia**

The first American military personnel arrived at the jet crash site 12 hours after the disaster occurred. Within days, investigators from the Air Force, other branches of the military and the National Transportation Safety Board were on the scene. Dr. Steve Cogswell arrived five days after the crash.

AFIP, as the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology is often called, is an interservice unit that deals with such incidents. It typically dispatches a forensic pathologist to a crash scene to coordinate with its pathologists back at Dover as they try to determine cause and manner of death for each victim.

This plane crash investigation was different. Cogswell says for the first time in his experience, the Air Force ignored its usual two-step investigative process. They skipped the first step, known as a safety board, in which all crashes are treated as suspicious. During a safety board, investigators try to determine whether the crash was an accident or the result of foul play. Instead, the Air Force immediately began the second phase, an accident investigation, mirroring sentiments of Pentagon and White House officials who implied the crash was nothing more.

Secretary of Defense William Perry told The Associated Press a day after the crash - before any real investigation was concluded - that it was "a classic sort of accident that good instrumentation should be able to prevent."

Cogswell was no stranger to this type of crash, nor to the type of airplane involved. The model, a T-43, is the military version of the Boeing 737. Cogswell had been involved in the investigation of two previous Boeing 737 disasters, including the crash of USAir Flight 427 near Pittsburgh. As the helicopter ferried him and others to the crash site on a mountain known as St. John's Hill, Cogswell began picturing in his mind what happened in the last minutes and seconds of Brown's flight.

The crash took place in the vicinity of Croatia's Dubrovnik airport, which is situated on a ledge of flat land between the Adriatic Sea on one side and a Balkan mountain range on the other. Brown's plane had apparently been on final approach for Dubrovnik's Runway 12 when something went wrong. Clouds and fog rolling in from the Adriatic can completely blanket and hide the mountain range. Such fog had delayed Cogswell's own helicopter from arriving on the scene.

Contrary to initial press reports, however, no terrible storm was raging when the jet crashed. As Cogswell's helicopter got close to the site, the wreckage of the plane became apparent. The jet had literally run into the mountain. Apparently, the pilots had been making an instrument approach through dense cloud cover when the mountain's terrain suddenly appeared.

The Air Force later concluded the plane was 10 degrees off course as a result of its pilots using improper navigation aids and ground beacons. Questions about the ground beacons were never fully resolved. According to the Air Force report, within days of the crash the maintenance chief for Dubrovnik's airport, Niko Junik, was found dead by gunshot, an apparent suicide.

The plane had not slammed nose-first into the mountain. Instead, the right wing and right engine hit first, followed quickly by the fuselage. It appeared to Cogswell that as

the keel of the plane slammed into the rocky surface, the jet broke into two or three major parts. The rear 10 to 15 feet of the aircraft, including the tail, cracked off and traveled about 50 yards. It remained almost completely intact.

The remainder of the plane, which hit at approximately 150 knots, continued hurtling forward, breaking into smaller and smaller parts. By the time Cogswell arrived, all bodies had been removed and transported back to Dover Air Force Base. Cogswell had a set of pictures showing the bodies as they were found, but investigators failed to draw a "body map" pinpointing the precise location of each corpse.

As the on-scene pathologist, Cogswell examined the photos and crash debris, and developed a fairly good idea of the last moments of the T-43. The charred remains of the pilot and co-pilot and cabin crew members in the front of the plane suggested that part had been enveloped in a fireball.

The rest of the plane showed little or no fire damage. As the passenger compartment came apart, passengers were thrown helter-skelter, some breaking loose of their seats belts, others flying through the air still buckled in. Most of the bodies were found intact. The pictures, reviewed by the Tribune-Review, show that many of the victims were left partially clothed; Garments had been shorn away as they were raked across the dense brush and rocky ground.

Brown's body, as one photograph shows, was found amid plane wreckage. Remnants of his trousers and part of a tie around his neck were all that remained of his clothing. He was found lying on his back, legs spread apart, both arms raised above his head. Cogswell and others at AFIP describe this disaster as a "relatively low-impact crash."

Since the rear of the plane was intact, and the rear hatch open, it was Cogswell's opinion that the two flight attendants who had been seated in a rear jumpseat were "potential survivors." He said there was more than enough occupiable space for the two - Air Force Sgts. Shelley Kelly and Cheryl Turnage - to have lived. Items in the plane would have been thrown forward and should not have hit them, and the G-forces of deceleration were relatively low.

In fact, Kelly did survive for several hours and was found alive by Croatian rescuers. "Depending on who you talked to, Kelly was found near her seat, on the floor of the plane or outside the plane," Cogswell recalled. Croatian rescuers said she died while being transported for medical assistance. Autopsies conducted at Dover indicate Kelly died of a broken neck, and Turnage of "multiple blunt force injuries."

Upon arriving at the crash site the Monday after it occurred, Cogswell received a call from Gormley, the pathologist who had examined Brown's body and several others at Dover the day before. "I talked to Col. Gormley and he told me there is a .45(-inch) inwardly beveling, perfectly circular hole in the top of (Brown's) head," Cogswell said.

Gormley asked Cogswell, as AFIP man at the scene, to figure out what type of cylindrical object could punch through the skull creating such a wound. Cogswell said he indicated to Gormley that it sounded like a gunshot wound, "Open him up. This man needs an autopsy," Cogswell said he told Gormley. "This whole thing stinks."

Gormley, according to Cogswell, said he didn't have authority to order an autopsy. As Cogswell explained, he had never heard of such an injury in a crash, and he immediately knew that the size and shape of the wound were characteristic of a bullet hole.

Cogswell, sifting through the wreckage, found various cylindrical rods, bolts and seat brackets. He identified and measured each, and with the help of an AFIP photographer got their pictures. Cogswell believed each was either slightly too big or too small to explain the hole in Brown's head.

Cogswell also felt it would be very difficult for any rod or similar item to pierce the skull then exit, leaving a perfect hole as it did. His suspicions grew upon his return to the United States when he spoke to AFIP colleagues who had stayed at Dover. He also reviewed the photographic and X-ray evidence. "I talked to a few people who were there from our office and asked them ... if they thought this wound looked like a gunshot wound, or, 'What do you think the hole looked like?' And the uniform response was, 'Yeah, it looked like a gunshot wound,'" he said.

## **Dover**

It was Easter weekend, and military personnel began arriving on the Saturday night after the crash to prepare the base mortuary that is used especially for mass disasters. Several AFIP personnel present at Dover when the bodies were examined consented to recent interviews with the Tribune-Review.

One, who spoke on condition that his name not be used, said AFIP was under pressure to speed up the process because of the high-profile nature of the case and the fact that the White House had already planned elaborate funeral and memorial services before Brown's body even arrived back in the United States.

AFIP has jurisdiction to conduct autopsies on all military personnel, and did so on all military victims of this crash. According to Cogswell, it's good practice to conduct autopsies on all victims in a plane crash. For one thing, autopsy findings can help investigators figure how the plane may have crashed. Cogswell also said an autopsy should have been conducted on Commerce aide Naomi Warbasse because, he contended, the external examination and X-rays showed no discernible cause of death.

While AFIP can't order autopsies of civilian victims, it usually seeks authorization from families to do so. In this case, "people were very reluctant to go ask the families" to conduct autopsies, Gormley told the Tribune-Review. He said Brown's status as a Cabinet member did not mean AFIP could order an autopsy. Others disagree, considering what investigators at Dover discovered.

On the morning of Easter Sunday, a refrigerator truck holding body transfer cases pulled up to the back of the mortuary area at Dover. The second case pulled off the truck was tagged "CR0-002-01" - the identifying number of the body, which translates, "Croatia, second body off the truck." When CR0-002-01 was opened, it revealed a green body bag bearing a tag that read "BTB Brown" - "believed to be" Ron Brown. That identification would be confirmed by fingerprints.

All bodies passed through several stations, including the FBI's fingerprint station, while at Dover. First, an X-ray machine checked for explosives that might be attached to or hidden in the body. Second was the fingerprint station. Another station took dental X-rays for identification and comparison. Finally, full-body X-rays were taken before the body underwent external examination or an autopsy.

During external examination, Gormley described Brown's body as the "intact but partially burned body of a middle-aged black male with curly black hair, brown eyes, a black mustache and natural dentition." Gormley noted flash and chemical burns had spotted Brown's body. An X-ray noted a break in the pelvic bone. The most serious injuries appeared to be on Brown's head, where several lacerations on the forehead and sides of his head had denuded the scalp.

At the very top of the cranium, Gormley observed a wide area of denuded scalp, in the middle of which was a "depressed skull fracture" he described as a "round, punched-

out defect in the outer table of the skull approximately 0.5 inches in diameter." He also noted that the hole got wider as it got deeper.

Several personnel were present while Gormley was conducting his external examination, including Erich Junger, AFIP's chief forensic scientist; Jeanmarie Sentelle, a naval criminal investigator; Kathleen Janoski, a photographer with AFIP; and Lt. Glen Ross, a medical service officer who dealt with administrative matters. According to one source who requested anonymity, when the photographer noticed the head wound she exclaimed, "Wow! Look at the hole in Brown's head. It looks like a bullet hole."

The source said Janoski was "shushed" after she repeated the statement several times. Janoski, contacted at AFIP, declined to comment. She referred all questions to AFIP's press office.

Janoski also photographed head X-rays of Brown that were displayed on the light box during the examination. Her photos would later become part of Cogswell's slide program.

He tells his audiences that the frontal head X-ray shows the defect at the top of the head, and something perhaps more sinister. Inside the left side of Brown's head, in the area behind his eye socket, "there are multiple small fragments of white flecks, which are metallic density on X-ray. That's what we might describe as a 'lead snowstorm' from a high-velocity gunshot wound."

Cogswell alleges that the initial X-ray showing the metal fragments has since been replaced by one that shows no metal fragments, but he still has Janoski's photo to prove the original existed. The hole "got our attention at first," Junger told the Tribune-Review.

The now-retired chief forensic scientist said concern about the wound quickly dissipated because "we figured out what it was. Again, it was nothing earth-shattering." Junger said that a "very reasonable explanation" for the hole was found "when we looked around the aircraft area itself," indicating that some piece of the aircraft or its contents had hit Brown's head and created the wound.

## **The Wound**

Cogswell, AFIP's man at the crash scene, disputes the idea that any item found among the debris could explain the hole. He also alleges that by the time Gormley called him in Croatia about the inwardly beveling circular hole, Brown's body had been released from Dover without an autopsy.

Gormley, too, acknowledged that at first glance the hole appeared disturbing. "A perfectly round, nearly round .5-inch hole makes one think, 'Tell me more about this gunshot wound,' right?" he said. He also acknowledged that no piece of the aircraft was found to explain the hole, but argued that a metal fastener or rivet probably struck Brown's head. He said it probably was not a metal rod because the hole "didn't go all the way through the skull."

Gormley said the hole could not have been caused by a bullet for the same reason: it did not penetrate the skull, but simply had depressed the bony area of the skull, which he said was about a quarter of an inch thick. The hole "didn't go anyplace," he said. "It turned out it didn't have a track."

Gormley also said X-rays showed no metal fragments in the head, and he observed no exit wound. Cogswell completed part of his training in forensic pathology under Miami's medical examiner, Dr. Joe Davis, a renowned expert in gunshot wounds. Davis, now semi-

retired, vouched for his former pupil. "I always found him to be competent," he said, noting that during his training in Miami Cogswell saw "an awful lot of gunshot wounds."

Cogswell, after reviewing photos and X-rays, came to dispute Gormley's analysis. Cogswell contends brain matter was visible in the wound. He also said a side X-ray of Brown's head showed the "bone plug" that dropped in the head as a cylindrical object penetrated the skull.

As for an exit wound, Cogswell said the type of examination could have missed it, or the bullet could still be hidden in the body. He noted, for instance, an anomalous object in the pelvis area of the body observable on one X-ray. Cogswell and another AFIP staff member allege that Brown's case file no longer contains any full-head X-rays. They have disappeared. All that remain are photographs taken of the original X-rays at Dover.

The Tribune-Review obtained copies of those images as well as detailed photos of Brown's body and the circular wound. All were shown to Dr. Martin Fackler, former director of the Army's Wound Ballistics Laboratory in San Francisco.

While acknowledging he is not a pathologist, Fackler said he thought it "very difficult to see" how something like a rivet could have produced the head wound. He also said brain matter was visible. "It's round as hell. That is extremely round," Fackler said with a chuckle. "I'm impressed by how very, very round that hole is. That's unusual except for a gunshot wound. It's unusual for anything else."

Fackler said he could not rule it a gunshot without a full autopsy and better X-rays. He said the supposed metal fragments on the first X-ray were not conclusive because they were very small, an autopsy had not been conducted to locate them, and a side X-ray was overexposed, giving little detail of the head. "They didn't do an autopsy. My God. It's astounding," he said.

He also was surprised that the hole was described on Gormley's report as "approximately .5 inches." Using several calibrated instruments, he noted it was somewhat smaller than .5 inches, "and a little bit small for a .45-caliber bullet hole."

Fackler explained that the skull can be slightly "elastic" and bullet holes can be slightly larger or smaller than the actual bullet caliber. He said the hole was more consistent with a .40-caliber or 10 mm bullet, like those widely used by law enforcement agencies.

Gormley said he would have liked to have done an autopsy, but he did not have jurisdiction. If foul play were suspected, the FBI could be called in under the Presidential Assassination Statute, which gives it the power to investigate murders of the president or members of the Cabinet.

Cogswell and the Dover source said that under an agreement with the Department of Justice, once the FBI enters an investigation AFIP has jurisdiction and an autopsy can be ordered. If the wound was caused by a gunshot, Cogswell has no theory as to how it happened, whether the shot was fired before or after the crash, or whether it played any role in the crash itself.

Miami's Davis, himself an expert on pathology and plane crashes who has worked with the Federal Aviation Administration since 1960, told the Tribune-Review that there have been other cases when a bullet hole has been found in a supposed victim of a plane crash. In one instance several years ago, he said, a deranged flight attendant smuggled a gun aboard a civilian plane and killed the crew, causing the crash.

Davis said anytime a possible gunshot wound is found on a crash victim "that in itself raises all sorts of alarms." "No way can you say it's a simple accident. It's considered very suspicious," Davis said.



Cogswell said suspicion should have been aroused in this case. "You can't ignore who this person is," he added. "You can't ignore the controversy surrounding him. To stack up the coincidences: one of 36 people has got a hole; the hole is in their head; the hole is dead center in the top of their head; and it just happens to be the most important person on that airplane from a political point of view. That's a whole of reason to investigate it."

At the time of Brown's death, Independent Counsel Daniel Pearson was seeking to determine whether Brown had engaged in several sham financial transactions with longtime business partner Nolanda Hill shortly before he became secretary of commerce.

On March 19, just weeks before Brown's sudden death, Pearson obtained subpoenas that showed his probe had widened to include Brown's ties to possibly illicit fund-raising activities involving the Democratic National Committee and a DNC-affiliated group called the Asian Pacific Advisory Council. Pearson's investigation was closed soon after Brown's plane crashed. Unfinished matters, including the investigation of Hill and Brown's son Michael, were turned over to the Justice Department.

**Military Imposes Gag Order**  
By Christopher Ruddy  
FOR THE PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW  
December 6, 1997

Military authorities have placed a gag order along with extraordinary restrictions on the Air Force lieutenant colonel who went public with allegations that a gunshot may have caused the death of Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown.

Early Friday, Lt. Col. Steve Cogswell of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology received written orders that he not comment to the press about matters involving Brown's death. He was told to refer all press inquiries on the subject to AFIP's public affairs office. The instructions also informed Cogswell that he was under "command investigation" - a process similar to an internal affairs inquiry - by the Air Force.

Cogswell, who works at an AFIP facility in Rockville, Md., also was told he could not leave the floor where his office is located without prior approval from his superiors. Cogswell could not even leave for lunch without permission.

Later Friday, two military policemen arrived at Cogswell's office, according to an AFIP source. They reportedly escorted him home and searched the residence. One military source at AFIP told the Tribune-Review that the actions taken against Cogswell were "unheard of for a ranking military officer" and likened those restrictions to house arrest.

On Wednesday, the Tribune-Review reported that Cogswell questions the official version of Brown's death in light of a .45-inch circular wound found in the crown of his head. In interviews, Cogswell referred to the hole as an "apparent gunshot wound."

The Air Force actions came a day after The Associated Press released a story confirming that Cogswell had made the allegations about Brown's death. Cogswell, reached at his office yesterday, declined to comment. Instead, he read from his instructions that he could not speak to the press.

AFIP spokesman Chris Kelly yesterday told the Tribune-Review that Cogswell must coordinate all media contacts with the public affairs office pursuant to AFIP policy. He also said no "punitive actions" have been taken against Cogswell, who has been asked to remain at his duty station during an internal investigation to determine if any policies were violated. Kelly reiterated that the Brown case is closed and the AFIP stand by its findings.

Another source at AFIP expressed astonishment at the Air Force reaction, particularly since Cogswell has made no secret of his concerns about the handling of Brown's death. In fact, he has discussed those concerns openly with professional colleagues during slide shows he has presented on mistakes in plane crash investigations. Cogswell heads up the training course unit at AFIP.

It has long been the practice, according to sources, for AFIP personnel to share and discuss matters involving previous investigations with colleagues and the public.

An AFIP spokesman was quoted this week as saying Cogswell should not have spoken about the case because it was "sensitive." Other sources said the case was never marked sensitive or secret.

## **Second Officer: Wound appeared to be from Gunshot**

By Christopher Ruddy

FOR THE PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

December 9, 1997

A second Armed Forces medical examiner has stepped forward to publicly confirm key statements made by a colleague about the death of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. David Hause (pronounced "hoss"), a deputy armed forces medical examiner, told the Tribune-Review he personally examined a suspicious head wound on Brown's corpse while it was being examined at Dover Air Force Base, Del. He said several allegations made by Air Force Lt. Col. Steve Cogswell in a Tribune-Review article last week are true. Hause also expressed criticism of the military's treatment of Cogswell in the wake of that article.

Hause and Cogswell, both members of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, participated in AFIP's investigation of the April 1996 military jet crash in which Brown and 34 others died.

### **Present for Examination**

Cogswell was not present at Dover when the wound was examined, but Hause was.

According to Hause, his examination table was only two tables away from the one on which Brown's body was laid out. "A commotion" erupted, he said, when someone said, "Gee, this looks like a gunshot wound." Hause said he left his examination table to view the wound.

He remembers saying, "Sure enough, it looks like a gunshot wound to me, too."

He said the wound "looked like a punched-out .45-caliber entrance hole."

To the best of his recollection, Hause said he never discussed the wound with Col. William Gormley, the pathologist examining Brown's body, nor did he review any X-rays.

Hause agreed the wound appeared perfectly circular, which is consistent with a high-velocity impact caused by a bullet. Neither Cogswell, who has been involved in more than 100 plane crash investigations, nor Hause, who has been with AFIP for five years, could remember finding a similar wound in a plane crash victim's head.

Both contend that while parts of the plane could certainly pierce the skull during a crash, the resulting hole probably would be left jagged or irregular after the object entered and exited the skull.

Hause is considered one of AFIP's leading experts on gunshot wounds. He served as an Army combat infantryman in Vietnam, where he received a Purple Heart. He left the service for a brief stint as a police officer, but rejoined to become a medical pathologist. Hause said he has been involved in autopsy procedures since 1972.

Before joining AFIP, Hause spent two years as division surgeon for the Army's 1st Cavalry Division, including duty as a surgeon during the Gulf War. He also served as the Army's regional medical examiner in Germany.

### **No Autopsy**

No autopsy was conducted on Brown's body. Gormley, the assistant armed forces medical examiner who conducted the external examination of the corpse, contends the

hole definitely wasn't a bullet wound. With no suspicion of foul play, he said he didn't have authority to order an autopsy of the civilian.

But Cogswell said the wound should have prompted an autopsy since it raised the possibility of homicide. In such a case, Brown as a member of the Cabinet would have been covered under the Presidential Assassination Statute.

Hause agreed that "by any professional standard" an autopsy should have been conducted on Brown's body, but said he understood that "political and administrative" factors made it difficult for one to be conducted. Even so, he suggested that Gormley should have consulted with superiors to get authority, or if that was impossible, sought permission from the next of kin. After viewing the wound, Hause said he did not pursue the issue or investigate further. "I made the presumption the reason (Gormley) concluded it wasn't a gunshot wound, (and) therefore there was no need to go further, was that he looked at the X-rays" and found no evidence of a bullet, Hause explained. He described Gormley as a competent pathologist, but added that Gormley's experience is more in airplane crashes and less in gunshot wounds.

Gormley, who has approximately 25 years' experience in pathology, has stated he did review X-rays and found no evidence of bullet fragments or the fired slug itself, and no sign of an exit wound all indications that pointed away from foul play. Cogswell suggested, and Hause agreed, that since a bullet may have entered at the very top of Brown's head, it could have traveled down his neck and lodged itself somewhere in the body. Hause said he examined one chest X-ray and found no evidence of a bullet.

### **Severity Disputed**

But the primary evidence cited by Gormley that the hole was not caused by a bullet was that the circular hole "didn't go all the way through the skull." He described the hole as having "no open communication with the inside of the head" no brain was visible, and the "punched out" bone defect had simply been depressed into the skull but was still visible, covering the brain.

Gormley acknowledged that had the hole actually gone through the skull to the brain, it would have raised suspicion. "You wouldn't want to have that. It's not good," he told the Tribune-Review. Because the hole did not puncture the skull, Gormley said, it was likely not created by a rod, but rather by a rivet or some fastener that was part of the plane.

Cogswell, the AFIP pathologist sent to the crash site in Croatia, disputes the idea that any part of the plane could be found to account for the hole. He also has argued that a photograph of the wound contradicts Gormley because it shows that the hole did go through to the brain.

Additionally, Cogswell and another expert consulted by the Tribune-Review said a side X-ray indicates a "bone plug" from the hole displaced under the skull and into the brain. Hause's eyewitness examination also contradicts Gormley. "What was immediately below the surface of the hole was just brain. I didn't remember seeing skull" in the hole, he said. Hause concluded that the piece of skull "punched out" by the impacting object had displaced into the head.

Cogswell has also alleged that an initial X-ray of Brown's head showed tiny metallic fragments, which he said could be consistent with a "lead snowstorm" resulting from a disintegrating slug. Cogswell alleges this X-ray was replaced with other X-rays that did not show the possible fragments.

## **X-ray Evidence**

Cogswell has a photographic image of the initial X-ray, as does the Tribune-Review.

In a press report released after last week's article, the Air Force contended "the alleged 'bullet fragments' were actually caused by a defect in the reusable X-ray film cassette" and that "medical examiners took multiple X-rays using multiple cassettes and confirmed this finding."

Cogswell and another AFIP source also have alleged that all of the original X-rays of Brown's head, which were supposed to be in the case file, have disappeared.

Hause confirmed that for the Tribune-Review. Last Friday, Hause explained, he was asked to review the Brown case file with Dr. Jerry Spencer, the AFIP's chief medical examiner. They laid out all of the X-rays and discovered that, indeed, no X-rays of Brown's head remained.

Hause said he was also ordered to collect all photographs taken of Brown at Dover. These photos, stored in a safe, should have included photographs of the X-rays. But after compiling an extensive inventory of the negatives, Hause could find no original photo negatives of the head X-rays. They, too, had disappeared.

According to Hause, all that remains of the head X-rays are photographic slide images in the possession of Cogswell and copies of images possessed by the Tribune-Review.

Hause said the disturbing facts raised by Cogswell, including the missing X-rays, have not drawn an appropriate reaction from AFIP officials.

"It looks like the AFIP is starting its usual procedure of, upon receiving bad news, immediately shooting the messenger," Hause commented in reference to administrative actions taken against Cogswell in recent days.

## **House Arrest**

Cogswell received a letter late last week informing him that he was under internal investigation, that he could not leave the area of his office without permission and an order one AFIP member likened to "House arrest" and that he was not to speak to the press.

On Friday, Hause said a commotion developed in the office when a military police officer showed up and asked Cogswell to accompany him to Cogswell's home to retrieve all slides and photos in his possession relating to AFIP cases.

"One of the things I'm wondering is why all the attention is focused on Cogswell, who never had the original X-rays," Hause said.

He said Cogswell's allegations should have precipitated a review of AFIP's handling of the Brown case, both from within the office and from outside consultants, rather than an investigation targeting Cogswell.

Hause noted Cogswell had made his concerns about the Brown case known during slide programs at professional conferences. AFIP, Hause said, has "encouraged" and "directed" staff pathologists to conduct such programs using previous case materials, including photos and X-rays. He said there was no need to seek prior approval either to use previous case material or to discuss previous cases.

Based on AFIP's actions last week against Cogswell, "The question you have to ask yourself is: Are (officials) upset that AFIP may have blown a case, or are they upset the American public found out that AFIP may have blown a case?"

After negative publicity of AFIP's actions surfaced Friday, Cogswell told the Tribune-Review the agency has backed down slightly. He said he is now allowed to speak to the press, as long as it happens during off-duty hours.

Contacted for comment Monday, Gormley referred all questions to AFIP spokesman Chris Kelly. Kelly said he didn't expect any of the questions to be answered by the end of the day.

**Gag Order Broadens**  
By Christopher Ruddy  
FOR THE PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW  
December 11, 1997

The chief medical examiner for the U.S. armed forces, reacting to press criticism of his agency's handling of the death of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, issued a sweeping gag order Wednesday on military and civilian personnel in his office.

At approximately 1 p.m., Dr. Jerry Spencer, chief medical examiner for the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, hand-delivered a memo signed by himself to approximately 20 AFIP staff members. The memo placing restrictions on those staffers comes in the wake of allegations by two AFIP forensic pathologists that the agency did not properly investigate Brown's death.

The pathologists, Air Force Lt. Col. Steve Cogswell and Army Lt. Col. David Hause, have criticized AFIP for not conducting an autopsy on Brown's body upon its return to the United States from the site of a military jet crash in Croatia in April 1996.

Both men allege that AFIP did not properly investigate a suspicious head wound that both agree may have been caused by a gunshot. The two forensic pathologists also claim that x-rays of Brown's head have mysteriously disappeared from the case file.

Spencer informed his staff in the memo that "a command investigation" was underway "regarding procedures and individual actions related to the (Tribune-Review) article 'Experts disagree on Ron Brown Head Wound' authored by Christopher Ruddy and other related matters."

Cogswell's concerns were detailed in the article. Hause's supporting comments were reported in a follow-up article this week.

Chris Kelly, a spokesman for AFIP, said the internal investigation does not include a review of official findings that Brown died of "blunt force injuries" suffered in the crash. Kelly noted that an experienced medical examiner ruled the circular wound on Brown's head was not caused by a gunshot.

The investigation, he said, would focus on "policies and procedures on the Brown case."

He declined to comment on whether the missing x-rays would be part of the investigation.

Spencer's memo laid out very specific restrictions on AFIP staff during the investigation:

- All Staffers are to refer press calls to the public affairs officer. "Do not make any statements to the press without prior public affairs coordination," Spencer wrote.
- All staff members are to stay at their duty stations in AFIP's Rockville, Md., offices for the duration of their working day. Staff, including ranking military officers, must seek approval to leave the building for lunch.
- Staffers are to turn over "slides, photos, x-rays and other materials" relating to the Brown case.

In the past, AFIP medical examiners have been allowed to keep such case materials at their homes for use in lectures.

The widely distributed memo mirrors one that placed similar restrictions on Cogswell alone last week. Last Friday, Cogswell was escorted to his home by an Air Force police

officer who demanded entry to his house while Cogswell retrieved case materials in his possession.

One AFIP staff member told the Tribune-Review that the treatment of Cogswell was "unheard of" for a military officer and likened the restrictions on his movements to "house arrest."

Spokesman Kelly took umbrage at that description and said Cogswell and other staff members are free to go home at the end of their work day.

Another staff member told the Tribune-Review that yesterday's Spencer memo indicated "there is a lot of panic" among senior military officials concerned about negative publicity in the case.

In a previous interview, Hause told the Tribune-Review that AFIP actions against Cogswell ignored concerns over the handling of the Brown case.

Kelly reiterated that AFIP stands by its conclusion of accidental death and said the internal inquiry is being conducted to "make sure things administratively were done properly" in the Brown case.



## **Top Pathologist says Assassination Possible**

By Christopher Ruddy

FOR THE PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

December 17, 1997

One of the nation's most prominent forensic pathologists says there was "more than enough" evidence to suggest possible homicide in the death of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, and an autopsy should have been conducted on his body.

Pittsburgh coroner (Allegheny County) Dr. Cyril Wecht reached these conclusions after reviewing photographs of Brown's body, photo images of X-rays of Brown's head and body, and the report of the forensic pathologist for the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology who examined the corpse.

The Pittsburgh pathologist's findings -- including his identification of what may be more evidence suggesting homicide -- bolster the statements by Air Force Lt. Col. Steve Cogswell and Army Lt. Col. David Hause, both AFIP forensic pathologists.

Hause and Cogswell participated in AFIP's investigation of the April 1996 military jet crash in which Brown and 34 others died.

Both officers told the Tribune-Review that a perfectly circular hole found at the very top of Brown's head looked like a .45 caliber gunshot wound, and both contended its discovery should have prompted an autopsy. No autopsy was conducted.

In the wake of their allegations, Air Force Col. William Gormley, the pathologist who examined Brown's body, has dramatically changed his description of the wound.

Previously, Gormley, an AFIP pathologist with approximately 25 years' experience, insisted that the primary reason the hole could not have been caused by a bullet was his finding that the circular hole "didn't go all the way through the skull."

A bullet most assuredly would have, Gormley said, and he described the hole as having "no open communication with the inside of the head," with no brain visible. He said the "punched out" defect had simply been "depressed" but was still visible, covering the brain.

Gormley also said in his initial interview that if the hole had indeed gone through the skull, "You wouldn't want to have that. It's not good."

Gormley said his written examination report detailing "a round, punched-out defect...approximately .5 inches in diameter" was consistent with his observation that the hole did not penetrate the skull. Gormley said the object that caused the wound probably was a rivet or some other fastener that could be found in the plane.

But Cogswell, AFIP's investigator at the crash scene, disputes the notion that any part of the plane created the circular hole.

Last week, appearing on BET Tonight, a national black cable network show hosted by Tavis Smiley, Gormley admitted that a photograph and lateral X-ray of Brown's head both of which have been published in the Tribune-Review indeed prove the skull had been penetrated and that Brown's brain was visible.

Gormley noted it has been a year-and-a-half since the Brown crash, and said he had simply forgotten what the wound looked like.

Still, he said, the wound definitely wasn't caused by gunshot, primarily because X-rays showed no slug or metal fragments in the head consistent with a bullet, and there was no sign of an exit wound.