

## Former veteran White House official charged with embezzling from press

WASHINGTON — The former White House travel office chief was charged Wednesday with embezzling from news organizations in a case that renews debate over the 1993 firing of employees who arranged for reporters to travel with the president.

A federal grand jury indictment said Billy R. Dale, a veteran of more than 30 years at the White House, pocketed more than \$68,000 that news organizations paid to cover their reporters' travel expenses.

But in two counts of embezzlement and conversion, the grand jury only charged Dale with stealing more than \$33,297.95. The grand jurors said some of the \$68,000 was taken more than five years ago — a statute of limitations prohibits charges about actions that old.

Justice Department spokesman Carl Stern refused "for reasons of legal strategy" to specify the exact amount prosecutors will try to prove Dale converted to his own use.

Dale's attorney, Steven Tabackman, was out of town Wednesday, but had denied Monday that Dale took any money and pledged to mount a vigorous trial defense.

Tabackman said he could show Dale substituted his own cash for office checks he deposited in his personal bank account if Dale's handwritten ledgers, now missing from his White House office, can be found or if expense payment records can be obtained from businesses overseas.

At the White House, press secretary Dee Dee Myers, noting the case is in court, limited her reaction to pointing out that the administration revamped the travel office last year and cooperated with the investigation.

Tabackman has suggested his cli-

ent was being made a scapegoat because of embarrassment the White House suffered over the firing of Dale and six subordinates. He vowed to question everyone involved in the firing, which could produce testimony from Hillary Rodham Clinton.

According to previous inquiries, she was briefed about the travel office and once told a top White House aide to get "our people" into the office. She said she could not recall the remark.

Republicans contend that the inquiries by then-White House chief of staff Mack McLarty and by the congressional General Accounting Office were not critical enough. They plan hearings on the case next spring by the House Government Operations Committee.

The grand jury charged that from February 1988 through April 1991, Dale deposited 55 checks totaling \$54,188.61 in his own Maryland National Bank account instead of putting them in the travel office account at Riggs National Bank.

The grand jury charged him with embezzling only 41 of the 55 checks because the other 14 checks are too old to be included. It identified only six of the 41 checks "embezzled and converted by Dale," totaling \$19,297.75.

The government said the checks included payments by news organizations for reporters' expenses and refund checks from businesses that provided services on trips.

In a second count, the grand jury charged that between February 1992 and January 1993, Dale cashed checks on the Riggs travel office account to replenish the travel office's petty cash fund, but instead converted

\$14,000 of the cash to his own use.

The charges carry a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and \$500,000 in fines.

Dale, 57, of Clinton, Md., took charge of the travel office in 1982.

An audit in May 1993 found the office kept sloppy records. White House lawyers called in FBI officials to announce an investigation and later were criticized by McLarty for giving the appearance of trying to pressure the FBI.

Further controversy arose when it was learned initial complaints about the office came from Catherine A. Cornelius, a 25-year-old distant cousin of President Clinton, who worked there and wanted to run it, and from Hollywood producer Harry Thomason, a friend of President Clinton who wanted travel office business for his air charter company.

Cornelius and Thomason remain under investigation but are not expected to be charged, according to a Justice Department source, who demanded anonymity.

Five of those fired were rehired elsewhere in government; a sixth retired.

The grand jury did not say how Dale spent the allegedly stolen money.

Tabackman has said prosecutors may point to a Virginia vacation home and boat Dale acquired while being paid about \$75,000 a year. But he said Dale and his sons built much of the house themselves, and that Dale took out a mortgage for the house and borrowed \$9,000 to buy the boat.

"You don't borrow \$9,000 for a boat if you've got \$55,000 available," Tabackman said.

## News... in a Minute

### Potoroo rises again

PERTH, Australia — A small marsupial thought extinct for 125 years has been found on Western Australia's southern coast.

Researchers found the animal, Gilbert's potoroo, last week in a nature reserve east of Albany, 255 miles south of Perth.

The last recorded sighting of the animal was in the same area in 1869.

Environment Minister Kevin Minson said five of the marsupials — two adult males, a juvenile male and an adult female with a pouch young — were found alive in traps last week.

Gilbert's potoroo grow to about a foot, weigh about 2 1/2 pounds, have rat-like tails, a snout and a furry coat of gray, reddish brown and black.

They were first identified by Europeans in 1840. A search for the marsupials in 1975 didn't turn up any, Minson said.

### Friends don't let friends drive sleepy

WASHINGTON — Drowsy drivers may cause as many accidents as drunken drivers — 30 percent of fatal crashes in one study — and at least one American in every 20 has caused an accident by nodding off at the wheel, sleep researchers say.

Don't blame boring highways and long drives for drowsing and driving, said Dr. Thomas Roth, a researcher at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. Instead, he said Wednesday, blame a stubborn unwillingness to submit to slumber and a hyperactive American lifestyle with inadequate time for sleep.

Research presented at a conference on the problem of drowsy drivers showed that more than a third of all fatal accidents in some locations can be attributed to sleepy drivers.

### No 'Star Wars' for defense secretary

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary William Perry rejected Republican calls for the revival of a "Star Wars" missile defense system Wednesday, saying he prefers to put money into local, battlefield anti-missile defenses.

Perry said his upcoming budget, to be made public early next year, would include a "robust program" for both sea-based and ground-based anti-missile defense systems.

The secretary said there was no current threat to the United States that would justify building such a huge missile defense system. The Pentagon is doing enough research to build such a system in time to meet the threat, should one materialize, he added.

The defense secretary, in an interview with news service reporters, also turned aside top GOP lawmakers' calls for a pullout from Haiti as soon as possible and criticism that the effort was costing U.S. taxpayers too much.

## GOP may redefine goals of the Fed

WASHINGTON — Alan Greenspan made it clear Wednesday that the Federal Reserve is ready to push interest rates still higher to battle inflation, despite Democrats' warnings that such a move would heighten the risk of a recession.

But in a hint of the political changes in the offing, Republicans who will be taking control of Congress next year praised the Fed's resolve and said they wanted to rewrite its legal charter to remove full employment as one of the goals of monetary policy.

Such a change, if approved, would mark a dramatic revision of the 1978 law under which the Fed operates, which requires the central bank to pursue the goals of maximum employment, stable prices and moderate, long-term interest rates.

Democrats immediately attacked the proposal by Sen. Connie Mack, R-Fla. who is in line to become chairman of the Joint Economic Committee next year, saying it would allow the Fed to be even more narrowly focused on fighting inflation than it is now and that such a policy would ignore the economic misery caused by rising unemployment.

## Survey reveals perceptions of poverty

WASHINGTON — Most Americans believe people on welfare collect more than they actually do and think the poverty line should be higher than it is, a survey indicates. People seem to see welfare payments as "pouring water into a leaky bucket" but they want to fix the bucket rather than stop pouring, says the survey's sponsor.

The study, conducted for an upcoming PBS television documentary on American poverty programs by the independent Center for the Study of Policy Attitudes, found that 84 percent agreed that society has a "moral obligation" to help the poor, and that 80 percent thought government should do something about poverty.

"Even among white males, the demographic group who made the strongest shift in the last election, 75 percent agreed that the government has a responsibility to try to eliminate poverty," the study said.

The study found wide chasms between the way people view federal anti-poverty programs of the 1960s War on Poverty, and what they think should be done about them.

For example, 75 percent said they feel

government programs are rife with waste and do little to help poor people, but only 10 percent wanted to eliminate welfare.

Eighty-five percent supported replacing welfare with programs that create jobs for poor parents who want work but can't get it — yet only 21 percent wanted to cut the amount spent on current programs.

"They do perceive that there's a high level of waste and fraud in poverty programs. Even with that, they still don't want to decrease spending," said Steven Kull, director of the center, which conducted the study for the producers of "America's War On Poverty," which will be broadcast Jan. 16-18.

Kull, a faculty member at the University of Maryland, cautioned that the survey results did not mean there is wide public enthusiasm for anti-poverty programs. "There's a good deal of frustration. But they think it's morally wrong to just pull the plug," he said.

Fifty-eight percent of those polled thought the federal poverty line should be higher than its current income limit of

\$14,763 a year for a family of four. Only 7 percent felt it should be lower. The average income limit suggested by those polled was \$17,856, 21 percent higher than the present level.

When asked how much they believe a single mother with two children receives in welfare payments, the average response was \$685 a month, the study said. The national average for state and federal payments is \$366 monthly.

Ninety-two percent said reducing poverty would be a good economic investment. Seventy-three percent said increasing aid to the poor would cut racial tension and crime.

As for financing such aid, 58 percent said the wealthy should pay more in taxes for poverty programs, while 34 percent said the wealthy should not be required to pay more.

The poll, conducted Oct. 13-16, surveyed 900 Americans at random, 23 of whom gave in-depth interviews. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.5 to 4 percentage points.

## Justice Department charges Ohio man collaborated with Nazis in Lithuania

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department moved to strip an Ohio real estate agent of his U.S. citizenship Wednesday on grounds he allegedly persecuted Jews and others while serving in the Nazi-sponsored Lithuanian Security Police during World War II.

Citing captured records in the Lithuanian Central State Archives, the department's Office of Special Investigations, which hunts Nazis in this country, charged that Algimantas Dailide, 73, on at least one occasion participated in the arrest of Jews who

had escaped from barbed-wire-enclosed ghettos in the province around Vilnius, Lithuania's capital.

The records show those Jews were jailed, the government said, noting that in such cases Jews routinely were executed or otherwise punished.

A recording machine answered the phone at Dailide's home in Brecksville, a suburb 12 miles south of Cleveland where, OSI chief Eli Rosenbaum said, Dailide still owns and operates a small realty business. Messages for Dailide were not immediately returned.

In a complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Cleveland, the government said the Lithuanian Security Police, or Saugumas, acted as a subordinate component of the German Security Police and Security Service and had duties that paralleled those of the German Gestapo.

The Saugumas assisted Nazi occupying forces in enforcing the persecution of Vilnius Jews by arresting ghetto escapees and turning them over for execution, the government said.

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