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Clinton's Secret Police in Overdrive

New information hints at another 1993 Whitewater coverup

On Oct. 5, 1993, Bruce Lindsay told his best friend, President Bill Clinton, the explosive news: The Justice Department was about to make Arkansas Gov. Jim Guy Tucker a target in a criminal probe over the collapse of the Madison Guarantee Savings and Loan. On Oct. 6, Clinton and Tucker met for their first White House rendezvous of the administration. The next day, the White House secret police appear to have swung into action.

Newly available Secret Service logs show that on Oct. 6, 12 and 14, 1993 top Clinton damage-control specialist Betsey Wright held a White House summit meeting with Craig Livingstone — the keeper of the FBI files.

Wright, a longtime Clinton confidante, employed private detectives to check out leads on the women and state troopers said to be bad-mouthing Clinton. Her operatives dug up embarrassing information to intimidate those witnesses into silence or to discredit them if they went public.

Craig Livingstone's day job was to be the liaison between the White House and the FBI for background investigations of potential appointees. His apparent side job was overseeing the illicit procurement and scrutinizing of the FBI files of prominent Republicans.

What did Wright and Livingstone have to talk about? Whatever it was, it must have been urgent. One meeting was at midnight. Another pow-wow took place in the offices usually used by the First Lady's staff in the Old Executive Building.

These three meetings of the secret police chieftains were the only meetings between the two that the White House logs indicate for the entire Clinton administration.

Word that the Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) had sent Justice a criminal referral suggesting a probe of Tucker's role in Madison was explosive news. Special prosecutor Kenneth Starr eventually got Tucker convicted on 13 counts in the matter — and then got Tucker to testify against the Clintons. That testimony is thought to be a key element in the Whitewater probe.

Betsey Wright was a private lobbyist at



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the time of these meetings. She would have had no professional reason to meet with Livingstone. But Betsey was the institutional memory of the Clintons' Arkansas years. She had been Gov. Clinton's chief of staff, campaign manager and general protector. In any Arkansas-based crisis, it was natural to contact her to learn what might come out.

The pattern of the subsequent Wright-Livingstone meetings suggests that the initial Oct. 6 meeting may have led to operational assignments for Wright. How else to explain the White House entry logs for Oct. 12, which indicate that Betsey Wright was waived in for a meeting with Livingstone at "00:00"?

Apparently, whatever she was doing came to a conclusion on Oct. 14, when she

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met with Livingstone's sidekick, Anthony Marceca. According to the logs, it was her last meeting with either man.

Was the timing of the meetings coincidental, or were they linked to the RTC referral? Were the conferences part of an orchestrated effort to see where the criminal probe might lead? Was Wright working on buttoning up leads which might prove embarrassing to Clinton in the Tucker probe?

Did Livingstone share with her any information from FBI files which might assist her in damage control? Did any White House higher-up suggest to Livingstone that he bring Betsey in? At the time, Wright was unpopular with the White House staff; it's unlikely that he would have reached out to her on his

Perhaps coincidentally, Livingstone also met with Carol Tucker Foreman, the governor's sister, several hours after her brother met with the president.

What was Craig Livingstone doing meeting with Foreman hours after the Clinton-Tucker chat? There may be an innocent explanation: Perhaps the Foreman-Livingstone meeting involved her effort to win a top-level job. But, if so, it was the only time White House logs reflect a direct encounter between a high-level job applicant and Livingstone.

These White House entry logs, obtained under subpoena by the conservative group Judicial Watch, show a clear need for further questioning of Livingstone.

Until now, Livingstone has refused to answer congressional inquiries, citing his Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination. Dan Burton, chairman of the House Government Operations Committee, should see if special prosecutor Starr would object to granting Livingstone immunity to in exchange for his testimony. Starr has jurisdiction over the FBI file scandal, but seems more focused these days on Whitewater and on the Lewinsky scandal. (In fact, Livingstone's attorney has recently boasted that his client is out of any legal danger.) If Starr doesn't have Livingstone in his sights, the national interest would surely be served by granting him immunity to gain his testimony on the file scandal.

Some additional areas for inquiry: The White House entry logs show that Livingstone entered the "residence" on Dec. 7, 1993, at 7:23 p.m. to meet with POTUS — the president. It was evidently not a social occasion: In another entry, when he was waved in to attend a party, he was listed as visiting the "state floor," not the "residence."

On Oct. 18, 1994, Livingstone met with the vice president at 1:42 p.m. and with the president at 4:18 p.m. What were these meetings about?

Each new revelation puts the operations of the secret police — the off-the-shelf operatives hired by the Clinton administration — closer to the heart of this presidency. Congressional hearings are the only way to learn the full scope and breadth of the secret police's role.