

## **A New American Story**

“World events do not occur by accident. They are made to happen, whether it is to do with national issues or commerce; and most of them are staged and managed by those who hold the purse strings”

Denis Healey, former British Defense Minister

On January 3, 2011, Traian Bujduveanu will be released from a federal halfway house to return to his family in Plantation, Florida. And halfway is precisely how it feels to him. He will have his freedom, but not his good name.

The government took that from him in June of 2008 when they used explosives to blast open the doors to his home in order to execute a raid at six o'clock in the morning. They took it when they struck his blind and elderly mother as they marched through his home, eventually dragging Bujduveanu in handcuffs from his bedroom into the backyard.

It was a scene reminiscent of war time videos taken by imbedded photo journalists in Iraq or Afghanistan, but the similarities are not just visual. The details are all too remindful of stories of betrayal at the hands of the American government. The same government that, in times past and present, seeks out the help of Iraqi or Afghanistan, or Vietnamese, citizens to overthrow their government, only to be thrown themselves beneath the wheels of democracy when it suited American interests to do so.

Like his name, Bujduveanu's story is complex, until you break it down into smaller parts and review it a few times so that it becomes familiar. Traian Bujduveanu, a naturalized citizen of the United States, was recruited by the American government back in the 1980's to assist in its plans to overthrow the communist regime of his native Romania. Two decades later, that same government accused Bujduveanu of conspiring to export military aircraft parts to Iran. In the process they were sufficiently able to threaten and intimidate him until he plead guilty to a crime he didn't commit. The question of why – why did the government fabricate this case, is just as complex and, yet, just as simple.

Bujduveanu came to the United States, to New York City, from Romania in 1974 with his family. He was 18 years old and filled with optimism. This was America, land of the free, and a place where anyone could succeed through hard work and determination. After six years in the United States, Bujduveanu applied for and was granted citizenship in his adopted home. His parents and two sisters also became naturalized citizens.

But they were not the first in the Bujduveanu family to take this path. His family and all ancestors were born in Greek-Macedonia, near the ancient city of Pela. By the late 1930's Greece, through the Greek Secret Services, had begun an aggressive campaign to confiscate territory and property from ancient Macedonia and its people, employing a form of ethnic cleansing in its wake. By 1939 there was a mass exodus from Greek-Macedonia, also known as ancient Macedonia, with half settling in far away Australia, Canada and the United States. While Traian's grandfather fled to Romania, his grandfather's brother immigrated to the United States, settling in New York. There Traian's young uncle, Ionel, enlisted as a pilot in the United States Army during World War II.

Along with thousands of other pilots, Ionel was assigned to Operation Ploiesti, making dangerous daylight bombing raids against petroleum refineries in oil rich Romania. During the latter stages of World II, Romania, in the concert with the German/Italian axis of power, was supplying as much as a third of petroleum Hitler's forces needed on the eastern front against Russia. Because of Ionel's extensive ties in Romania, the U.S. Army agreed to change his legal name to John Nicholas should he be shot down in one of the raids and there be reprisals against the Bujduveanu clan.

It was this story of his uncle that inspired Traian to enter the Spartan College of Aeronautics in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with the goal of getting a pilot's license. He graduated in 1980 with a degree in Avionics and Instruments.

In 1984 Bujduveanu moved to Florida where he began working for a company called New World Aviation. He quickly found himself in sales, assisting the company as it grew and expanded, selling to foreign governments and their military, throughout Central and South America.

A year later, agents of the United States government approached Bujduveanu to enlist his assistance in its efforts to bring down the dictatorial government of Nicolae Ceausescu. After World War II, Romania had fallen under Russia control and influence, leading to a succession of repressive communist leadership, ultimately culminating with the installment of Ceausescu in 1965. Ceausescu vacillating between support of Russian submission and Romanian independence, but maintained absolute control throughout, never wavering in his fervor for the Marxist concept.

Bujduveanu possessed all the qualities the U.S. government desired. Although born in a small village, his family moved to Bucharest, Romania's capital, when he was still an infant. He grew up with Romania's political elite, many of whom attained important government offices themselves when their time came. Some were even placed in highly sensitive security positions. Bujduveanu had been able to maintain friendship and contacts from his childhood as he returned to Romania year after year on holiday, and occasionally business.

He was obviously fluent in the Romanian language, as well as Macedonian. He was additionally fluent in English and had picked up some Spanish-language skills during his travels throughout Latin America. Although a Romanian citizen by birth, Bujduveanu was a proud citizen of the United States and a firm believer in democracy.

"If Greece was the cradle of democracy," Bujduveanu is fond of saying, "then Macedonia was its birthplace."

Of course he would help the American government in its opposition to the corrupt communist regime in his home country in the name of democracy. Although he was a willing soldier in the cover war, he was not a spy, not in the Hollywood sense of the word. He was not involved in any kind of assassinations or death squads. His job was to target high level assets and gather information.

He left New World Aviation and began his own business, Orion Aviation Corporation, a modest company which he operated from his home in Florida. But it was more than a front for his clandestine services, it was part of his dream, the same American dream that brought his family here in the first place.

Ultimately, the Ceausescu regime was toppled over the course of a single week, from December 16 through 22 in 1989.

“Minor incidents in the Transylvania city of Timisoara led to violence, which quickly spread to other cities.” – Encyclopedia Britannica, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition (1995).

Ceausescu was arrested, tied and executed on Christmas Day. Bujduveanu’s picture had been taken shaking the leader’s hand only months before.

“I am familiar with these events and the role of the U.S. government in them,” Bujduveanu admits. “But it’s not important. What is important is that Romania is once again a democracy, and a better democracy than what we have here now. Of course I’m talking about the government, the corruption of the United States government in recent years.”

Bujduveanu is quick to add, “It is the government and not the American people. But if they don’t wake up, if the American public does not begin to hold their government responsible for its actions, they will lose what rights and what democracy they have left.”

After the fall of Ceausescu, all seemed right with the world. Orion Aviation was doing well, following the same line of business as his former employer, but with more of a focus in Eastern Europe and Pacific Rim countries. But the U.S. government and its agents were never far behind, contacting him regularly for input on a variety of issues.

Bujduveanu’s arrest and search warrant were executed on June 21, 2008, and he and his family were not very fortunate.

The sound of the explosion when government agents blew open his front door, combined with the ensuing smoke, prompted a neighbor to jump over his fence to investigate, worried that something was wrong. He was met by half a dozen men dressed in SWAT-style gear who told him to return to his home. When he asked what had happened they told him he could read all about in the tomorrow’s newspapers. But what his neighbor wouldn’t read about was Bujduveanu’s mother, who suffered was later diagnosed as a heart attack. Officials called a fire and rescue ambulance for her, but later sent it away after she was stabilized in an attempt to cover up the incident.

Frustrated in not being able to find what they were looking for, a squad of agents and officers began digging, literally, with shovels found on the property.

Interestingly, the government claims to have “found boxes of military aircraft parts stored on Bujduveanu’s property, including hundreds of parts for the C-130, the F-5, and other military aircrafts.”

The court, in its limited wisdom, has decided not to allow Bujduveanu to present a multitude of proofs on appeal by granting the government’s “Motion in Limine”, filed after it saw the defensive evidence he planned to present on appeal. It is an obscure legal maneuver that “preclude(s) the Defendant from challenging these (parts) classifications in Court or at trial,” or otherwise in public.

The government’s motion goes on: “In the sampling of the Defendant’s filings attached hereto ..., the Defendant attempts to explain that the parts at issue are not military or are not suitable for military use because they are used antiqued parts. This “explanation” would be irrelevant to any judiciable issue at trial.

At this Bujduveanu’s demeanor change and he is no longer the stoic protagonist. Struggling to maintain his emotion he asks, “What are they trying to hide? Why don’t they discuss this in the open? In fact, Iran has a firm order for 250 MIG-29 and 250 SU-27 aircrafts, or because the Iran Aircraft Industry manufactures its own aircrafts including a variant of the F-5 aircraft, or because the Iranian Helicopter Industry has been placed there and is manufactured its own Bell Helicopters. Do they really need 40 years old junk parts? Or is this the kind of noise that we need to make before we enter into Iran in order to create another revolution there? Can anybody see that we are a total failure when it comes down to foreign policy and relations?” Bujduveanu’s frustration grows with each question. He is frustrated with the court’s compliance with the government in keeping him silent when they have so publicly humiliated him. There was no court stepping in to stop the federal government, or the multitude of separate government agencies from putting out their own press releases after his arrest. No judge to keep government friendly websites, indeed some government sponsored websites, from presenting a one-side view – the prosecution’s view, before he had been arraigned. No higher authority to protect

him from being tried in the press, at the behest of the government, so that this same government could use it all against him in pressuring him to plead guilty. Everyone questioned and interrogated by the government where quoting the federal agents saying, “There is a lot of pressure from above ...” Pressure by whom? Who were these people above?

“And these lists – the Munitions Control List and the Commerce Control List, they are available to anyone on the Internet. They show the part numbers and descriptions. They show the classifications. So what are they afraid of? Why won’t they let me make my case in the court?”

But Bujduveanu did have his day in the court, and he pleaded guilty to the charges. On April 2, 2009, Bujduveanu appeared in the Southern District of Florida courtroom and capitulated to the government’s singular charge of conspiracy to illegally export military and dual use aircraft parts to Iran. He reentered the same court on June 11, 2009, for sentencing: 35 months in federal prison to be followed by 3 years of supervised release.

“You must understand how the government works. When they arrested me they put me in a SHU (Special Housing Unit), completely isolated and sleeping on the floor for the first ten days. My attorney had to plead with the court to take me down to the general population area. This is here in the United States, not some Third World country.”

“The government threatened me with other charges, crazy charges. All lies. But remember, I’ve seen them lie. They are very good at lying. This I’ve experienced first hand,” Bujduveanu says with an almost casual reference to his past dealings with government agents during the Romanian plot. “I had to think of my elderly mother and my son.”

Bujduveanu has a seventeen year old son who lives with his ex-wife only a few miles from his home. Their residence was also searched, computers confiscated and his son’s vacation money seized.

Additionally, Bujduveanu had no access to his documents or the Internet in order to properly aid in his defense. He went through three different lawyers before he was able to find someone with the expertise to help him. By then he had pled guilty and had been sentenced, but still held out hope for his appeal. Then the court, in alliance with the government, instituted the gag order, giving him little to hope for at this point, like being halfway home.

All were in the overused name of national defense and homeland security. Indict and convict, but don't allow the defendant to put on a defense or appeal by confronting their accusers or challenging the evidence. With the stroke of an executive order pen here and a government sponsored gag order there, a new American story is told.

But that still doesn't answer the original question. Why? And why Traian Bujduveanu? As one recent U.S. president said, simply because they can.

The United States foreign policy efforts since the Iraqi war have been dismal. Friendly or otherwise empathetic countries around the world have been hesitant to give America the same kind of carte blank support they once did in the immediate aftermath of 09/11. This is particularly true of the cautious, or even skeptical, view countries take with regard to America stands regarding Iran.

In a related case this past May, a French court refused an American request to extradite an Iranian businessman who was accused of violating an American embargo on exports to Iran. Majid Kakavand, 37, had been arrested at a Paris airport in March of 2009 on an American warrant. But the French government prosecutor opposed the extradition request noting that Kakavand had not violated French law and that the equipment involved "was not necessarily military in nature." (The New York Times, Thursday, May 6, 2010)

So the American government seeks to achieve their goals by finding scapegoats here at home, backed by the courts and, in particular, a conservative Supreme Court found to be even more conservative in its interpretations of the War Powers Act.

Lastly, through fear and intimidation, the government acquires the assistance of its citizens in combating the "axis of evil" at every turn. The message is: "Be afraid, be

very afraid, to do business with anyone of Iranian decent or affiliation.” The government may not be able to get away with racial profiling, but its citizens can.

Everyone involved in this case have disappeared. The PSI officer, the lawyers, the state attorney, the federal agents, and none of the agencies involved in this case faded away. The only two people remaining in this case are Bujduveanu and Judge Seitz.

Case in point: Arizona’s new illegal alien law makes it a crime for anyone to give aid to an illegal alien. If a driver pulled over for a simple traffic stop is found to have an illegal alien in their vehicle, they have committed a crime by giving them a ride. Average citizens are required to determine if each passenger is legally on this side of the border. The simplest way to achieve the goal is to not give a ride to anyone with a Spanish surname, a Spanish accent or a brown skin tone not attribute to the Arizona sun.

But that’s another new American story.