

Hunting down some Help

Frustrated at the intransigence of the Defense investigators, whose principal accomplishment appeared to be an authentic emulation of Sergeant Schultz of Hogan's Heroes fame, the corrupt conduct of Karpovich and Barnes continued unabated. With absolutely nowhere else to turn, I once again went to Congressman Duncan Hunter for some more of his old-style western justice. Hunter was never interested in software, but he was definitely interested in saving the military time and money, and I knew I could prove that Karpovich was wasting both. As if there was not enough fueling my fire, he also needed to understand that a lot of innocent shareholders, some of whom were his constituents, could lose everything they had invested in, despite our successful performance.

Although I delisted the company off the Vancouver Exchange in October 1992 to rid of us of the stigma of being associated with such a speculative stock market, Audre's holding company was still of British Columbian registry, and I continued to have a lot of friends and shareholders up there. It made me angry to listen to them about how Tomahawk was being promoted. Karpovich and Barnes were quoted as saying they were going to bury Audre, and Tomahawk was going to be the beneficiary. I knew Hunter was already up to speed about the proven savings that would be realized from moving ahead with the purchase of Audre's software, and now it was time for him to hear about what was really going on under the rug.

The lawyer in him listened carefully and he was obviously disgusted, but not completely surprised that a known alcoholic like Karpovich would drive so far down the wrong path as to become completely corrupted. In what I increasingly came to recognize as Hunter's mode of operation during any crisis, he immediately picks up the phone and calls General Klugh to tell him he has a guy in his office who says he has a real problem in the ADCS program office, and the General should speak directly with him. Klugh didn't want to hear he had problems with his personnel from anyone, especially Capitol Hill. To be fair, the General was already deep into a thankless job. Having retired from military service after a distinguished career, he had loyally returned to once again serve his country, this time as the Pentagon's Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Logistics. The unhappy part of that position was that he was primarily charged with making base closure recommendations, one of the most daunting jobs in Washington. It was universally understood that many bases existed on political life-support at

great unnecessary expense to the military. Nothing was more controversial and provoked more resentment than recommending that some dependant community's military base should be closed. The ADCS program was small potatoes by comparison. To survive the stress, he seemed to specialize in shutting out all sources of criticism.

Integrity was obviously of paramount importance to him, and he did not want to hear about some deviant civilian program manager and his assistant. He also had the usual military knee-jerk response to the accusation of insubordination within his ranks. It could not be possible because he was in charge, and the potential that it might be held against his ability to lead was not even a consideration. That was an instinctive reaction to the uniformed service's doctrine of disciplining or demoting any officer for the malfeasance of others under their command, regardless of whether they were aware of it or not.

Klugh was determined to deny an audience to any unhappy contractor with a criticism of his program management, and that was that. Besides, if he wanted to listen to unhappy people, all he had to do was return the calls from all the members of congress whose constituencies his base closure recommendations were threatening. Duncan said he was willing to continue to press the case for a meeting, but he could sure use some help given the Deputy Under Secretary's refusal to respond affirmatively to his request to meet me. I had rarely asked anything of Congressman Cunningham since first meeting him at my ranch, although we continued to get along well, and he always said he was available to assist me if needed. He even hosted me in the Congressional dining hall after my divorce decision was made public. To my surprise, he invited Henry Hyde, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, to dine with us so that Henry could hear all about the details of the marital ruling. Unfortunately, Chairman Hyde offered no advice; he just alternated between laughing and shaking his head as he listened, remarking only that he was glad not to have anything to do with California and its court system.

In an uncomfortable aside, Congressman Barney Frank of Massachusetts walked in to have dinner, and the Duke started whistling at him like a school-yard bully. While it was very embarrassing for Frank in 1990 to have his relationship with a male prostitute made public, Frank was generally seen as an honest and effective legislator. Sitting as far away from us as he could, Frank was still well within earshot as the Duke started mimicking a fighter

pilot on the radio calling out a warning of an “incoming” missile. Frank smirked and remarked something to the effect that it was nice to see his colleague in such good form, but he preferred to eat alone. The exchange was not exactly what I had expected to listen to within the congressional dining room, but then again, the Duke never did much to hide his opinion of others.

Afterwards, I did not feel particularly good about ever becoming successful in garnering any righteous indignation regarding the outrageous conduct of the Family Law court. Even Pete Wilson’s Appointments Secretary just threw up his hands upon being told of the private property settlement ruling against a public company and said it was all Deukmejian’s fault for appointing that judge in the first place, and there was nothing the Governor could do. But Duke, looking past all the jokes and laughter, appeared sincerely sympathetic. He said he realized Audre’s importance to San Diego, and that many of his constituents were going to get hurt. As Audre’s direct representative to Congress, Duke had joined in support of a couple of letters and in the passage of the ADCS appropriations, but this was material from many perspectives, and I thought his combative nature would be well suited to the task of helping me with Klugh.

I had heard Duke be surprisingly severe in his opinions of much of the upper ranks at the Pentagon, both civilians and those in uniforms. It was well known that Duke rode rough and rowdily over authoritarian types and his Navy career had suffered as a result. Aggressiveness is a great attribute to have in the cockpit, but it didn’t fly on the ground with those that resided behind desks. With little or no provocation, Cunningham would regularly launch into a rant about how he should have been nominated for the Congressional Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War, a denial he swore he would ultimately make the brass at the Pentagon regret. After telling him about Karpovich and Barnes’ scheme to subvert our software, and Klugh’s rebuff of my request to have him hear my accusations, he was definitely on-board with both feet. I will admit that I placed some emphasis on Klugh’s authoritarian airs, and that was about all the Duke had to hear.

After briefly sketching out some talking points, Cunningham without hesitation picked up the phone on his desk and called Klugh. With a mischievous nod he promptly got into it with the General. I was pleasantly surprised how quickly he assimilated the talking points, and he did not miss a beat in aggressively bringing each one to Klugh’s attention. On occasion

during the call, Duke would even look up from the phone and wink at me. He was obviously enjoying himself immensely. After a little wrangling, Klugh agreed to call up Hunter's office and set up an appointment to address a problem with some contractor that was evidently not going to go away as easily as he had hoped. I appreciatively thanked Duke for his help and to celebrate, we agreed to meet at Washington's Union Station that night for dinner. I had never been to Union Station and the congressman was a good tour guide, explaining in detail its history and recent restoration. I was pleasantly surprised at the train station's grandeur and ambiance. In many ways it reminded me of Grand Central Station in New York. The restaurant was excellent, Cunningham had been very helpful, exceptionally enjoyable to be with, and we had a good time. I was grateful I could count on his fervent expression of continued support.

I was more than primed when the big day arrived. I got to Duncan's office early and sat in his reception area alongside a couple of Lieutenant Generals waiting for their turn to speak to the Congressman. Duncan seemed to rush from meetings to telephone calls, then back to meetings, all in a steady and enthusiastic flow. I was invited into his office after the Generals left and was told to make myself comfortable while he attended to some other business. The mementos adorning Duncan's office walls were very interesting and I occupied my time by looking at each one. Vickie, the Chief of Staff, briefly stuck her head into the room to check on me and looked displeased as usual to see me. If you were not a titan of industry or a giant within the government, then apparently in her opinion, you were wasting his, and therefore her time. I always disliked her arrogance and coldness, characteristics that were diametrically opposed to those of her boss, which is probably why they made a good team.

Right on time, I hear the announcement that the Deputy Under Secretary had arrived. Duncan suddenly reappeared and warmly invited them into his office. The friendliness was not contagious and Klugh barely acknowledged me when we were introduced, instead keeping all his poise and politeness firmly focused on the Congressman. Accompanying Klugh was a Mr. Roy Willis, the Pentagon's Capitol Hill liaison and finally, sulking through the door looking more diminutive than usual, was John Karpovich. Without much of a segue, Duncan basically says there have been reports of misconduct within the program and we are here today so that I can directly speak to the Secretary about my concerns regarding the conduct of Mr. Karpovich and the conclusions he had published in his report. As all eyes turned on me, I

briefly presented some history leading up to my participation in the genesis of the testing program and its objective to prove to the Pentagon the best methodology for converting its technical archives. I then got right into it. I have never been one to be unwilling to say directly to someone what I have been saying in their absence, and I did not hesitate to let it all hang out here.

I was prepared, and I started pounding away. It all came out, the perpetual procurements, the partying, the request for stock options, the schemes upon getting turned down, and the subversion of the test itself. I aggressively, and factually presented every accusation. Klugh was obviously upset at my assertiveness, and Duncan would jump in on occasion like a referee at a professional wrestling match. Every once in a while, Klugh would turn to Karpovich for acknowledgement that what I was saying was true, and I remember him often responding by looking down at the floor and nodding his head in agreement. Willis remained in the back of the room, appearing to be looking for any opportunity to exit. I made it clear that I had tried to reason with him, and then ultimately turned to the DCIS for help. Karpovich denied that he and Ann ever asked me for stock options, but he had to acknowledge that he had a long history of problem drinking, relied on others to drive him around after his license was suspended, and had been contacted by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service regarding the stock option issue. The more Klugh heard the less and less he liked it, especially given the fact that he was hearing it from me in the presence of the congressman.

At one point he blurted out that no one under his command would do such a thing, and I angrily retorted, accused him of having no clue as to what he was saying because he knew Karpovich all of six months when I had been suffering his antics for more than six years. Right after I sarcastically told him that I didn't ever remember seeing his face in a Tysons Corner bar watching Karpovich hit the floor in a drunken stupor at 2:00 AM, and before he came to his guy's defense he ought to know what he was talking about first, Vickie walks in and pulls Duncan out of the room for an important call. At the very instant Duncan disappeared into the next office, Klugh jumped to his feet and sticking his face near mine, begins shouting that in his life he has never been subjected to the kind of insubordinate conduct I was addressing him with. He was so mad, I thought he was going to have a stroke, but I was not intimidated and was certainly not going to back off. In the very next instant Duncan reappeared, and Klugh clamped up and calmly sat down like nothing had transpired between us. I looked up at Willis who had taken up position by the door, and I think that if he could have climbed

into the wall paper to get away, he would have. Karpovich looked like he needed a strong drink or two or three hundred. Klugh smiled coldly while sitting rigidly upright and looked like he was slowly turning into stone.

The meeting wrapped up shortly thereafter, with Duncan saying in closing that he does not take sides in matters like this as the only thing that is important is what is in the best interests of the Department of Defense, but that he thought I had made a strong case and we all could see that Karpovich had to agree with most of it. It basically came down to “General, it sounds like you have some real problems on your hands, and I think you should take a careful look at getting this program back on course.” And I also think he may have added that all of San Diego’s bases are essential to our defense and that after this gets fixed, he should look elsewhere for his base closures. Everybody laughed at Duncan’s veiled sense of humor, but it was obvious that Klugh was not laughing about the meeting. I knew he would now do everything in his power to ignore the meeting and put the accusations behind him. Fix the program? Fuhgeddaboutit! He was going to cover his ass. Speaking of behinds, I also knew he and Karpovich would put my ass out to dry at every available opportunity. It was going to be my job not to give them the chance.

The next communication from General Klugh was in April and it was very pleasant news. He notified Duncan that he was prepared to begin to move forward with the purchase of our software for use by his engineers. He was committing to immediately purchasing fifty copies and training for \$3.1M for General O’Neill’s operations in Huntsville, and also for the Navy in Norfolk. Duncan replied on the 11th with appreciation, and a reminder that O’Neill had expressed an interest in possibly needing 500 copies and that the remaining \$16.9M of funding should not be obligated until General O’Neill makes his final determination as to the actual amount of our software he will be needing.

We were ecstatic to say the least. All the waiting had finally paid off. We had hung in there since 1990, continually proving the performance of our software and the tremendous savings in time and money it could provide to the task or automating our conversion of weapon systems engineering and the logistics of their maintenance. A cornerstone of our federal strategy was now finally falling into place. Our first priority of business would be to support the Huntsville and Norfolk operations. Our second step would be to include the Air Force in the rollout, thereby imbedding our software in each of the three principal commands. The third leg of our plan was to commence the

introduction of our software to other federal agencies. We had long standing links to the mapping community, and I was looking forward to building off our prior experience with the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service, knowing we could also be of great assistance to the US Geological Survey, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency, the Bureau of Transportation and the Defense Mapping Agency, just to mention a few that came to mind.