

THE SECRET TEAM BEHIND IRAN/CONTRAGATE

For the last 25 years a Secret Team of official and retired U.S. military and CIA officials has conducted covert paramilitary operations and "anti-communist" assassination programs throughout the Third World, according to a lengthy affidavit filed in Federal Court by the Christic Institute.

The international crimes committed by this group in the name of the United States are at the heart of the Iran/Contra Scandal. Several Secret Team members, such as retired Maj. Gens. Richard Secord and John Singlaub, and businessman Albert Hakim, are now being investigated by Congressional committees and the Special Prosecutor for their role in the Reagan Administration's illegal arms sales to Iran and the Contras. For a quarter century this group has trafficked in drugs, assassinated political enemies, stolen from the U.S. government, armed terrorists, and subverted the will of Congress and the public with hundreds of millions of drug dollars at their disposal.

The leaders and chief lieutenants of the Secret Team are defendants in a \$17 million civil lawsuit filed in May 1986 by the Christic Institute on behalf of U.S. journalists Martha Honey and Tony Avirgan. Plaintiff Avirgan was seriously wounded in the 1984 attempted assassination of Eden Pastora (a dissident contra commander who would not accept the supervision of the largest contra grouping, the FDN) during a press conference at La Penca, Nicaragua, near the Costa Rican border. The attack killed eight, including one U.S. reporter, and seriously injured two dozen.

During their subsequent investigation of the press conference attack, Honey and Avirgan identified the bomber as Amac Galil, an anti-Qhadaffi Libyan sent to the Costa Rican ranch of American John Hull, a CIA operative. The journalists allege that Hull's ranch was used as a transfer point for planeloads of arms destined for the contras and for Colombian cocaine smuggled into the United States. They also found that the same group who planned the Pastora bombing also plotted to assassinate the U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, Lewis Tambs. The assassination would be blamed on the Nicaraguan Government in hopes of inciting a U.S. retaliatory strike, while also earning the contra network a \$1 million bounty placed on Tamb's head by Columbian druglord Pablo Escobar.

Because the La Penca bombing is merely one incident in a long history of criminal enterprise by these defendants, Christic Institute lawyers are prosecuting the suit under a tough anti-organized crime law known as the RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) Act. The 29 defendants include: Hull, Secord, Singlaub, Hakim, Escobar; contra leader Adolfo Calero; businessman Robert Owen; and mercenary Thomas Posey.

Two important, but relatively unknown, defendants are Theodore Shackley and Thomas Clines, who are both being investigated by the Select Committees. In the affidavit, Christic Institute General Counsel Daniel Sheehan alleges that Shackley and Clines were CIA operatives who supervised covert paramilitary operations against Cuba in the early 1960s. In 1965 the two were transferred to Laos where they provided air support to a druglord named Vang Pao in order to consolidate his control over the opium trade. Some of these heroin profits were used to train paramilitary units of Hmong tribesmen which assassinated over 100,000 suspected "communist sympathizers"--largely

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non-combatant civilians like town leaders, school teachers, and bookkeepers. Shackley and Cline's associates in this "unconventional warfare" operation included Secord, Singlaub, and a young 2nd Lt. by the name of Oliver North.

In 1971, Shackley and Clines were transferred to the CIA's Western Hemisphere operations, where they directed the "Track II" strategy in Chile that contributed to the 1973 overthrow of Salvador Allende's democratically elected government. The following year, Shackley and Clines directed and financed the Phoenix Project, a political assassination program that killed some 60,000 Vietnamese civilians.

According to the affidavit, Shackley and Clines moved their Secret Team operations into the private sector shortly before the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. They subsequently transferred large quantities of Vang Pao drug money to a secret account in Australia and diverted hundreds of tons of military equipment from U.S. arsenals to a secret cache in Thailand.

Following the collapse of the Saigon government, Shackley, Clines, and the Secret Team moved their operations to Iran to help the Shah's secret police identify and assassinate opponents of the regime. It was during this period that Richard Secord, as assistant secretary of defense, and middle-man Albert Hakim, developed the technique of buying U.S. aircraft and weapons from the government at the low manufacturer's cost, selling them to Middle Eastern nations at the much higher replacement cost, and depositing the profits into secret bank accounts.

The Secret Team next moved to Central America in an attempt to shore up another tottering dictator--Nicaragua's Anastasio Somoza. When President Carter invoked the Harkin Amendment to cut-off further U.S. aid to Somoza, members of the Secret Team stepped in to supply Somoza with arms. After Somoza's overthrow, members of the team armed and advised the dictator's ex-National Guardsmen who were setting up a counterrevolutionary army in Honduras.

This private supply channel continued until the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, who formally allowed the CIA to mount its own covert paramilitary operation against the Sandinista government. In late 1983, anticipating a congressional cut-off of U.S. aid to the contras, Lt.Col. Oliver North, under the direction of Reagan, Bush, Meese, and Casey, reached out to Shackley, Clines, Secord, and Hakim to re-activate their military supply to the contra operation. This operation was in direct violation of the Boland Amendment passed by Congress in October 1984 that banned all U.S. officials from providing direct or indirect support for military or paramilitary operations against Nicaragua.

This purposeful violation of the will of Congress and the commission of criminal felonies constitute impeachable offenses by the government officials involved.

When the White House decided in 1985 and 1986 to secretly sell arms to Iran, North recruited the same men to carry out this covert mission. The Secret Team was the critical conduit in the plan to divert profits from the Iran arms sales to the contras.

The Christie Institute lawsuit, free from the political pressures on the Special Prosecutor and Congressional Select Committees, is pursuing the full truth behind the Iran/Contra scandal including 25 years of criminal activity by the Secret Team.

For a copy of the affidavit, send \$10 to the Christie Institute WEST

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