

Peter Lemkin
PO Box 1046
Coronado, CA 92118

7/28/90

Dear Peter,

Because you are going abroad and because you said you will be sending me some copies of "Tosh" records, I won't mail this until you return.

For a reason never clear and never enunciated, Bud Fensterwald called me "Happy Harold" years ago. He repeated it in his newsletter after my open-heart surgery.

The second sentence in your 7/4 is pretty sick and reflects your inability to come to grips with what I did say. I never said, suggested or thought that I know "all the details of the assassination of JFK." Quite the opposite, I've always said that we don't know because the crime itself was never investigated. However, there are some things that are known, in instances beyond reasonable question, and any honest, intelligence and meaningful inquiry must be within the parameters of what is known. This is where you are sadly lacking and you have been influenced by the nutty literature. You reflect it in this letter but there is no point in trying to reason with you because you are emotionally involved and have not been able to reason. You say you are your own devil's advocate. Bullshit!

On page 3, first sentence, second graf, you say that your boy was a "roommate of Ferrie - it was way back when (sic) in Florida during the Bay of Pigs time." Do you know when the Bay of Pigs was? Your next sentence says that is when you, "bullshit artist" met Oswald." Here is something easy to check and you don't even pick up the utter impossibility of it. You are entranced by the irrelevant, all that stuff about drugs and Central America. Which has no relevance at all.

Bud Fensterwald is the kind of man he is but he is not CIA, not with any other intelligence agency, and the nuts started this rumor before he represented McCord. And what you say here is storybook stuff, not the real world. I'm sure you won't know what I mean when you reread what you wrote

With regard to the FBI documents you enclosed, the Phoenix record is of 62 classification. That in those days meant, "Miscellaneous" and it included "administrative inquiry." It refers to a 26 file. That classification was for interstate theft of autos and airplanes or parts.

The letter from FBIHQ to Cincinnati is the first record serialized in a new file, 105-76496. 105 then meant Internal Security-Nationalistic Tendencies.

You might want to heed what it says on page 2 the second time you obliterated his name: " he initiates contacts with the press and Government agencies" but then claims to have been contacted by them. Have you any substantial reason to believe this is no less true now that 31 years have elapsed since then?

I don't really care who this guy is and I'm not going to make the easy effort to learn. You've given me enough leads. From what you've told me about him and what he has told you I don't believe him and don't want to waste any time on any nonsense, of which there has been much like his.

Your problem, aside from lack of knowledge of other than the nutty literature, is your inability to ask the questions any reporter, any investigator, anyone making any kind of inquiry has to ask. You want so much to believe you can't do anything else. That is the road to serious trouble. As so many illustrations of the past make apparent.

Sincerely,

Hardy

Peter Lemkin
P.O. Box 1046
Coronado, CA 92118 USA

CONFIDENTIAL

July 4th, 1990

Harold,

How in the world did you get the nick-name 'Happy Harold'? Everything I do or say seems to bring out the curmudgeon in you. I really do not see the need to upbraid and attack quite the way you do...but as there is only one Harold Weisberg and I think he can be of help to my research*, I will persist..... *AND MIKE TO YOU!

If you are quite convinced that you know all the details of the assassination of JFK and all its players, and that every letter like mine have been and will always be B.S. unworthy of your attention, and that many persons have not died of odd accidents and strange suicides and (un)natural causes...then just throw this letter away.....

Perhaps I am wrong.....perhaps my source (X) is nuts or a dis-information agent....perhaps, but nothing I've seen....including your letters convinces me of that....quite the opposite-things look more and more convincing....and, yes, I do play devil's advocate and have been very skeptical of X and often challenge and doubt them.

There is much I could learn from you (the reason I attempted this communication), but I already sense there are some few things you could also learn from me. Your comment/question on X not going before the Iran/Contra Committee is not totally clear to me, but seems to indicate you are not aware that that committee was wedded to the truth as much as the Warren Commission...or Watergate Investigations...or RFK investigations. No X did not testify. He is cited in The Fish Is Red (for his pre and post Castro gun-running for the CIA); in Out Of Control for his Iran/Contra involvement and in a recent article published here in a West Coast magazine detailing his Iran/Contra involvement all of which was reviewed by a Senator, who wishes to remain nameless at this time (people have asked me for their confidentiality too!). That Senator went to Central America to investigate the allegations and missed being killed by a bomb by yards! Bill Casey apologized for the near miss....saying the bomb, while CIA was destined for another target....yeah right, Bill. 2/19/77 This Senator passed the information and maps of missions by X to some Senate committees and it made it through the White House too! X has also testified before the Church Committee and HSCA - but totally evaded all involvement outside of past missions related to anti-Castro activities. SINCE then they have had a rather profound change of heart.

No X is definitely NOT either Hall nor Hemming....though X knew both.

Your point about the documents being on Hoover's desk have their merits. I'll take a risk, Harold, and send you copies of two of the documents I have so far. I have only removed X's names and aliases from the documents - all else is as I received them. I would like your trained eye and experience in interpreting them, authenticating them and help in getting others....in the near future (should you decide I and X are not nutty fruitcakes).

As to my paranoia....I make decisions about my own life and I would like to live to your age, Harold. I have reason to believe that X (and I by association) take GREAT risk in getting X's story out. Many that X worked with and knew are dead....of often very strange circumstances. Even X's lawyer from a related matter of some years ago is dead by 'suicide' a la G.d M., and others. So, I will continue to be very careful with the information and who has it and what is done with it - sorry, but I am not as visible as you and my 'strange' death would go unnoticed to all but my family, a few friends and maybe, now, you.

If I'm wrong in my evaluation of X and his information, you can laugh and I'll be very ashamed before many more than just you. If your wrong (and others feel as you do too) and I disregard my better judgement....I'm in trouble, at least, and X's life aint worth \$.10!

X is a decent person trying to come to terms with much of what they have done and seen and the lies they have been told. X did not see most of this as lies earlier on. Somehow....somehow X, though they played (I believe) an important role in 11/22/63...and though they were known to some investigations...NEVER has been asked (nor before this offered) the relevant questions/information!

X spent ~~2~~^{*} months in prison in the period immediately after the events in Dallas. X believes this was to make them unavailable to the Warren Commission and to give a warning against talking...which they had attempted to friends. Documentation on that did exist...and should still exist..if it hasn't been 'sanitized'. Bud Fensterwald somehow obtained in two (!!!!!) weeks a thick pile of documents on X, but when he confronted X seemed to miss the real story! We are attempting now to get copies of those documents without causing a stir or undue suspicion. As you no doubt know Bud, please do not at this time share this with him. I am one of those (no doubt to you, hopeless paranoids) who harbor doubts (not proof) of Fensterwalds connections to the intelligence establishment...mostly though his client list! Indulge me.....

As to the documents enclosed: They have been copied a number of times by X and have degraded some, but think they are still workable. You would be best able to evaluate all the little notations on sides. I would be most appreciative for any details you can give on who read, sent, etc. these documents. Also, what primer on FBI file numbers do I need? A few of the dark marks were made by highlighter pen by X, as were a few notes, I believe (such as 4-66/Omega 7). He often puts such notes to refresh his memory. The two page document we believe to be an attempt (or summary of such attempts) to coverup and create a new reality for the real destination of flights xx/xx/63!...as he did NOT fly to Albuquerque....NO WAY!!!! Jose..... THIS INFORMATION IS ALREADY WAY BEYOND THE POINT THAT COULD GET X AND I IN LETHAL TROUBLE, SO PLEASE KEEP THIS ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENTIAL AND BETWEEN WE TWO!!!!!!!!!! I am working as quickly as possible to come to a point where I do NOT have to play this game of secrecy...but I'm not there yet...not until we get a few more documents and confirmations of X's information and financial backing for the book. (Not for personal gain!..he nor I..!)

One page document just testifies to X's involment in Cuba.

Page two of the two-pager is (we believe) the FBI's attempts to portray X as less than upstanding, more than suspect of criminal activity and of danger to the U.S National Security State. All he ever did of a criminal or suspicious nature HE DID ON DIRECT ORDERS of the very same National Security State!

The SAs referenced in the document flew in from D.C, were very high level and threatened X that he had better stop with his story - or else!!!! and then HIT X!!!!!!...no I wasn't there, Harold...but I do have reason to trust X and you don't have to....but I think you will.....are you a betting man? Maybe...just maybe a significant, heretofore generally unknown aspect of the events surrounding 11/22/63 remains within the information I allude to! I know you are more than skeptical on this prospect....but I am not!

Yes, your right in saying that if true much of the documentation never existed an/or was altered. We are well aware of this, but know of the existance of some relevant documentation and believe others exist if obtained 'carefully'. Once the 'Thought Police' get wind of what we are trying to get and why....it will disappear!...ergo my 2nd reason: hesitency with info! I believe we already lost some things in Florida fo: due to carelessness on my or Gaeton's behalf...can't yet tease it out.

Pardon all the typos - new typewriter and some different spacing on the keys.

It is now 7/11. I've let the letter so far sit on my desk and cool, as have I. I guess I don't react so well to all of the skepticism, but I DO understand it! Anyway, there have been some positive developments. I will in the next two weeks receive over 400 pages of de-classified documents on X - these being the ones I mentioned Fensterwald had had. I am getting them from another researcher who had copies. Once I get them I will forward to you relevant ones for your comments on them. I, myself have not seen them but have been told that they describe X's black operations background and include a flight plan for the day in question....though altered somewhat from the actual. X and I believe we can eventually document the real flight plan.

As to X having been a roommate of Ferrie - it was way back when in Florida during Bay of Pigs time. Around the same time and place X met Oswald. T.B.=Tracy Barnes from the last letter. X insists he saw T.B. in Dallas and had reason to know exactly what he looked like in the flesh. Yes, I agree many things that I mentioned outside of normal 'tradedcraft', which I'm very familiar with, but much was - Nixon being in Dallas, the public execution, the open mistakes, coverups, lies...

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Fletcher Prouty has independent information as to T. Barnes being there. I don't think they were so much operational that day....they just had to watch from close by...for their own perverse pleasure...but THAT is pure speculation.

7/25

Well, I've obviously let this letter sit awhile. I was told that 400+ pages of X's '105' file were on their way. I was waiting to send some of that along....but everyone in this line of work seems tied up by O. Stone's interviews for his new movie on Dallas!

I will be going to Europe on August 2nd to lecture again for some two months or so. There I also work on Olof Palme assassination research. You can write me there c/o Jan Thomas Odegard, ISLA, Tøyengata 25, 0578 Oslo 5, Norway. I hope you will.(write here if you think it will catch me.)

Re-reading this letter I wish I had the time and energy to re-do it. Pardon my grumpyness. Actually, we may have an offer for publication and things seem to be going better. I have NO doubt that when I can send you the documentation (with the names on!) and explain fully the person's story you will stop being so full of doubt. Upon my return we hope to go full steam on the research and writing.

I hope for just a short while longer you will give me the benefit of the doubt - I'm sure you're still (with good reason) skeptical. X played a minor, yet PIVOTAL role in Dallas 11/22/63, I believe. It is a piece of the puzzle, that while small makes the big picture much clearer.

Enclosed is an article about X's Iran Contra involvement. His last name has been removed on the copies. Senator Hart is willing to testify as to his belief in the story - Iran Contra and Dallas etc. Please do not contact Hart at this time, however. Another member of Congress is about to subpoena X for their committee investigating matters related to Iran/Contra. We are NOT too happy about this and wonder what X's public exposure then will do!?! X had a long and friendly relationship with Senator Schweiker in the past.

Anyway. Best to you despite your skepticism. Circumstances have forced me to play a very stupid game. The time is quickly coming when X will be in the NYT pages...not for Dallas (I hope), but for more recent stuff. Those that employed him on 11/22/63 must be even more nervous than I that the information of his past will get out now!!!! I hope to be able to get you complete information on X soon. Please bear with us.....Hope your recovery is going well. Let me know your comments - no matter how skeptical.

Sincerely, Peter

P.S. Do you have or know someone who does have a Dallas 1963 phone directory?

P.P.S. Have more recent information on B. Fensterwald that he may not be anything more than he seems to be. You know him well and I would trust your judgement. His being a lawyer for McCord, though, gives one pause....CIA people don't even go to un-approved dentists! ...let alone lawyers!

P.P.P.S. In your massive files you might already have much on X. In any case, we will need to do FOIA and other document accessing moves in the Winter. your advise and/or help would be most appreciated, if your ever interested.

FBI

62-76

Transmit the following in (Type in plaintext or code)

AIRTEL

Via (Precedence)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI
FROM: SAC, PHOENIX (62-2116) (P)
SUBJECT: INFORMATION CONCERNING

misc. info in file
form in street file
inquiry

8. Encl. 5

encl. 2, 4, 5

CIA Washington DC
Neon

Enclosed for the Bureau are four copies of an LHM concerning subject for appropriate dissemination. Enclosed for Miami is one copy of above LHM for information.

Agent interviewing subject on 6-30-76, and 7-1-76, was SA [redacted]. Agents interviewing subject on 7-26-76, were SAs [redacted] and [redacted]. Subsequent interviews were conducted by SA [redacted] on 8-2-76 and 8-10-76, and by SA [redacted] on 8-5-76, 8-9-76, and 8-10-76.

b7C

On 7-27-76, SA [redacted] ATF, Phoenix, advised that ATF had done a preliminary investigation concerning information furnished by [redacted] pertaining to [redacted] SA [redacted] advised that ATF was unable to document [redacted]'s times and places which he furnished them in his initial contact. SA [redacted] advised that it appeared [redacted]'s [redacted]

Phoenix indices reveal [redacted] as the subject of Phoenix file 26-20103 in 1963. This file has been destroyed and the remaining original FD-302s would indicate that [redacted] was flying a plane to Albuquerque, New Mexico. This would fit into the time frame [redacted] alleged on 8-10-76 wherein he was instructed to leave a plane loaded with arms in New Mexico.

- 2 - Bureau (Encs. 04)
- 1 - Miami (Encs. 2) (Info)
- 2 - Phoenix

DE-87
62-117228
SI-120

22 AUG 13 1976

CHM:dpt
(5)

one copies
Nike

Approved: [Signature] Special Agent in Charge

USCA Request 12/1/76

See MIP... ADD. DISSEMINATION

55 OCT 7 1976

SAC, Cincinnati

3-2-59

Director, FBI

105-76496-1

Then Int. Security Dist. + Exhibits

IS - CUBA; ~~NEUTRALITY MATTERS~~ aka.

Reurlet 2-16-59.

Even though you have made the information furnished by the subject available to the Bureau of Customs, the Bureau desires that the pertinent information the subject furnished concerning Cuban matters be submitted under the subject's caption in a form suitable for dissemination.

If not already done, subject should be interviewed for complete details of his activities in behalf of the Cuban rebels, such as his contacts and assignments. He should also be interviewed for any other information he may have concerning Cuban activities in the U.S. or elsewhere.

For your information, there is enclosed one copy of each of the following reports captioned:

- Report of SA [redacted] dated 3-18-52 b7C
- at Dallas, Texas; report of SA [redacted] dated 3-28-52 at New Orleans, Louisiana; and report of SA [redacted] dated 6-6-52 at Dallas, Texas. b7C

Enclosures (3)
1 - 26-152654 (

VEN:mtb
(5) *mtb*

NOTE: Subject interviewed in another matter. At that time signed statement admitting flying two loads of weapons and ammunition from Florida to Cuba.

53 MAR 9 1959

MAILED 30
MAR 2 - 1959
COMM-FBI

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 1/13/81 BY SP/14

MAIL ROOM TELETYPE UNIT

21 CIA 5407

PX 62-2116
CHM:dpt

It is the opinion of SAs [redacted] and [redacted] b7
that [redacted] is interested in establishing contact with the
FBI in Arizona in the event he should ever become involved in
coordination activities. It was noted that [redacted] initiates
contacts with the press and Government agencies, but in conversat
he indicates "he was contacted by." [redacted] also seemingly
has a tendency to embellish his stories. However, as
does have some knowledge of matters of a current concern to
the United States Government and as [redacted] is disposed to
contacting the Phoenix Division at this time, Phoenix will
continue to receive information from [redacted] and furnish
same to Bureau. As noted in LHM, in [redacted]'s last contact
with Phoenix on 8-10-76, [redacted] was advised [redacted] b7
[redacted] to detailed
writing.

ACIA Davis Contact

8-10-76

MAP POINTS AND SECRET MOVES OF THE CONTRA WAR

The DC-3 airplane, heavily guarded by uniformed Panamanian soldiers, sat on the far side of the jungle clearing at Penonome, 60 miles southwest of Panama City. Its cargo doors were wide open and chocked tight against the fuselage. The right engine idled slow and rough; the left engine was shut down for the loading operation. Soldiers in two Jeeps outfitted with .50-caliber machine guns guarded the plane fore and aft. One gunner trained his weapon on the loading crew; the other .50-cal was pointed at the cockpit and the unarmed American flight crew.

The pilot, Wayne Howard, stuck his head and left arm out the cockpit window and waved a small white flag. The soldier in the Jeep edged back and gave a thumbs-up. A line of cargo handlers hurriedly stacked white plastic sacks on pallets; others inside the plane slid the heavy pallets forward and secured them for the 680-mile flight to Costa Rica.

It was early March 1983, about 30 minutes to sunrise. Tosh

the co-pilot, was about to begin his third cocaine flight in 12 days from Panama to the secret American airfield at Santa Elena, on the west coast of Costa Rica, just south of the Nicaraguan border. Tosh, a member of an all-civilian Black Crew (black meaning top secret) of American military-intelligence operatives, had made several trips into Santa Elena in the past four years. The base was a major transshipment point for weapons being funneled by the U.S. to El Salvador and later to the anti-Sandinista Nicaraguan *contra* rebels. Tosh (name) and Wayne Howard (a CIA-supplied identity) had worked together on these weapons runs, which originated in many parts of the U.S., including the Marine base at Twentynine Palms in the Southern California desert. They had even made secret flights into Nicaragua itself to drop weapons to *contra* guerilla units. But their last three hops between Panama and Santa Elena were drug runs, and Tosh was beginning to wonder why

the Black Crew was suddenly in the dope business. After all, he reminded himself, he was flying under authority of U.S. military intelligence, which answered to the National Security Agency, which, by extension, answered to the White House.

The flight this morning had been set in motion a few months earlier by the CIA station chief in Costa Rica and bore the Pentagon code name Royal Tiger. ("Royal" was the CIA designation for extremely sensitive espionage techniques or missions; fewer than 100 top-level military and intelligence chiefs had knowledge of these operations.) Royal Tiger was an airlift delivering military hardware to various Central American jungle airstrips, but this particular flight was different from the others.

Tosh and Wayne were in the process of stealing 1200 kilos of high-grade Colombian cocaine from the Ochoa branch of the Medellin cartel, which was operating through Panama with the aid of Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega. The American plane had landed 30 minutes before the cartel's drug-running plane was due; ties between the cartel and the CIA's local operatives were so close that this kind of precise information was commonly available to the Black Crews. This same intelligence indicated that the Panamanian soldiers would expect the plane's

pilot to signal his identity by waving a white flag in his left hand. And although everything looked fine to the soldiers now, in reality Tosh and the other crewmen were trying to trick one faction of the drug cartel into assuming another faction had ripped it off and perhaps cause internal dissension and feuding among the cocaine barons.

Tosh felt uneasy sitting in the cockpit of the old, modified DC-3, but not because of the machine guns, which were routine. Rather, it was the sickening knowledge that if something went wrong, the operation would be revealed as a drug run gone sour, flown by an American crew and sanctioned by the U.S. government, which had played both ends against the middle and lost.

From the right-hand co-pilot's seat, Tosh watched the edge of the jungle clearing for any sign of a surprise attack from one of the rival drug cartels that operated from this remote strip. Suddenly, a flock of birds sprang up from the trees and winged quickly away from the dirt road that cut through the thick jungle undergrowth. A car, a black sedan, sped down the rough road, churning a rooster tail of orange dust. The birds circled and returned to their perches as the car raced up the clearing toward the runway and the parked DC-3. One of the Panamanian soldiers stood up to watch the oncoming car. Wayne too had

noticed it. He dropped the white flag and shouted back to the American crewmen in the cargo hold, "Button this bird up, and let's get the hell out of here. Fast!"

Tosh reached up and hit the start button and cranked the left engine. It belched twice, blowing thick blue smoke over the confused soldiers and their Jeeps. The cargo kickers, Dan and Perry, shoved the last pallet and two Colombian loaders out of the hold. A few bags of cocaine broke and spread their contents on the ground, the powder disappearing in the prop wash. The kickers secured the double-wide cargo doors, and the plane was rolling by the time the black sedan came to a sliding, broadside stop. Three men in civilian clothes jumped from the car and began firing bursts from their AK-47s. The rounds went wide and far left of the lumbering bird.

The plane was turning into the wind when the first of the tracer bullets from the .50-cals buzzed past the cockpit window. Wayne

glanced at Tosh and grinned. He lined up the plane's wheels in the ruts of the dirt strip, and Tosh flipped the tail-wheel lock into position. Together, they pushed forward on the throttles, and the engines began to scream. *This is going to be close*, Tosh thought.

"Go! Go!" yelled Perry, as he strapped himself into the radio operator's seat. He slipped on the

earphones and fine-tuned the radio to their assigned low-frequency band. Their radio signal would notify ground stations that the plane was on its way out and there was trouble.

Wayne peered at the far end of the runway. Tosh was hypnotized by the sight of the wall of trees rushing toward them. The controls were still mush. Tosh guarded the throttles with his left hand and called out the air speed as the bird slowly crept past 60. Wayne eased back on the yoke. "It's going to be tight," he said calmly.

The nose was lifting when Tosh noticed one of the Jeeps pulling along his side of the plane. He saw the gunner yank back a lever on the .50-cal and watched, in slow-motion, the hot tracers inch their way toward the nose of the bird. He glanced toward the trees and was certain they weren't going to make it.

The slugs sliced deep into the side of the airplane, and everything went crazy. Bullets, ripping metal, and electrical sparks popped and arced around the cabin. The radio rack exploded, and fire engulfed the panel. Perry grabbed a fire extinguisher and emptied it on the burning wires. Three large holes were torn in the fuselage behind

Tosh, and a bullet was embedded in the aluminum frame of Eddie's seat. Tosh was amazed to look out and see the plane clear the trees by ten feet. He tapped on the fuel gauges, but the needles didn't move, a good sign that the bullets hadn't pierced the fuel tanks. They flew in silence for a while, then trimmed up, set power, and headed for Costa Rica.

Three hours later, the Americans landed at Santa Elena and were met by two DEA agents. Wayne and Tosh were de-briefed while another crew unloaded the cocaine. Nearby, a U.S. Air Force cargo plane was emptied of its shipment of weapons, and the drug cache was put aboard that aircraft. The Air Force plane then took off for Homestead Air Force Base, south of Miami. Later, a ground crew would strip and cannibalize the shot-to-hell DC-3, a venerable bird that Black Crews had flown on hundreds of secret missions since the 1950s. Its remains would be carried out to sea on a barge late at night and ditched. This operation was officially closed, and the four crewmen went their separate ways back home to the States.

Fifty-two-year-old Robert "Tosh" who has lived in the San Diego area off and on since 1976, has decided to come forward with details of his work as a pilot in Central America during the time the U.S.

government was secretly arming the Nicaraguan *contras*. From 1979 to 1986, between his assignments — ferrying cargo and people into the jungles of

war eventually became a business. I ended up running drugs on behalf of the U.S. federal government. Period."

The slugs sliced deep into the side of the airplane, and everything went crazy. Bullets, ripping metal, and electrical sparks popped and arced around the cabin.

Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama, sometimes returning to the U.S. with shipments of cocaine and marijuana — had a blue-collar job in San Diego. He worked as a plumber for the Erling Rohde Plumbing Company in La Jolla. Owner Mike Glancy made a deal with . . . when he hired him in 1985: "As long as you finish the job you're on, you can come and go. He'd be gone for two weeks, a month at a time, then be back here for two, three months before he was gone again. Sometimes, all of a sudden he wouldn't show up, and the next day I'd get a call from Costa Rica. It's Bob, saying, 'Hey, Mike, I gotta be down here for a few days. . .'"

. . . sometimes talked about his other life with a couple of the guys around the plumbing office. "And I thought at first he was a bullshitter, until stuff came out in the papers just like he said," remarks co-worker Norm Isbell.

When the existence of Santa Elena broke publicly in 1987, it was big news, since military aid to the *contras* had been illegal at the time the airfield was most heavily used. "Tosh had been talking about Santa Elena for years before that," Isbell reports. But as the gun running mutated into drug running, ostensibly for the purpose of collecting "intelligence" on the drug cartels, . . . became increasingly disenchanted. "It really bothered his conscience," Isbell recalls. "When he found out what was really going on, it started to get to him. That's why he stopped."

Today . . . is living in . . . and trying to put his past behind him; he's starting a business that prepares pilots for FAA licensing examinations. But the official subterfuge he saw in Central America and the way it changed his perception of the U.S. government continues to dog his conscience. "I believed in the *contra* war at first," he explains. "And before that, I believed in what we were doing in El Salvador. We wanted to get that fucker Castro out of Central America, and we had to do it covertly, and we didn't need some congressman's nose up our ass while we did it. But along about 1982, the gun running and the drug running blurred together, and the *contra*

says he made drug deliveries all over the American Southwest. And like that Air Force cargo plane he saw leaving Santa

Elena, he says he delivered cocaine on four different occasions to Homestead Air Force Base. (At least one other pilot, Michael Toliver, has testified in federal court that he flew drugs into Homestead as part of the *contra* resupply network. Toliver is now in prison in North Carolina on an unrelated marijuana-smuggling conviction.) Flying CIA-supplied airplanes, . . . was able to

cross the border into the States unimpeded by U.S. Customs, which lifted inspection requirements for such government-sanctioned aircraft. He and his colleagues, many of whom had flown for CIA-backed airlift operations in Southeast Asia (and some of whom, including . . . had

even worked together 30 years ago running guns to Cuba), believed that they were working on sting operations for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. "We'd deliver the drugs, and then we'd wait for the bust, and we waited and waited, but the busts never came."

. . . says. "Come to find out, the drugs were being sold to support the *contras*, and our government knew it. Our government is crookedier than shit. Every facet, we're a network of greed. . . . Our job was to gather facts related to military affairs, at first. Then we were asked to start gathering information on drugs. Then these same agencies that asked us for the intelligence on drugs started sacrificing our men, busting us, calling us a bunch of mercenaries, rogue elephants. I figured, if they'd hang out certain guys to dry like John Hull, Eugene Hasenfus, or Barry Seal, what would they do to me?"

In the spring of 1983, . . . who had a residence in Denver, approached then-Senator Gary Hart with information about government involvement in drug running in Central America.

. . . also expressed his concerns that this information had been passed up through proper channels and nothing had been done about it. He met with Hart staffer Bill Holen, giving him a copy of a map of Central America marked with notes, aircraft IDs,

staging areas, weapons drops, and *contra* crossover points from Honduras into Nicaragua. At the time, most of this information was a secret being withheld from

Congress. The map, on which . . . continued to make notations for four years, until he quit flying to Central America in 1987, was a form of security for him. He figured that since a copy of it was in Hart's hands, the map would protect him if he were ever shot down in Central America and the government tried to discredit him and deny his activities. Several of the names . . . wrote on the map would be revealed years later to be principal players in the Iran-*contra* scandal (Robert Owen, Felix Rodriguez, Richard Secord), including some who figure prominently in the current trial of former National Security Adviser John Poindexter. But at the time . . . jotted them down, these notes and names were his private picture of a dirty secret.

Hart, who had spent four years on the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee and is now a practicing lawyer in Denver, says he recalls that . . . information was passed on to the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee. "and from there it went nowhere. But I think it should have been taken seriously." Hart says he has no reason not to believe . . . stories, given the later revelations about the *contra* war. "Do I believe the CIA flew guns, legally or illegally, to the Nicaraguan *contras*? Of course I believe it. Do I think they flew drugs back? I think it's possible."

If or this story, the samples of . . . 's map notations have been numbered and his spelling corrected. These numbered notes provide a personal view into the *contra* war, the interagency feuds, the drug dealing, and the official government lies. The dates and routes marked on the map appear to support recent contentions of at least one U.S. Senate subcommittee that the upsurge in the importation of cocaine and marijuana in the 1980s paralleled operations in the U.S.-funded *contra* war. Although this subject was scrupulously avoided during the Iran-*contra* hearings that made Oliver North a hero, the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Narcotics and Terrorism has since confirmed the *contra* drug connection and has also stated flatly that senior officials in the Reagan-Bush administration were

aware of and may have even encouraged drug trafficking as a way to fund the *contra* war. "We're spending billions for a drug war that could have been stopped in 1982," ... alleges, "and George Bush knew it."

In 1985 and 1986, ... estimates that 60 to 80 percent of his return flights from Central America were drug runs. He figures that he alone delivered some four tons of drugs to this country, flying CIA-funded aircraft on protected flights. And about 50 pilots flew in circumstances similar to his. ... saw and heard about suitcases full of money that were flown south and delivered to the *contra* leaders. These were ignominious circumstances in which to end his 30 years of working for the government as a member of the Black Crews, the super-secret operatives attached to the White House as far back as the Eisenhower presidency. "I don't want to be involved in any way with the government again," ... announces. "I am flat-ass done with this shit."

MAP NOTES



Clk DEA, Mex. Police staging area at ranch

This is the Delgado Ranch, a few miles south of San Felipe, Mexico, also called Saltwater Pines because of the trees that grow there. This ranch was owned by Mexican drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, who allegedly masterminded the 1985 kidnapping and torture-murder of DEA agent Enrique Camarena.

... says he made "four or five" stops at this drug transshipment point on his way back from delivering CIA-supplied weapons to the *contras* and once saw Quintero himself help unload a shipment of marijuana Tosh had brought up from Panama. ... found it intriguing that "the ranch was always heavily protected by Mexican police." Caro Quintero, now serving 40 years in a Mexican prison, was so rich that he once volunteered to pay off Mexico's foreign debt — \$104 billion at the time — if he was given a free hand to operate in Mexico.



Airstrip on Pacific coast, just outside of Cabo San Lucas

This is one of several airstrips on the drug route between Central America and the California desert and parts of Arizona. Between 1983 and 1986, ... says, he made a dozen or so drug-ferrying trips up this corridor, starting in Panama and making stops at Santa Elena, Costa Rica; Puerto Escondido, in southern Mexico; and up through Baja and Mexicali.

His delivery points were all over the Southwest. Borrego Desert airstrips. A kick-out place near Humboldt Mountain in Arizona. A strip near Buckskin Mountain, close to the Colorado River. And some abandoned mines beside Tunnel Peak, between Parker and Havasu City, Arizona. ... says he delivered some 200 kilos of cocaine to those mines during what he thought at first were undercover operations in association with the DEA. "We were documenting the loads and the routes and waiting for the big busts. But the busts never seemed to add up to the amount of cocaine we were bringing in."

... says that many of the men in the Black Crews he worked with felt extremely uneasy about the drug shipments, and occasionally there was talk of coming forward as a group to reveal publicly the extent of government-protected drug shipments. Their complaints to DEA and CIA contacts often elicited disclaimers that "you've got to keep the big picture in mind" and "you might blow a major sting operation." The FBI, CIA, and DEA seemed to be spying on each other's undercover deals. ... believed, and they were beginning to bust each other's operatives.

... says he once landed in Scottsdale with a load of coke, as had been planned, but an FBI contact who was supposed to be there was nowhere to be found. ... had 1240 pounds of cocaine in a DC-3, and when the contact didn't show, he began to think he had been set up to be busted. While some of the plane's cargo was unloaded and another pilot took off with the rest of the load, ... tried to get in touch with his FBI contacts. "You ever try to contact FBI officials late at night on a weekend?" he asks. "The FBI thought I was some kind of nut." His reservations about hauling drugs only intensified.

That trip had started normally enough, with a weapons run out of an airfield called "The Farm," near McAllen, Texas, on the Mexican border. But he had been instructed to return to the U.S. with drugs. "And here I am a dope runner, and this whole thing was turning into a drug operation. It seemed like we were fighting the wrong war all of

a sudden. We should have been fighting the drug lords who we were in cahoots with."



Apples, Oranges, Pears, Bananas, code 6 or 7; The Boss - Customer

These are Black Crew code words used during the *contra* resupply effort; the codes date back to the days when covert operations were being carried out in Cuba in the early 1960s. Apples were small arms and ammunition. Oranges were artillery, C-4 explosives, and primer cord. Pears were electronics. Bananas were personnel. "The bananas are delivered" was a code used when, say, a government dignitary was deposited on the ground.

Code 6 was the name of the flyway through Central Mexico, across the U.S. border at Piedres Negras, and on up to the Big Bend region of Texas. Code 7 stood for the air route up Baja, through San Felipe and Mexicali, then on to drop points in the Anza-Borrego Desert, Twentynine Palms, or the old Patton bombing range east of the Salton Sea.



Rafael Quintero, San Felipe, Mex., [phone number], Gacha.

M. Colombo, Penonome, Panama, 1986

This map note contains a San Felipe phone number that ... says was Quintero's number at the Delgado Ranch. Gacha is the big-time drug lord from Colombia. Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, a member of the Medellín cartel and purportedly a billionaire. This note refers to a drug deal Quintero and Gacha did together in 1986 that ... says "must have been related to the *contras*, since I was involved." At the time, ... knew the names only as the people he was to contact at the ranch. Gacha was gunned down by Colombian police last December.



12 degrees L, 84 degree Long., Bluefields NGA, River Escualito

Bluefields is a port on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, one of three harbors mined by the CIA in 1984. ... says that before 1982, he worked mainly on the ground as a military-intelligence operative, verifying reconnaissance photographs taken by Nicaraguan, Panamanian, and Honduran natives. This was part of the American effort to document the

buildup of Cuban troops, listening posts, and equipment in Nicaragua after the Sandinistas took over in 1979. "We were in there at Bluefields lots of times trying to shoot pictures of Cuban missile technicians," ... reports. Among the many rumors that the CIA was frantically trying to check out was the one about the impending construction of ballistic-missile silos on Nicaraguan soil.

This Cuban presence convinced ... in the early stages, that the *contra* war was just. He decided he'd do whatever was necessary to halt the buildup. In 1982, ... and four Nicaraguan *contras*, along with two CIA military operatives, made it to Bonanza, a gold mining camp in northeastern Nicaragua, to confirm the presence of Cuban advisers there and to map the location of radio navigation beacons the Cubans had installed.

... says his cover, should he have been caught in Nicaragua, was as an American tourist on vacation from his job working in Central America for a pipeline company, CCG American Services, a legitimate French company that had contracts to search there for oil and gas. Other people in that operation had cover as journalists.



Luis Ochoa, Penonome, Panama, at villa next to river. Previous Vesco and Rojas prop. 6-9-83

... says that Jorge Luis Ochoa, a Medellín cartel member, sometimes stayed at a villa between Rio Hato and Penonome when he was sending shipments out of Panama. ...'s impression at the time he wrote this note was that the villa was

actually owned by members of the regime of former President Anastasio Somoza, the Nicaraguan dictator ousted by the Sandinistas in 1979. Black Crew scuttlebutt had it that the villa had been owned previously by Nixon crony Robert Vesco, the financier who had secretly contributed cash to underwrite the Watergate break-in.

This note is significant because it refers tangentially to Barry Seal, a veteran of the Black Crews who was assassinated in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1986. The official U.S. government story on Seal is that he was a drug runner arrested by the DEA in 1983 and, in return for leniency, began working as an undercover narc. Seal says that actually Seal had been working for years undercover as a Black Crew operative in military intelligence, though he might have been profiting on drug running simultaneously, and that he was a victim of the interagency feuds in which the CIA, DEA, and FBI occasionally arrested each other's water-carriers. But one fact about Seal isn't in dispute: He had gained the trust of the highest members of the Medellín cartel by 1984 and was considered the most important agent the DEA had. In the end, Seal may have been sacrificed to the Reagan-Bush administration's implacable hatred of the Sandinistas.

In 1983, Toshi Barry Seal, and another Black Crewman installed a camera behind the bulkhead of a cargo bay on the *Fat Lady*, a C-123 transport plane that Seal often flew on gun- and drug-running missions to Central America. The U.S. government wanted photographs of Jorge Luis Ochoa and other cartel members helping to load cocaine into the plane. Seal and the DEA were working on a large-scale undercover operation that was to culminate in the arrest of all the cartel leaders together in one location, and this photographic evidence would assist that effort.

Seal recalls that they ran the camera's shutter-release cable into the cockpit so Seal didn't have to be anywhere near the cargo bay in order to trip it. And the plan succeeded: the photos were taken. Seal says he saw the pictures on two different occasions.

Seal also provided damaging information about Manuel Noriega. After meeting with Ochoa and another cartel member in Panama, where they were hiding out after ordering the murder of a senior Colombian government official, Seal reported to the DEA that the Panamanian dictator was providing protection for the drug tycoons.

In 1984, when the CIA learned

His delivery points were all over the Southwest. Borrego Desert airstrips. A kick-out place near Humboldt Mountain in Arizona. A strip near Buckskin Mountain, close to the Colorado River.

that Seal had been meeting with cartel member Pablo Escobar in Nicaragua, the agency hatched a plan to link the Cartel with the Sandinistas in a drug-smuggling scheme. The agency hoped that if the American public could be convinced of Nicaraguan drug dealing, aid to the *contras* might be legalized.

The DEA protested that using Seal in this way would blow his cover and ruin any chance of busting the cartel. According to several recent books and newspaper articles, DEA officials were summoned to the White House in 1984 and pressured by Oliver North to release photos of Seal's plane in Nicaragua being loaded by cartel members. The DEA refused. The published accounts say that soon after, North leaked a story to the *Washington Times*, implicating Nicaraguan leaders in drug smuggling.

DEA officials eventually told congressional investigators that the allegations of Nicaraguan drug dealing were untrue. But at the time, the White House was pressing hard for money for the *contras*; President Reagan went on national television in March of 1986 with blow-ups of Seal's photographs, which Reagan claimed had been taken in Nicaragua during a drug-loading operation. The president pointed out one man in the pictures, Frederico Vaughan, calling him a close associate of one member of Nicaragua's ruling junta. Shortly thereafter, Congress reversed itself and voted \$100 million in military aid to the *contras*.

Seal, who had been pulled out of the field by the DEA when the phony *Washington Times* story broke, eventually was compelled to testify about the cartel before a federal grand jury in Miami. Ochoa subsequently contracted for Seal's murder: Barry Seal was machine-gunned to death on February 19, 1986, about a month before President Reagan's television appearance. Two Colombians shot Seal in his car in front of a halfway house where he was doing time on a drug charge. The Colombians are now serving life sentences in Louisiana, and a warrant has been issued for the arrest of Ochoa and Pablo Escobar for letting the contract on Seal.

As for those photographs Reagan made so much of, they weren't shot in Nicaragua, claims "they were shot in Panama." Freddie Vaughan, it turned out, had close ties to the National Security Council and

Oliver North. The drug running documented by the photographs was taking place with the assistance of an ally, Manuel Noriega, who only became a casualty to the drug war when his help in the *contra* war was no longer needed.



Bill Cooper; Lake Tahoe, Reno, Sept. 1, '86, call Four Aces Palmdale, Harry D.

Bill Cooper was a pilot friend of Seal's who, along with Buzz Sawyer, died in the crash of a C-123 shot down over southern Nicaragua on October 5, 1986. The third American crewman, Eugene Hasenfus, parachuted safely into the jungle and proceeded to blow the cover off the Reagan Administration's secret *contra* war.

The plane happened to be Barry Seal's old *Fat Lady*, carrying a load of guns and ammunition to a band of *contras* working inside Nicaragua. As soon as news of the crash reached Washington, D.C., the government confirmed Seal's worst fears about its willingness to sacrifice covert operatives. The White House, the State Department, the CIA, everyone who had a hand in the supply network stridently denied that Hasenfus or the dead crewmen had any connection at all to the government.

But among the papers found aboard the plane was a business card from Robert Owen, Oliver North's liaison with the *contras*, and there were documents linking the plane to Southern Air Transport, the CIA's airline of choice. Papers in the plane also contained addresses of safe houses in El Salvador, from which enterprising reporters discovered that telephone calls had been made to Richard Secord, the profiteering ex-Air Force general who was in charge of the secret arms-supply network. Hasenfus himself admitted that he had been working for the CIA, specifically for Felix Rodriguez. Hasenfus knew him by his *nom de guerre*, Max Gomez. Both of these names appear in various places on the map.

Rodriguez, whose nickname was Snake, had helped chase down and

assassinate Ché Guevara in Bolivia in 1967. He was one of many expatriate Cubans attracted to the *contra* war because they thought it was a harbinger of their return to a liberated Cuba. Rodriguez was recruited to be the main *contra* supply coordinator in Central America by Donald Gregg, an ex-CIA official who was named as then-Vice President Bush's National Security Adviser in 1982. Evidence surfaced during the various Iran-*contra* investigations that Rodriguez may have had almost daily contact with Bush's office in 1986. But while the Hasenfus affair brought about the undoing of Secord and North and led directly to the revelation of secret shipments of arms to Iran aboard Southern Air Transport's airplanes, George Bush skated clean.

Seal and Cooper go way back. They'd flown together in the 1950s and 1960s for the CIA-front airlines Air America and Inter-Mountain Aviation in the Golden Triangle area, where Thailand,

Burma, and Laos converge. Their flights were in support of Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese nationalist guerrillas, whom the CIA was still backing long after they had been defeated on mainland China. Using American arms, the guerrillas organized villagers into a massive production of opium, the local crop, which provided the base for large-scale heroin production in Southeast Asia. Eventually, the CIA airplanes were directly involved in drug running, according to eyewitnesses, investigative reporters, and even congressional investigators. The CIA-backed planes, with their civilian American crews, delivered arms to the guerrillas and then flew

opium back out to Thailand.

"Old Air America pilots who were flying in Central America started to get disgusted about all the drug running," Seal remarks. "They'd say stuff like, 'This is just like the Golden Triangle.' They talked about the black goo in the cargo bays of C-46s."

The map note refers to Lake Tahoe because that's where Cooper's family lived. Seal's Four Aces Aviation in Palmdale was the airfield where Cooper was to pick up his plane for this September 1986 flying job.

Black Crew operatives like Cooper and Seal were contacted in the States for covert work abroad in a couple of ways.

according to . . . Sometimes the crewmen were involved in ongoing projects, like arms shipments that went south at certain times every month, so there was no need to risk open communication between the deliverymen and their superiors. Other times, small aviation companies would place classified ads in aviation periodicals or daily newspapers, calling for pilots and mechanics. "We'd know that those ads were calls for a job," explains. "You'd call, tell 'em who you were, and they'd check your name against a list they had of names, MOSs [military occupational specialties], and mailing addresses. If you were on the list, they'd switch you to the guy to talk to for the job, and you were set up for an interview. But there was no direct discussion of it on the telephone."

out later that the most reliable photography was done from satellites," he reports.



Santa Elena (Somosa ranch), C-130, DC-6B, New airfield being built, 10-4-83. Ochoa-Barry operation, staging area weapons (drugs)

says that Santa Elena had been former Nicaraguan president Anastasio Somoza's

Second and North. "Barry Seal had flown in the *Fat Lady* with weapons one time and got her stuck," says. "That decided 'em to lengthen the airstrip."

Interestingly, during John Poindexter's current trial, in which he is charged with conspiracy to destroy documents, obstruct investigations, and lie to Congress, the prosecutor introduced a memo from Oliver North that seems to corroborate . . . story about the stuck airplane. North had written to Poindexter that "one of the planes of the *contra* resupply operation got mired down in the mud at an airport in Costa Rica."

Another reason Santa Elena was upgraded was that the other major

in San Diego and sold three radar-deflecting Kevlar boats to the *contras* for \$140,000, according to testimony by Robert Owen before the Iran-*contra* committee. *Contra* leader Adolfo Colero had visited the boat company in San Diego in 1984 and taken a ride on one of the boats. In a 1987 *San Diego Union* story about the boat purchase, Karl Phaler gushed that "Oliver North said I was a great American. After a compliment like that, I would have done just about anything." Phaler was told that the heavily armored boats, which were fitted with machine gun mounts, were to be used to transport food, military equipment, and medical supplies to the *contras*. But he

, an atrocious speller, wrote "Neirago?" on his map shortly after seeing a Panamanian dignitary at a landing strip near Rio Hato, on the Pacific coast of Panama, in 1983.



C-19, U.S. OMC-235, Delta 3, Sqd 4

"Charlie one-niner was the group name. Delta 3, Squad 4 was the special U.S. Army team I worked with when we were making weapons drops into Nicaragua," explains. "Bill Cooper was flying with that same group, sometimes." OMC-235 was the acronym for Operational Methods

Clandestine, a super-secret corps of active-duty military operatives controlled by the White House, continues. With these map notations, he was jotting down names of military groups to jog his memory during his talks with Senator Gary Hart's office.

Hart was especially interested in the fact that U.S. active-duty military personnel had been operating undercover in Nicaragua in the early 1980s. says several special operations groups performed HALO (high-altitude, low-opening) parachute drops into Nicaragua, exiting airplanes just outside Nicaraguan air space and free-falling across the border before opening their chutes at low altitudes. himself flew some of the military operatives into Nicaragua to shoot photographs, radar installations and purported MiG fighter-plane bases. "It turned

ranch in northwestern Costa Rica. He also says that it had been used as a transshipment point by drug runners for years before the *contra* war got underway in 1981. And this didn't change after Oliver North, Richard Secord, and their cohorts ordered the improvement of Santa Elena's landing strip to make the ranch the major staging area to supply weapons and equipment to the *contras*' southern front.

Small airstrips like Santa Elena were sprinkled throughout Costa Rica and Honduras. When the *contra* war was in full swing, these strips were needed to provide refueling stops and drop-off points for guns and other supplies destined for guerillas bivouacked nearby. "The drug people controlled the areas where the

rebel army needed bases," explains. "The gun suppliers — first the CIA and later the private people who turned the war into a business — had to strike deals with the drug people in order to share these strips. You can't stay sane and safe down there without being on good terms with the CAF — the Colombian Air Force. I've taxied right up with a load of guns, and on the other side of the field, they're loading up drugs at the same time."

The map note refers to Barry Seal and Luis Ochoa, the Colombian drug magnate, running cocaine into Santa Elena. The C-130 and DC-6B notations refer to the reason the field was improved and the airstrip lengthened at the direction of

staging area for the *contras*' southern front, the ranch owned by American citizen John Hull, 150 kilometers east-southeast of Santa Elena, wasn't big enough for the scale of the operation. Also, even though Hull worked closely with the CIA in helping to arm the *contras*, the use of an American's land in Costa Rica for an arms-

shipment point was politically unacceptable to the Costa Rican government.



PT Patrol, Santa Elena

Three extremely fast "stealth" boats were used to patrol the waters off Santa Elena and protect the secret airfield, says, and the boats had a connection to San Diego. Karl Phaler, a San Diegan, had helped El Salvador modify several Boston Whalers into fast patrol boats in 1980 and 1981. says the Black Crewmen always called the Santa Elena patrol boats "Phaler boats." In an interview, Phaler said he doesn't know how the boats he helped build for El Salvador might have ended up off Costa Rica. "Maybe somebody else just used my design and the name stuck." Phaler later established a boat company called Freedom Marine

never actually found out where the boats were delivered or how they were used.



"North by Northwest," Toys for Eden

Until May 1984, *contra* leader Eden Pastora was the major beneficiary of weapons shipments to Hull's ranch and Santa Elena. Costa Rica actually has three areas called Santa Elena; says Oliver North and his courier, Robert Owen, assigned the code name "Point West" to the Santa Elena staging area on the northwest coast of Costa Rica. So 's notation refers to Oliver North, the location of Santa Elena, and the main reason for its existence.

On May 30 of 1984, at a jungle hideout, La Penca, just inside Nicaragua, a bomb exploded during a press conference called by Pastora. He was decrying the CIA's pressure on him to merge with the main faction of *contras* in Honduras. One American and several Costa Rican journalists were killed, but Pastora survived. The bombing, which was never solved, became the basis of a lawsuit filed by the Christic Institute, a nonprofit public-interest law firm based in

Washington, D.C. The suit claimed that the bombing was part of a criminal conspiracy that also included illegal covert arms smuggling, violations of banking and currency laws, and political assassination. Filed in federal court under the Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organizations statute, the suit named 29 defendants (including Hull, Secord, Owen, Pablo Escobar, and several CIA officials) who allegedly had a direct or indirect hand in the La Penca bombing and in various secret wars all over the world. The lawsuit was dismissed for lack of evidence last

July and is currently on appeal.

Before the bombing, says that Pastora's guerilla commanders often complained about the shoddy gear they were receiving. They also complained about the escalating prices they had to pay for equipment. began to share their frustration. "The guns weren't for sale when we were taking them to Guatemala and El Salvador a few years earlier," he remarks. "But in Costa Rica in 1982, '83, and '84, suddenly the guns are being sold to Pastora. His commanders would say stuff like, 'Well, you really fucked up my budget this month.' And some of the stuff was crap — boots with holes in 'em, old M-1s instead of M-16s, medical supplies that had their seals broken. It was a business, and we were bringing drugs back to pay for it. We were trading better weapons to the drug cartels in return for use of their airstrips. I thought this was a shitty way to fight for democracy."

Once the *contra* resupply effort was outlawed by Congress in 1984,

says, the airplanes themselves became rattletraps. Oliver North's job was to circumvent the congressional ban on government aid to the *contras*, and that was accomplished by commissioning Richard Secord to bring in private arms dealers and aircraft suppliers to do the work for profit. says these outfits didn't take care of their airplanes nearly as well as the CIA did, and he ended up flying planes that sometimes had no airworthiness certificates on board. Many of the planes had defective instruments, which was a serious problem when he had to deliver equipment during the rainy season. "Directional gyros were broken, so you couldn't tell if you were drifting off course; there were magnetic compasses with low fluid levels, so the compass would stick. Artificial horizons that were partially working, which is worse than not working at all. Hydraulic problems. See, this way, if a plane

went down, it would be much easier to claim it was a shoddy-free-lance operation not connected to the government."



Drug route from Panama to Ft. Escobedo, Mex., Ochoa-Escobar operation, Army, Ft. Huachuca, Az., in place 3-2-83

On this date, March 2, 1983, Tosh says he reported this popular drug-smuggling air route to the unit he answered to, based at Ft. Huachuca, Arizona. His military operations logistics officer was Army Col. James Steele, who was chief of the U.S. advisors in El Salvador. had carried dope on that route from Santa Elena to Oaxaca to Puerto Escobedo and on up into the United States several times. He says that he and his colleagues, working for military intelligence, using equipment supplied by the CIA, had infiltrated these drug-smuggling routes, and they expected that these flyways would be shut down in one major sting operation. But it never happened. "That route remained open and operating for years after I had reported it to Ft. Huachuca," he says. "Nothing was being done with this information, and a lot of us were starting to get pissed off about flying drugs."



CX over Bravo One



CX over Bravo Two

These crossovers are two of many checkpoints at which was instructed to contact ground stations on his flights up the coast. These crossovers were points where two different flyways intersected, and there was a

communications station nearby. The Black Crews usually had a coded check-in, such as six clicks on the microphone button or a short series of dots and dashes or a terse whistle into the mike. Such coded communications were common. "Going into Hull's ranch, you always whistled," recalls

The check-ins were required because sometimes ground controllers sent back information that the mission was to be terminated for various reasons, and at these crossover points there were automatic, pre-set route changes and landing

points for canceled operations.

According to Bravo One was the name of a weapons route into Guatemala on which *Big Toad*, a C-130 cargo plane, made regular air drops of heavy weapons. Bravo Two was the weapons route between various airfields in the Yucatan region of Mexico and the coast of Honduras. A lot of U.S. military hardware from El Salvador and Honduran military bases made its way to private contractors through Felix Rodriguez, according to and several other sources. says this hardware was shipped to the Yucatan as a way of "laundering" it before it was then taken back south and sold to the *Contras*.



Noriega?

an atrocious speller, wrote "Neirago?" on his map shortly after seeing a Panamanian dignitary at a landing strip near Rio Hato, on the Pacific coast of Panama, in 1983. "We had dropped off weapons there that were headed for El Salvador," remembers, "and drugs were being loaded for the return trip. This guy was with some other people, and we called him the 'Strongman.' He was extremely friendly with all his people, all the way down to the corporals. I didn't really know who he was, just the 'Strongman,' and somebody mentioned his name. I tried to write it just from the way it sounded."

Looking back on it all, sometimes finds it hard to believe he witnessed first-hand such a sordid part of American history. When he tells

these stories, it is with an air of resignation tinged with insecurity, for he fully expects the listener to disbelieve him. So much of what he says is impossible to double-check; so many people in his circumstance have had their characters besmirched and their stories branded as lies by government agents. One thing he has going for him is that unlike many pilots, he says he didn't cut side deals with drug runners, so he didn't make a lot of money. Why didn't he? "Sheer stupidity on my part. Looking back on it, I sometimes wish I'd taken the money like a lot of these damn mercenaries." He spits out the word *mercenaries* as if it were a lemon rind. "Sure I'm pissed off that I didn't get in on any of it, but we were loyal to our crews. I wouldn't have sold them out."

Ty West, a producer with CBS News in New York who used

as a source in 1987, when the television program *West 57th* broke stories about the secret Santa Elena staging area, says. "You wish a Catholic priest would come in and have all these stories and say, 'By the way, here are the photographs,' but it just doesn't work that way... Tosh always had this big hang-up that nobody will believe him. That's partly why we never put him on camera — he would never believe that we believed him."

The details published here are just a fraction of what knows about U.S. government actions in Central America. He can rattle off names of pilots and the secret, illicit missions they flew until the listener's eyes glaze over. He can name dates and places and times where he tried to warn federal investigators about the drug running, after which he was either threatened with arrest or the information went nowhere. In fact, he's seen the glazing eyes so many times, he's become jaded. "The public really doesn't care much about what really happened down there," he observes. "They don't expect any better from the government. The CIA, the FBI, the DEA, Congress, the White House, they all knew we were involved in running drugs to help the *contras*, and they could have stopped it. Everything I did down there was sanctioned. George Bush claims he didn't know, but he would have had to go to great lengths to keep himself ignorant about it. But I'm just a little ol' plumber, so what could I know about all this?"



1

2

3

Handwritten note in a circle

Copper
Iron
Aluminum

Copy 1011-7
The Best Choice

**RETURN RECEIPT
REQUESTED**

Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Rd. Route 12
Frederick, MD 21701

