

Sarah
CC: Trahern ✓

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New York, N. Y. 10017

August 6, 1990

Dear Mr Lamb,

Several callers have raised the question of John Hull's involvement in the U.S. Contra operation and the journalists who were asked didn't know about them. I am inclosing copies of

① a 1989 piece by MARK A UHLIG
for the NY TIMES

② a 1990 piece by John McPHAIL
for the Miami HERALD

I hope they will be of use to C-SPAN - The best thing that has happened to the American people since the town meetings were established.

Congratulations!

AROUND THE AMERICAS

Costa Rican prosecutor links two Americans to fatal bombing

By JOHN McPHAUL
Special to The Herald

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica — A Costa Rican prosecutor has recommended that two Americans be charged with murder in the 1984 assassination attempt against Nicaraguan rebel leader Eden Pastora, a bombing that only wounded its intended victim, but killed three journalists and maimed several more.

A preliminary report on the judicial investigation of the bombing named John Hull, identified as a CIA operative who helped supply the contras from his northern Costa Rican farm, and Felipe Vidal, a shadowy Cuban American contra figure, as planners of the La Penca bombing, named for the site of a Pastora press conference where it took place.

The report connects Hull, Vidal, anti-Castro Cubans and Manuel Antonio Noriega in a broad-ranging conspiracy that combined contra arms flights and cocaine runs through northern Costa Rica.

Hull fled Costa Rica last year, jumping bail on charges of neutrality violations and drug trafficking. The trafficking charges were later dropped. Vidal's whereabouts are unknown.

Pastora's refusal to accept participation of Miami-based anti-Castro Cubans in the effort to oust the Sandinistas, his refusal to accept the help of arms pilots who doubled as drug runners, and his refusal to join



Hull



Pastora

forces with U.S.-backed contras were cited as possible motives for the bombing.

The report marks the first time that a Costa Rican authority has confirmed the obvious by identifying the bomber as a man posing as a Danish photojournalist named Per Anker Hansen.

The suspected bomber vanished the day after the assassination attempt.

The report alleges that initial investigations into the incident were stymied in part by local police officials with close ties to the U.S. Embassy. The report also describes in detail the infiltration of Costa Rican security services by the United States.

Per Anker Hansen accompanied 23 journalists to a hastily arranged press conference at Pastora's stronghold in the small border hamlet of La Penca on the Nicaraguan

side of the San Juan River.

According to the report, shortly after the early evening press conference began in a small shack, the bomber left the room and remotely detonated a plastic explosive contained in the camera case he guarded during an all-day car and canoe trip to the rebel outpost.

Pastora escaped the explosion with burns and shrapnel wounds. A U.S. journalist, Linda Frazier of the Costa Rican English language weekly *The Tico Times*, Costa Rican cameraman Jorge Quiros and his assistant Evelio Sequeira of local Channel 6 were killed in the bombing. At least one rebel at the press conference also died.

According to the report, a group of Cuban Americans from various Miami-based anti-Castro groups formed the "307 Commandos" to fight on the contra war's southern front with the idea of overthrowing the Sandinista government and then using Nicaragua as a base to overthrow Fidel Castro, a plan that was foiled by Pastora's refusal to include the Cubans in his fighting force.

Noriega was connected to the investigation through Floyd Carlton Caceres, a Panamanian pilot who worked for Noriega and who was extradited to United States from Costa Rica in December 1986. The case against Noriega in U.S. federal court in Miami is built largely on testimony provided by Carlton Caceres.

Costa Rica Struggles With Enigma: Is Local Hero Also a U.S. Warlord?

By MARK A. UHLIG

Special to The New York Times

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica — Ask about John Hull around here and you will get a dozen stories, all of them extreme.

Friends of the 68-year-old Indiana-born farmer say he is a pillar of the rural Costa Rican community where he has lived for 20 years, known for his generosity to children and the sick.

But his many enemies picture him as a mysterious agent of American power: arms smuggler, drug runner, ruthless warlord in Washington's secret operations against Nicaragua.

For years, those images have produced controversy and friction here. But in January the tenuous balance of opinion collapsed when the national police formally charged Mr. Hull with smuggling weapons and drugs to aid Nicaraguan rebels in northern Costa Rica from 1982 to 1984.

Weeks after Mr. Hull's arrest, the charges are still eliciting outrage from his conservative supporters here, who say he is the victim of a leftist plot. And it is a measure of Mr. Hull's reputation that his imprisonment has provoked disbelief and wonder among his enemies, many of whom had come to believe that he was beyond the reach of authorities in his adopted country.

Ex-Rebel Expresses Shock

"I am still recovering from the shock," said Edén Pastora Gómez, the former Nicaraguan rebel commander who worked with Mr. Hull before the two became bitter enemies. "He was the most powerful man in the country — the untouchable man of Costa Rica. It seems he did so much that he just became insupportable."

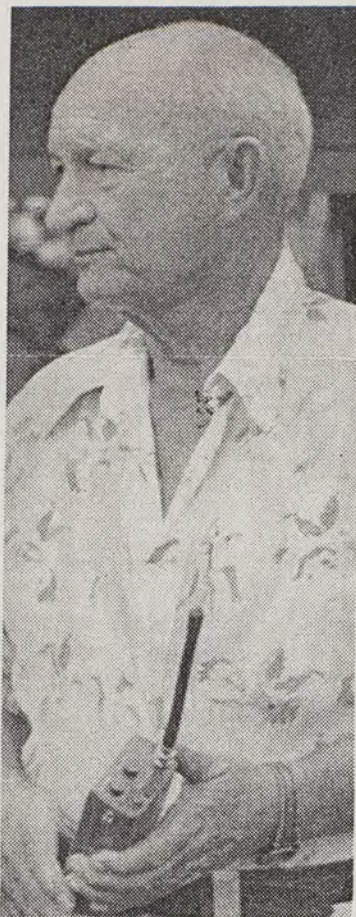
What Mr. Hull did and who supported him are questions that have made his case one of the most sensitive political issues here, involving Nicaragua, the Reagan Administration and Costa Rica's recent campaign against illegal drugs. Interest in the case has also been heightened by outside accounts like the recent book "Out of Control" by Leslie Cockburn, an American journalist, which links Mr. Hull to illegal acts that extend far beyond the crimes he has been charged with.

According to those accounts and local investigators, Mr. Hull was a key figure in American attempts to open a "southern front" in the covert war against Nicaragua. Investigators say Mr. Hull became an integral part of the secret contra supply network controlled by William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North and other Reagan Administration officials. He is accused of furthering that cause by shipping weapons and drugs from private airstrips on citrus farms and cattle ranches he owned or controlled near the Costa Rica-Nicaragua frontier.

Mr. Hull and his supporters have admitted that he is an "admirer" of Colonel North and that he helped the contras, feeding them at his ranch, helping them talk out their disagreements and evacuating their wounded by small plane from his rural runways. But they deny that he was part of any scheme to arm or train contra fighters — acts that would violate Costa Rica's neutrality laws. And they strenuously object to allegations of drug-running, which they say are part of a Government attempt to pillory Mr. Hull for his conservative views.

"We asked who made this decision and we were told that the investigators had received orders from above," said Ciro Casas Zamora, one of Mr. Hull's lawyers. "We don't know if those orders come from Managua, but we know our Government has very close relations with Nicaragua."

The timing of Mr. Hull's arrest has prompted the local press to speculate about whether the Government waited until the end of the Reagan Administration before acting against him. Others have suggested that his arrest was intended to help President Oscar Arias Sánchez smooth relations with the



Agence France-Presse

John Hull, an American rancher who lives in Costa Rica. His friends call him a philanthropist, but his critics say he is a ruthless player in Washington's schemes to topple the Sandinistas.



The New York Times/Feb. 7, 1989

John Hull's ranch is in Los Chiles, near the Nicaraguan border.

Nicaraguan Government.

But Costa Ricans and Americans familiar with the case say the structure of Costa Rica's law enforcement system, which is largely independent of the executive branch, makes it unlikely that the arrest was ordered for political reasons. Most believe the case is instead a logical outgrowth of the Iran-contra disclosures, which gave local investigators the concrete leads they needed to formulate a case against Mr. Hull.

"Everyone knew what was going on in the northern part of Costa Rica," said Daniel Oduber, a former President of Costa Rica, "but we didn't know how it operated, or how it was connected to the United States."

The nature of Mr. Hull's relationship to the United States Government and to the Central Intelligence Agency has long been a puzzle. Mr. Pastora, who first accepted and then was cut off from C.I.A. help for his rebel group, said he recalls being introduced to Mr. Hull by the C.I.A. station chief in San José, Joe Fernández, who told him that Mr. Hull was "in charge of the north-

ern part of the country for us."

Mr. Fernández told Federal investigators that Mr. Hull's influence with local operatives was reinforced by his friendship with Colonel North, with the colonel's courier, Robert W. Owen, and with other Reagan Administration officials. Mr. Hull, a native of Evanston, Ill., was introduced to Colonel North and other officials after he met Mr. Owen on a visit in the spring of 1983 to the office of Dan Quayle, then a Republican Senator from Indiana. At the time, Mr. Owen worked as an aide to Mr. Quayle.

Although American Embassy officials here will not comment on any intelligence role Mr. Hull might have had, Mr. Owen testified before Congress that Mr. Hull received \$10,000 a month through American-supported contra groups to finance his activities.

Senate Testimony on Drugs

"A substantial number of people told us that his ranch was used by drug pilots as they headed north," said Jack A. Blum, a special counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which heard testimony on Mr. Hull's activities. "A total of five people talked about it, and these were five people coming from very different corners of the scene."

Witnesses have linked Mr. Hull to a reported plan to blow up the United States Embassy here in 1985 with the intention of blaming the Nicaraguan Government and justifying American military action against Nicaragua. Mr. Hull also sued two American journalists, Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, for criminal libel after they published accounts linking him to a 1984 bombing that killed several journalists and wounded Mr. Pastora, who was then at odds with other contra leaders.

The libel charges, which were tried in San José, were dismissed by a Costa Rican judge. A countersuit against Mr. Hull, seeking civil damages for Ms. Honey and Mr. Avirgan, who was wounded in the bombing, was also dismissed by a Florida court last year.

Under Costa Rican law, the prosecution report against Mr. Hull is confidential, and Mr. Hull declined through his lawyers to comment on the charges. But prosecutors said Mr. Hull, who holds dual Costa Rican and American citizenship, faces a maximum sentence of 18 years in jail on two counts of drug smuggling and violating Costa Rican neutrality.

In the weeks since his arrest, Mr. Hull has been held in custody first in a prison cell and then in Mexico Hospital in San José, where he has been under observation for heart problems.

An American Embassy spokesman, Robert Plotkin, said an American consular official had visited Mr. Hull several times since his arrest as part of the embassy's standard efforts to help American citizens who are in trouble. But the Costa Rican official overseeing criminal prosecutions, Eduardo Araya, said in an interview that the embassy had made no attempt to interfere with the prosecution.

Bail Is Denied

Special to The New York Times

MANAGUA, Nicaragua, Feb. 6 — A Costa Rican court refused late today to approve bail for Mr. Hull, who remains under police guard in a San José hospital, Mr. Hull's lawyers said. The court's decision nullifies a ruling by the judge presiding over Mr. Hull's case, who last week recommended that bail for the American farmer be set at one million Costa Rican colons, or about \$12,500.

About 10 days ago Mr. Hull's lawyers said the judge had agreed to allow the case to be transferred to San Carlos, Mr. Hull's home region, where they feel he will receive a more sympathetic hearing. Mr. Hull owns a ranch in Los Chiles, near San Carlos, which is about 104 miles north of the capital.