

✓ CC: S. Trahern

December 21, 1990

Dear Ms. Hunter,

Several months ago I wrote to C-SPAN with some comments and a suggestion, and you responded. Hence, this letter directly to you.

A recent column by Tony Lang in the Cincinnati Enquirer was based on the book Kiss the Boys Goodbye: How the United States Betrayed Its Own POWs in Vietnam, by Monika Jensen-Stevenson and her husband William Stevenson (she an Emmy-award winning producer for CBS's 60 Minutes, he the author of A Man Called Intrepid). The basic theme of the book is that our own government has thwarted attempts either to obtain the release of POWs but or to obtain information about them.

I suggest the authors would make excellent guests for one of your shows, the book review show perhaps, but not necessarily.

In his column, Mr. Lang stated that Ross Perot was, for a while, given great freedoms in looking through secret files for information on POWs and MIAs. Reportedly, once when Perot was asked by George Bush how the search was going, Perot said, "Well, George, I go in looking for prisoners, but I spend all my time discovering the government has been moving drugs around the world and is involved in illegal arms deals... I can't get at the prisoners because of the corruption among our own covert people"... which leads me to another issue.

When can we have some real digging into and exposure of just a few of the terrible, rotten, immoral things the CIA has done in our good names, with our tax dollars. I think most Americans would be appalled by the misdeeds done in our name by the CIA -- and I think you'd find a lot of interest in a crusade to expose them ... or is this potato too hot to handle? It seems to me questions about the CIA are avoided. Just this morning I was watching the "Roundtable" discussion hosted by Brian (sorry, his last name won't come now -- an embarrassment since I watch the show practically every morning)... Anyway, a woman called in and asked a rather lengthy question about, as I recall, (1) big-company oil interests in the Persian Gulf, (2) CIA agents as employees for those companies, and (3) possible CIA involvement in the, I believe, Lockerbie air crash. One reporter sort of answered (1), and Brian immediately pushed a button and said, "Next caller, please." I don't think that's right, and it seems to me Brian (as much as I like his show) has a tendency to do that: to accept the easy question and preclude discussion of the tough. Is it my imagination, or do all media people shun discussions of the CIA? It seems that we need more of what the CIA is doing, more of what is being done, in (in my mind) insidious, immoral ways with our money. I just can't believe that the majority of people would support the subterfuge, killing, and drug smuggling that, apparently, the CIA does -- again, with our money, in our name. It infuriates me, leaves me seething. The only way, I think, we ordinary citizens have of fighting such entrenched power is through exposure -- and we need your help (and a not-so-quick hand on the "next call" button) to do the trick. The topics you cover are fascinating, but I sometimes think we're concerned about whether our tie matches our shirt while a cancer is eating away at our body.

Please consider these suggestions (and in spite of any negativism you might sense in my comments, please rest assured I love your programming and rarely miss Brian's (please forgive my not recalling last name) early-morning show).

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West Chester, OH 43069

P.S. Please see enclosed copy.

La Penca's scattered shrapnel beats a path to the CIA's door

Six years after the 1984 La Penca bombing, which killed three journalists and one contra, a new 54-page report illustrates a covert collaboration between Costa Rican and U.S. agents.

Authored by the Costa Rican government—under pressure from the Costa Rican Journalists Association—the report charges John Hull, a resident of Costa Rica for 20 years, with engineering the bombing that was intended to kill maverick contra leader Eden Pastora. Carlos Lehder, a Medellin drug lord imprisoned in the U.S. for life plus 135 years, has publicly said that Hull “was pumping about 30 tons of cocaine into the U.S. a year” from Costa Rica at the time of the bombing.

Interpol, an international law-enforcement agency, has placed Hull—who is currently holed up on his Indiana farm—on its most-wanted list for homicide charges, and the Costa Rican government is slowly preparing a request for his extradition. The Bush administration, however, is taking no steps to detain the “fugitive,” nor is it likely to. (Both Costa Rican and U.S. congressional staff sources claim Drug Enforcement

Agency agent Juan Perez arranged Hull's getaway last year when Hull jumped bail on Costa Rican drug charges.)

This latest report—which also charges two Costa Rican officials with taking CIA payoffs to sabotage the initial La Penca investigation—lends credence to the 1986 report



by U.S. journalists Martha Honey and Tony Avirgan, who was injured in the bombing. Their 18-month investigation traced the bombing back to CIA operatives and contra suppliers, naming Hull and Cuban-American Felipe Vidal as principal engineers.

The new findings have apparently stimulated efforts by the Bush administration to shut down the investigation. According to Costa Rican officials, U.S. Embassy “consular officer” Steven Groh recently confronted Chief Prosecutor Jose Maria Tijerino with a Florida court ruling that dismissed a case brought against Hull by Honey and Avirgan. “The matter has already been dealt with,” Groh reportedly said. But, according to Tijerino, the Florida ruling has no jurisdiction in Costa Rica.

Costa Rican investigators also must contend with their country's own right-wing sectors, which have consistently sought to undermine the La Penca probe. According to Jorge Chaverria, Costa Rican prosecutor, the rightist Costa Rica Democratic Association fanned rumors that the Sandinistas or the Basque terrorist group ETA carried out the bombing and put forth false witnesses “to try to divert the investigation.”

The conservative Costa Rican press has not only failed to support the new report but also prints blatantly hostile articles against the investigators to avoid problems with the U.S. Embassy, adds Chaverria.

Even Chaverria's own investigators at first scoffed at the CIA conspiracy theory, but within three months they confirmed most of the damning allegations. Nevertheless, Costa Rican government officials—who peg Tijerino as a Sandinista—still insist the report merely reiterates the findings of Honey and Avirgan.

Meanwhile, Hull's fate rests in the hands of U.S. officials, who are in no particular hurry to investigate or prosecute him. Interpol's arrest warrant for “hostile acts, drug trafficking and homicide” can be found in an FBI informational file. If the U.S. does give permanent refuge to Hull and the dirty secrets he holds, “we can't do anything,” says Chaverria.

—Karen D. Brown

How, in light of things like this and Iran/Contra, can Congress do this?

ACTION ALERT: Sneak attack in Congress

On August 3, while public attention focused on Saddam Hussein's Kuwait grab, the Senate approved a provision that would legalize the president's power to conduct covert operations without the advice and consent of Congress. The language, embodied in Title VII of the 1991 authorization bill for intelligence agencies, was ignored by the media. Described as a reform that regulates secret operations, the provision would legalize actions such as those taken by the Reagan administration involving secret aid to the contras. Despite the end of the Cold War, the Senate version of the bill would establish covert operations as a permanent instrument of Bush's New World Order.

Title VII of the Senate bill includes these provisions:

- For the first time, it gives the president express authority to conduct covert operations.
- It denies Congress the authority to forbid a covert operation in advance.

- It empowers the president to use any federal agency or entity—not just the CIA—to conduct covert operations.
- It gives the president authority to fund covert operations with money appropriated for any federal agency.
- It allows the president to use private contractors and foreign governments to do its dirty work, and to spend money from private and foreign sources.
- It allows the president to withhold information from Congress with the claim of executive privilege or the claim of extraordinary sensitivity.

The Title VII provisions are not included in the House version of the bill, which may have passed the House by the time this issue of *In These Times* appears. When the House version passes, the bill will go to conference, where a committee will meet in secret to decide on its final form. If the House members hold out, Title VII could be defeated. But this will happen only if our representatives hear from their constituents. Time is short.

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