

Contra-cocaine links confirmed

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A high official of the Central Intelligence Agency revealed this week that there was an agreement between the CIA and the Justice Department during the Reagan administration that CIA officers could conceal allegations of drug trafficking against its allies among the Nicaraguan Contras.

CIA Inspector General Federick R. Hitz made the admission at a hearing before the House Intelligence Committee which was devoted to clearing the spy agency of charges that it deliberately pumped crack cocaine into south central Los Angeles and other impoverished inner-city areas in the 1980s in order to raise money for the Contra war against Nicaragua.

The charges received wide publicity after a series of articles appeared in the San Jose *Mercury-News*. There were calls for a congressional investigation, and a public meeting in south central LA where CIA Director John Deutsch was heckled by a hostile crowd. Since then the agency has prepared a 600-page classified report on the issue, which will be submitted to Congress later this month, Hitz told the House committee.

Even in the context of an official whitewash, however, Hitz made important revelations. He said that in 1982 Attorney General William French Smith and the CIA had agreed that CIA officers should not be required to report charges of drug trafficking against their Contra associates, as long as the Contras were not directly employed by the agency. This secret agreement meant that the CIA would pursue a policy of looking the other way as long as the drug traffickers—including pilots ferrying arms to Contra guerrillas based in Honduras and Costa Rica—were not on its own payroll.

This policy remained unchanged until 1986, when Congress restored official US funding for the Contras and made drug-running an unnecessary as well as potentially embarrassing sideline for the anticommunist guerrilla group. This arrangement made it possible for the agency to declare, as Hitz told the House

Intelligence Committee, that there was no evidence “of any conspiracy by CIA or its employees to bring drugs into the United States.”

Hitz went on to admit that the CIA had been aware of allegations against “dozens of people and a number of companies connected in some fashion in the contra program,” and that “there are instances where CIA did not, in an expeditious or consistent fashion, cut off relationships with individuals supporting the contra program who were alleged to have engaged in drug-trafficking activity or take action to resolve the allegations.”

The admissions by Hitz led at least one congressman, Democrat Norman Dicks of Washington, to call for further hearings at which top Reagan White House officials such as Oliver North, who supervised the Contras during the period of rampant drug trafficking, could be interrogated.

From the time that the allegations of CIA ties to Contra drug trafficking were made public, the bulk of the corporate-controlled media denounced the charges and the *Mercury-News* later repudiated its own reporter and published a retraction. Now that these charges are being confirmed in sworn testimony by CIA officials themselves, there is virtual silence in the media.



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