# BROUGHT

FLASHPOINT: THE LA PENCA BOMBING

MARTHA HONEY
TONY AVIRGAN
AND THE CHRISTIC INSTITUTE

As TOLD TO
JOYCE BRABNER AND THOMAS YEATES

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THIS BOOK HAS BEEN EDITED BY JOYCE BRABNER, THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR WAS CATHERINE YRONWODE, AND IT HAS BEEN DESIGNED BY DEAN MULLANEY. FLASHPOINT WAS WRITTEN BY JOYCE BRABNER, ILLUSTRATED BY THOMAS YEATES, HAND LETTERED BY BILL PEARSON, AND PAINTED BY SAM PARSONS.

### DEDICATED TO LOU ANN MERKLE

THANKS TO DAN SHEEHAN, SARA NELSON, EVA BERTRAM, LANNY SIMKIN, WENDY MARKS, DAN SIEGEL, AND OTHERS FROM THE CHRISTIC INSTITUTE.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO MARTHA HONEY AND TONY AVIRGAN FOR THEIR TIME AND EFFORT.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LAWSUIT ON WHICH THIS STORY IS BASED, PLEASE WRITE TO: THE CHRISTIC INSTITUTE, 1324 NORTH CAPITOL STREET NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20002. (202) 797-8106.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF STORYTELLING SOME DIALOGUE AND SETTINGS HAVE BEEN CREATED BY THE AUTHORS AND ARTISTS. HOWEVER, THE FACTUAL BASIS FOR THE STORY IS CONTAINED IN THE COMPLAINT AND OTHER DOCUMENTS FILED BY THE PLAINTIFFS IN THE CIVIL CASE NUMBER 861146. ENTITLED: TONY AVIRGAN ET AL. V. JOHN HULL ET AL. IN THE DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA. THAT CASE, WHICH WAS DISMISSED BY THE COURT ON JUNE 27, 1988, IS PRESENTLY ON APPEAL TO THE COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT. IN ADDITION, OTHER SOURCES WHICH ARE CONTAINED IN THE BIBLIOGRAPHY PROVIDED THE FACTS AS WELL AS MANY OF THE SETTINGS. FINALLY, BUT NOT LEAST, THE REPORTING OF, AND CONVERSATIONS WITH TONY AVIRGAN AND MARTHA HONEY PROVIDED A GREAT DEAL OF THE SOURCE MATERIAL.

# Introduction to Flashpoint: The La Penca Bombing

by Jonathan Marshall

Is it a traditional comic book? Is it straight journalism? No, but

To an old-fashioned reader like myself, Flashpoint: The La Penca Bombing breaks every stereotype. On the one hand, it's not the usual superhero comic for kids, nor the kind of entertaining trash supposedly favored by semi-literate adults. On the other hand, despite its serious subject, it certainly doesn't look like journalism or scholarship. It dispenses with hedged assertions and careful weighing of evidence in favor of action, impact and visual imagination. This "graphic docudrama" comes with panel-afterpanel of bright color drawings, not the usual mass of gray text and grainy halftone photography. It's like a television documentary you can carry in your pocket—and without the usual network censorship.

If the novelty of this form at first attracts distrust or confusion, it should also generate excitement. Together the text and art make a powerful statement that will inform and stimulate a wide sector of

the American public.

The work traces its roots to such diverse sources as the educational comics of the 1940s and '50s and the politically oriented underground comics of the 1960s, with the superior production values of the graphic novels of the 1980s. But its authors also draw consciously and combatively from the techniques of government propaganda. The CIA has used comic books to target Third World populations with messages about the evils of communism and—in the specific case of Nicaragua—to instruct the Contras on how to disrupt the leftist Sandinista regime. This comic book has a different message, but it shares the impact of its ideological rivals.

The authors could hardly have chosen a more gripping subject to complement the power of their medium. The La Penca bombing, an attempt to assasinate Contra leader Eden Pastora in May 1984, did not by itself change history. But the investigation of it by Costa Rican-based journalists Martha Honey and Tony Avirgan opened up a window on CIA intrigues, Cuban exile politics, drugs-and-arms running and White House conspiracies long before the average American would ever hear of the Iran-Contra scandal. Their probe, in turn, became the basis of a lawsuit filed by the Christic Institute against obscure former officials who would only much later become household names: Richard Secord, Thomas Clines, John Singlaub, Robert Owen and many others.

It is a measure of the lawsuit's importance that its central claims were never seriously investigated by the joint congressional committees that convened to unearth the truth about White House crimes in Central America. They left the hot topic of drug trafficking to other committees lacking the political mandate to demand the truth. And they essentially ignored the question of administration responsibility for the attempted murder of Pastora at La Penca.

It's not as if Congress didn't have wind of the facts. As early as December 1985, two Associated Press reporters exposed the complicity of right-wing Cuban exiles and certain Contra leaders in cocaine trafficking out of northern Costa Rica. By January 1977, Newsweek and other publications were reporting assertions of drug smugglers George Morales and Gary Betzner that U.S. authorities had winked at their circular trade in guns to the Contras and cocaine to the United States. Later, in Senate testimony, Morales would implicate John Hull, an admitted CIA agent named in the Christic lawsuit, in aiding this arms-for-drugs traffic. The convicted drugmoney launderer Ramon Milan-Rodriguez and other traffickers would eventually flesh out the story to a subcommittee of the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee. Yet the only real word on drugs in the final report of the Iran-Contra committees was an astonishing staff memo reporting no "corroboration of media-exploited allegations that US government-condoned drug trafficking by Contra leaders or Contra organizations or that Contra leaders or organizations did in fact take part in such activity." This despite the admission even of administration officials that some high-ranking Contra leaders in

Costa Rica were guilty of smuggling.

Nor did the committees pursue assertions by individuals in the Contra aid network about assassination plots. Jesus Garcia, a Cuban exile jailed in Miami on weapons charges, claimed he was asked by members of that network to help kill the U.S. ambassador to Costa Rica, Lewis Tambs, in order to frame the Sandinistas and provoke a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua. His attorney, the respected public defender John Mattes, said, "Every claim that my client has made has been backed up. We've been able to corroborate much of what he did and where he was—facts, places, names, people that he met" (In These Times, December 10, 1986). In particular, Garcia received support from the former mercenary Steven Carr, who wrote in 1985, "I'm an American all the way, but I stop at killing other Americans for the sake of CIA war games" (Oakland Tribune, December 17, 1986).

Another active supporter of the Contras, Jack Terrell, claimed to have attended a meeting with Contra leader Adolfo Calero, Oliver North's agent Robert Owen, John Hull and others in January 1985, months after La Penca. One of the participants, a Cuban exile based in Costa Rica, allegedly said, "We put a bomb under him [Pastora], but it didn't work because of bad timing." Terrell recalled the attendees discussing new ways to kill the charismatic leader, who had angered the CIA and the Contra hierarchy by refusing to merge his own organization with that of the former Somoza national guardsmen based in Honduras (In These Times, December 10, 1986).

The sensitivity of such allegations is suggested by the extraordinary response they evoked from administration officials and their allies. Steven Carr told reporters that U.S. embassy officials in Coat Rica helped him jump bail and escape the country in order to keep him from talking (New York Times, July 13, 1987). Secord reportedly spent at least \$60,000 in Iran-Contra money to finance an ex-CIA officer's efforts to develop "derogatory" information against the Christic plaintiffs. (Washington Post, June 29, 1987). By inventing charges of treason, terrorism or personal harassment, Oliver North tried to draw the FBI into investigating those who threatened to blow his operation: Senator John Kerry, D-Mass., who publicized the drug and mercenary angles of the case; Jack Terrell, whom North (wrongly) believed to be the Christic Institute's "star witness"; and Daniel Sheehan, chief attorney for Christic (San Francisco Chronicle, April 25, 1988). And in July 1988, federal prosecutors moved to indict Terrell on Neutrality Act charges, even though it was he who tried in vain, in early 1986, to prompt Washington to crack down on illegal gunrunning to the Contras (New York Times, July 31, 1988).

The case, in short, is not yet history. As long as the guilty go free and the whistle-blowers face punishment, as long as the Contras continue to receive U.S. support, the La Penca story will remain a vital reminder of crimes and conspiracies that lie at the heart of U.S. foreign policy.

Jonathan Marshall is the co-author, with Peter Dale Scott and Jane Hunter, of The Iran-Contra Connection (South End Press, 1987).







THAT YEAR, FIDEL
CASTRO OVERTHREW
BATISTA, FORCING
MANY OF THE MOBSTERS, INCLUDING
MAFIA 'DON' SANTOS
TRAFFICANTE, TO
FLEE TO MIAMI.



WASHINGTON D.C., 1960: VICE PRESIDENT RICHARP NIXON AND A NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE— WITHOUT CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION— SECRETLY ESTABLISHED CONTRA-REVOLUTIONARY PLANS TO UNDERMINE, WEAVEN AND WEAKEN AND EVENTUALLY OVERTHROW LASTRO'S NEW SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, BY USING RIGHT-WING CUBAN EXPATRIATES.



LIKE THE GOOD CITIZEN
HE WAS, SANTOS
TRAFFICANTE HELPED
SELECT FORMER
ASSOCIATES OF HIS
AND BATISTA FOR
SPECIAL TRAINING
IN POLITICAL ASSASSINATION AND OTHER
TEPPOIST ACTS. THE TION AND OTHER
TERRORIST ACTS, THE
TARGETS WERE CUBAN
PRESIDENT FIDEL
CASTRO, HIS BROTHER
RAUL CASTRO, CHE
GUEVERA AND FIVE
OTHER CUBAN GOVERNMENT LEADERS.



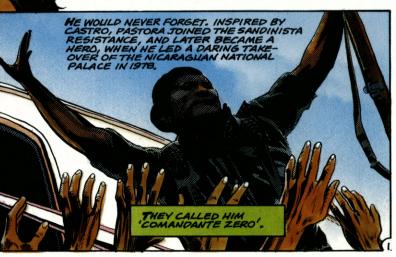
\* FUTURE WATERGATE
BURGLARS
\*\* CONNECTED BY IRANCONTRA/CIA ACTIONS
TO GEORGE BUSH'S
NAT'L SECURITY ADVISOR DONALD GREGG.
\*\*\* JAILED IN VENEZUELA FOR 1976 AIRPLANE BOMBING THAT
WILL ED 73: I AND ESCAPEI KILLED 73; LATER ESCAPE

## NICARAGUA, 1944:

DRUGS, GAMBLING, PROSTITUTION ...

EDEN PASTORA WAS 7 YEARS OLD, FROM A MIDDLE-CLASS, MIDDLE-CLASS,
POLITICALLY
CONSERVATIVE
HOME, WHEN HE
SAW CORRUPT
PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S SOMOZA 3 NATIONAL GUARD KILL HIS FATHER IN A LAND DISPUTE.

> SOMOCISTAS, WHEN I AM OLDER





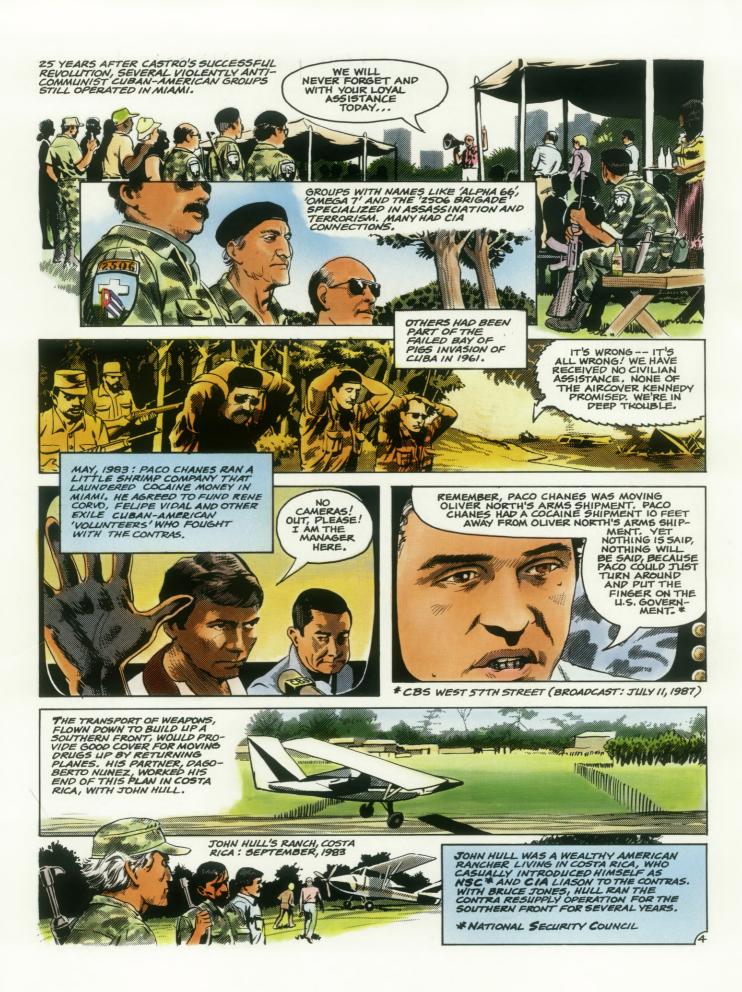


PANAMA, 1982: A MAN CALLING HIMSELF 'PER ANKER HANSEN' RENTED A LUXURY HIGH-RISE APARTMENT,

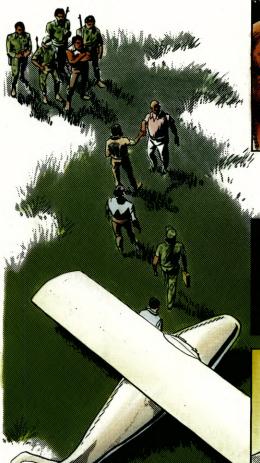








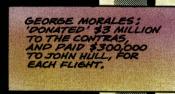
RENE CORVO AND FELIPE VIDAL'S MISSION WAS TO WIN ARDE COMMANDERS OVER, TO SET THEM TO JOIN WITH THE FON — WITH OR WITHOUT PASTORA.



ALTHOUGH PASTORA REFUSED TO ALLOW CUBAN-AMERICAN
MERCENARIES TO JOIN ARDE, THEY WERE EVENTUALLY PLACED
AMONG ARDE COMMANDERS AS 'VOLUNTEER COMBAT INSTRUCTORS'
BY HULL AND JONES.



A CRACKPOWN ON COLUMBIAN COCAINE TRAFFICKERS PABLO ESCOBAR, JORGE OCHOA AND OTHERS, HAD DISCUPTED THEIR USUAL SUPPLY ROUTES. HULL'S RANCH WAS USED AS A BASE FOR PLANES CARRYING DRUGS BOUND FOR THE U.S.

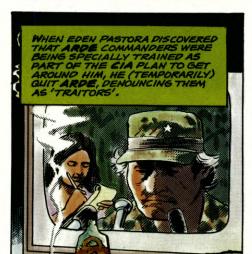






MICHAEL TOLLIVER: BROUGHT IN 28,000 LBS. OF WEAPONS FOR THE CONTRAS BY WAY OF HONDURAS. RETURNED TO U.S. WITH 25,360 LBS. OF MARITUANA. ALSO PAID \$75,000 FOR THE TRIP.

GARY BETZNER: FLEW TWO SMALL AIRCRAFT LOADS OF WEAPONS TO HULL'S PRIVATE AIRCRAFT, AND RETURNED TO FLORIDA WITH APPROXI-MATELY 1000 KG. OF COCAINE.





AMERICAN COCAINE
ABUSE BECAME
EPEDEMIC IN THE
EARLY 80'S. CRACK
FOLLOWED. SOME
TIE THIS RISE IN
ADDICTION TO THE
READINESS OF THESE
PRUGS NOW BEING
DEALT IN THE U.S. TO
SUPPLY CONTRA ARMS,



COSTA RICA STARTED TO FEEL LIKE HOME TO TONY AND MARTHA. JODY AND SHANTI LEARNED SPANISH WITH ALMOST EMBARRASSING EASE, A SMALL COMMUNITY OF INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISTS MADE THE MOVE EASIER BY GENEROUSLY SHARING LEADS AND KNOW-HOW.



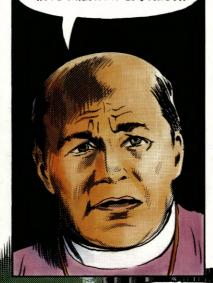




WHILE PREPARING TO DEFEND STACEY MERKT, THE FIRST SANCTUARY CHURCH-WORKER ARRESTED FOR TRANSPORTING SALVADORAN REFUGEES IN TEXAS, FR. WALLY KASUBOSKI AND ATTORNEY DAN SHEEHAN WERE VISITED BY A METHODIST MINISTER.

AN FBI AGENT HAS WARNED ME THAT THE SANCTUARY MOVEMENT AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ARE SMUGGLING KNOWN TERRORISTS INTO THE U.S.

I WAS TOLD THAT IF THE PRESIDENT DIRECTED MILITARY ACTION IN EL SALVADOR, OR IF WE INVADED NICARAGUA, THESE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS WOULD ORGANIZE INTO MILITARY CAPRES ...



-WHAT I COULDN'T BELIEVE IS HOW YOU WHEW! KEPT A STRAIGHT BELIEVE-THAT!

WHEN A SECOND MINISTER VISITED, WITH THE SAME QUESTIONS, IT WASN'T SO FUNNY,

... AND THESE
TERRORISTS WOULD
THEN LAUNCH MILITARY
STRIKES AGAINST ARMY
BASES, COMMUNICATIONS
CENTERS AND WATER
RESOURCE SYSTEMS
IN THE U.S.

WHAT YOU'VE JUST TOLD US PROVES THAT THE U.S.
GOVERNMENT HAS A MILITARY ATTITUDE TOWARD THE
REFUGEES FROM GUATEMALA
AND EL SALVADOR - NOT A
POLITICAL OR AN ECONOMIC
ATTITUDE. AND CERTAINLY
NOT EVEN A MIMANIFBI AGENT. THAT MEANS

LOOK INTO THIS. HE WAS VISITED BY A DIFFERENT FBI AGENT. THAT MEANS SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE, IS MAKING PLANS.

ED.

M.

THE CHRISTIC INSTITUTE HAD GOOD CONTACTS, INCLUDING SEVERAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS. BACK IN WASHINGTON, THEY BEGAN TO ASK QUESTIONS: WHO WAS SPREADING THESE STORIES? WHY?

OCHRISTIC INSTITUTE



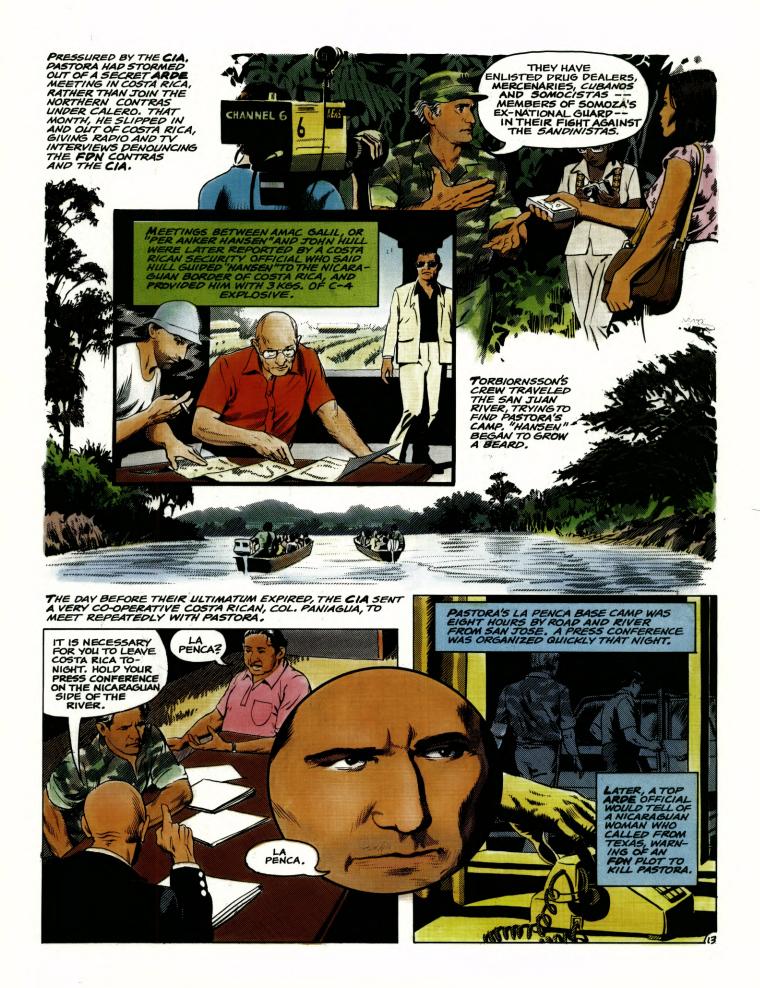
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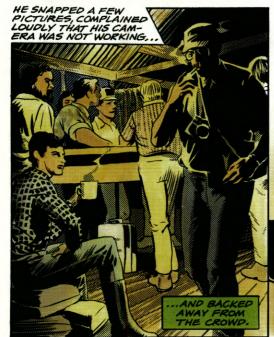




















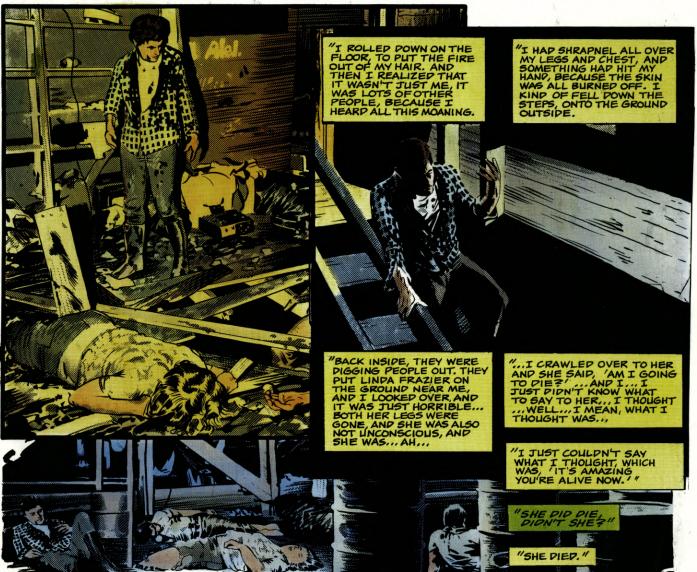






"WERE YOU KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS?"

"NO...I WAS SITTING ON A SACK OF RICE, HAVING A CUP OF COFFEE, AND I JUST SAW A BRIGHT FLASH, AND HEARD THIS BONG BONG, LIKE A BELL RINGING IN MY EAR. THEN I FELT MY EYEBROWS AND HAIR BURNING.





IT TOOK 4 HOURS FOR THAT BOAT TO RE-TURN, THEN 5 MORE HOURS BY RIVER AND BUMPY BACK ROADS TO A RURAL HOSPITAL..,





TONY HEARD HER SCREAM WHEN THEY FINALLY CARRIED HER DOWN TO THE BOAT.

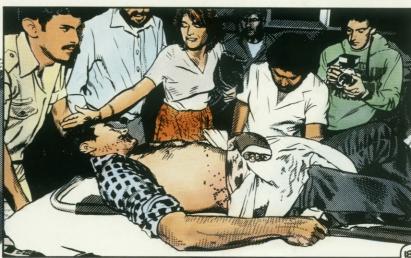






"CHRIS WILL PRIVE YOU. IT'S NIGHT, THAT'S A LONG PRIVE THROUGH MOUN-TAIN COUNTRY, AND THE FOG IS THICK."















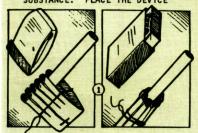








1. PLACE AN UNLIGHTED CIGARETTE BETWEEN TWO ROWS OF MATCHES. UNITE THEM TOGETHER BY TYING THEM FIRMLY WITH A STRING. 2. WRAP THE MATCHES IN DRY PAPER OR ANY OTHER INFLAMMABLE SUBSTANCE. PLACE THE DEVICE





BETWEEN EMPTY WOODEN OR CARTON BOXES.

3. LIGHT THE CIGARETTE AT THE FREE END. THE MATCHES WILL LIGHT IN 5 OR 10 MINUTES.

INCENDIARY BOMB ("MOLOTOV COCKTAIL")

1. FILL A MARROW-NECKED BOTTLE WITH
GASOLINE, KEROSENE, OR BURNABLE DIESEL;
BETTER STILL, IF SHREDDED SOAP OR SAWDUST ADDED.

SAMDUST ADDED.

2. INSERT A RAG IN THE BOTTLE UNTIL
ONE END TOUCHES THE LIQUID AND THE
OTHER EXTENDS NO MORE THAN 20cm FROM
THE RIM OF THE BOTTLE. SEAL THE
BOTTLE TIGHTLY WITH A STRING OR TAPE.

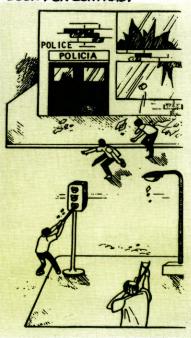


TO ACTIVATE THE DEVICE:

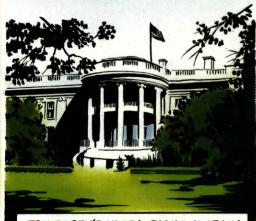
HOLD THE BOTTLE IN ONE HAND WITH YOUR ARM EXTENDED.

LIGHT THE RAG WITH YOUR OTHER HAND. C) IMMEDIATELY THROW THE LIGHTED BOTTLE AT YOUR OBJECTIVE WITH SUFFICIENT FORCE THAT IT BREAKS ON IMPACT.

THE CIA HAD ALREADY BEEN CAUGHT ILLEGALLY MINING NICARAGUAN HARBORS, EPGAR CHANORRO REVEALED A CIA MANUAL WHICH TALKED ABOUT THE NEEP FOR POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS AND SABOTAGE, THE CIA ALSO PRINTED AND DISTRIBUTED A COMIC BOOK FOR CONTRAS.



UNDER THE BOLAND AMENDMENT, CONGRESS
BANNED "DIRECT OR INDIRECT" U.S. MILITARY
AID TO THE CONTRAS. CIA DIRECTOR WILLIAM
CASEY, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR ROBERT
MCFARLANE, LT. COL. OLIVER NORTH, ROB
OWEN AND OTHER WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS
SET UP A PRIVATE CONTRA SUPPORT
NETWORK LED BY NORTH.



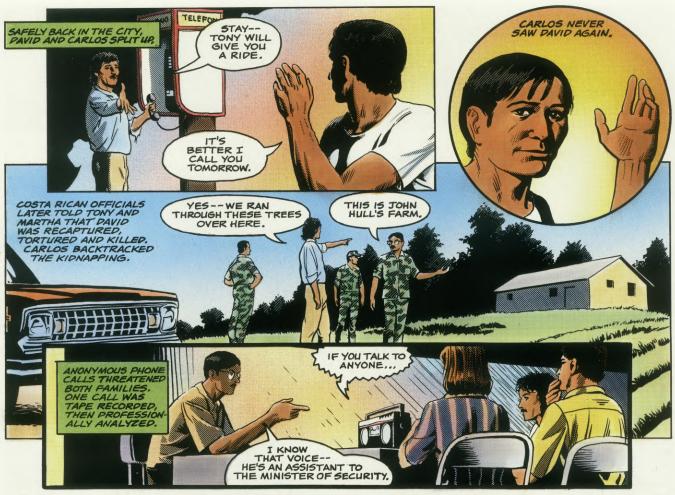




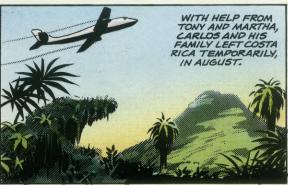


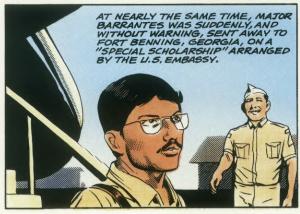








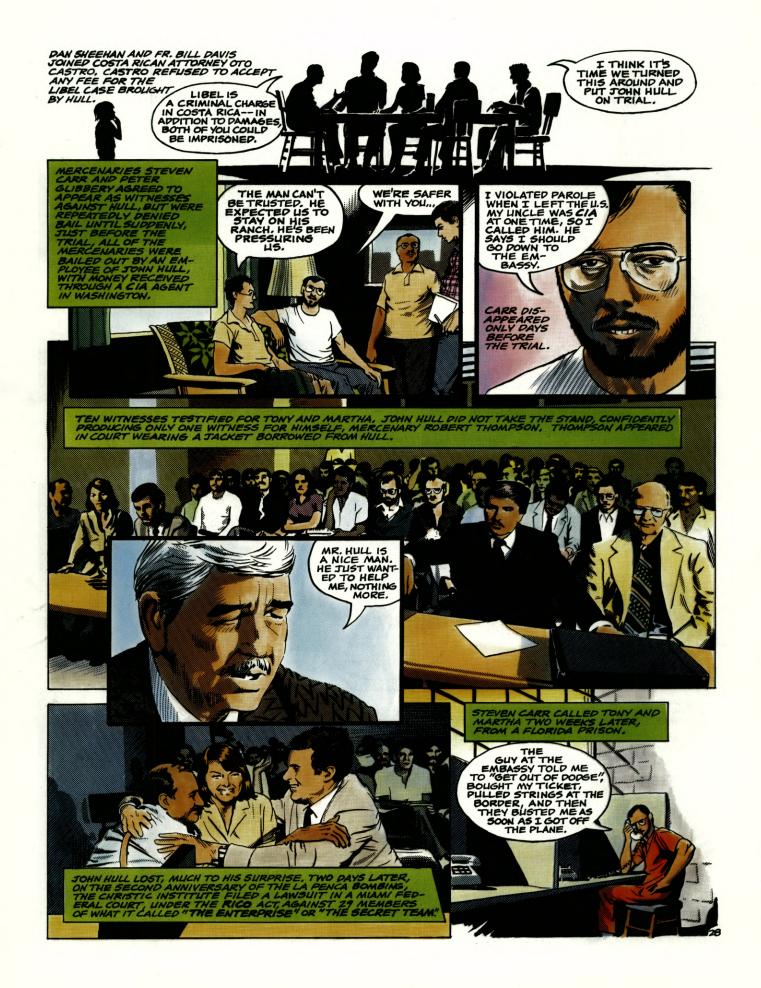




IN SEPTEMBER,
1985, TONY AND
MARTHA PUBLISHED THE
RESULTS OF
THEIR INVESTIGATION
IMPLICATING
JOHN HULL,
"AMAC GALIL"
THE FON AND
THE CIA.



PAYS LATER, JOHN HULL FILED CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST BOTH, DEMANDING \$500,000 IN DAMAGES AND \$500,000 COURT COGTS FOR INJURIES, FALSEHOOD AND DEFAMA-TION OF CHARACTER.





















MIAMI, MAY, 1988: UNDER THE RICO STATUTE, CHRISTIC INSTITUTE ATTOR-NEYS WERE ABLE TO SUBPOENA AND DEPOSE WITNESSES. EDITH HOLLEMAN QUESTIONED JOHN HULL.

MR. HULL, ARE YOU THE PERSON WHO SAID ON A RECENT FRONTLINE PSS BROADCAST THAT YOU WOULD TAKE SENATORS KENNEDY AND KERRY, PUT THEM UP AGAINST A WALL AND HAVE THEM SHOT, IF YOU COULD?

I WOULDN'T DO
THAT,., I SAID I
WOULD HAVE IT PONE,
I HIPE BEHIND THE
LAW. I'M LIKE MR.
SHEEHAN. I HAVE
OTHER PEOPLE DO
MY DIRTY WORK-LIKE YOU'RE
DOING HIS.



MAY 27, 1988: GEORGE BUSH ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL.\_\_\_\_

IF GENERAL
NOREIGA REVEALS PETAILS
OF THE CONTRA
SUPPLY OPERATIONS THAT SHOW
YOU KNEW MORE
THAN YOU HAVE
SAIP YOU KNEW,
WILL THAT HURT
YOUR CHANCES
OF ELECTION?

IF HE...OR
ANY OF THESE
LITTLE LEFT-WING
OUTFITS LIKE THE
CHRISTIC INSTITUTE
HAVE SOMETHING,
LET'S SEE WHAT
IT IS...



