Contragate: A Moral Challenge to People of Faith

Resources for Reflection and Action

The Christic Institute, 1324 North Capitol Street NW, Washington D.C. 20002 (202) 797-8106
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Faith,

On behalf of the Christic Institute, I am inviting you and your congregations to participate in writing a page of United States history. Together we face a serious threat to our constitutional democracy and a violation of fundamental values of our American people. At the Institute, we know that this challenge cannot be met effectively unless we as people of faith throughout the country educate ourselves and begin to speak out on behalf of truth and fairness in an organized way.

Six months before the Iran-contra scandal broke, we filed a lawsuit on behalf of two U.S. journalists who were injured by the illegal activities of the private contra supply network. Our in-depth investigation into this affair has revealed the existence of a "secret government," involved for over two decades in illicit weapons sales, political assassination programs, and illegal smuggling of heroin and cocaine into our country as a source of income for covert operations such as the contra supply program. These lucrative and deadly activities are undertaken in the name of "national security"; and yet they violate our laws, our democratic processes and our moral sensibilities.

In the wake of the Iran-contra scandal, the faith community has a special responsibility to raise up the truth and call for healing. Our dismay at the disturbing revelations is more than matched by our faith in God, the American people, and the power of the truth. Together we can shine a light in these shadows, spread the word, and by these acts defend our values and our Constitution. Please review the enclosed materials and join us in a national effort to become educated and effective spokespersons for our democratic and religious values in this critical stage of our country's history.

Sara Nelson
Executive Director

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The Christic Institute

The Christic Institute is an interfaith, public interest law firm and policy center. Since its founding in 1980, the Christic Institute has selected cases for their potential to establish critical legal precedents to advance social justice. Parallel public education and organizing campaigns complement each legal case, encouraging concerned citizens to press for needed policy changes through the legislative and electoral processes. The Institute is a non-profit organization, supported solely by foundations, religious institutions, and private donations.

The daily work of the Christic Institute is grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition of social justice. The Institute maintains a broadly pluralistic commitment to religious values and their proper place in American society. The staff of the Christic Institute --Catholics, Jews, Protestants, and others-- understand that religious belief is a powerful force in our society, which can be manipulated cynically for destructive ends or used reverently to build a just society.

The Institute's commitment is reflected in our record of taking on and winning such important cases as the Karen Silkwood case against the nuclear industry, the Greensboro civil rights case against the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party, and the Three Mile Island case against the General Public Utility Corporation. The Institute is now involved in a project with more significant and sweeping public policy implications than any we have undertaken to date: the Contragate Project.

The Contragate Project

In May of 1986, the Christic Institute filed a federal civil lawsuit on behalf of two US journalists, Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey. The suit, brought a full six months before the Iran-contra scandal became public, charges private supporters of the contra war against Nicaragua with racketeering, drug running and other criminal activity. Among the 29 defendants in the lawsuit are retired Major Generals John Singlaub and Richard Secord, businessman Albert Hakim, and private National Security Council liaison Robert Owen -- major figures in the Iran-contra scandal.

The investigations by the Christic Institute and the select congressional committees on the Iran-contra affair have revealed what journalist Bill Moyers has called a "secret government", operating covertly and illegally to carry out foreign policy behind the backs of Congress and the American people.

The Christic Institute lawsuit charges that this unlawful "off-the-books" foreign policy operation has engaged in drug smuggling, gun running, money laundering and political assassination programs for many years. The Institute will introduce evidence of this criminal activity in Federal Court, in order to bring to justice those responsible.

The lawsuit lies at the heart of the Christic Institute's broader Contragate Project. A nationwide public education campaign complements our legal efforts. Our goal is to generate a groundswell of public support for
a thorough congressional investigation into the issues raised by the scandal and the lawsuit, followed by appropriate legislative and judicial action.

It is our belief that Congress and the American people must confront the deception, law-breaking and circumvention of the democratic process that has resulted in a constitutional and moral crisis. Our representatives must act to check the illegal secret wars and covert operations that have become part of our foreign policy -- particularly when operations such as the contra supply program are funded in part by large-scale drug smuggling into the United States.

Responding in Faith: An Invitation

The Iran-contra scandal poses a moral challenge to people of faith. We face a time of grave national crisis, in which the strength and integrity of our very democracy is in danger. Yet hidden within this crisis is a rich opportunity for us as citizens of faith. Our faith enables us to "see the signs of the times", and calls us to bear witness to events as they unfold.

The hard moral issues must be extracted from the web of deception that has surrounded this scandal and the long history of similar activities. With the broader community of faith, we can seek out the truth in this affair, and come to understand the nature and origins of the crisis we face.

We at the Christic Institute feel a need to reflect on these issues, and to respond in faith. We invite you to join us in looking to our religious roots, within our respective faith traditions, for insight and inspiration.

There are many and different forms of reflection and response within every religious tradition; we have collected a sampling of resources for use as you see fit. For understanding and analysis, we include background information in Part One of this packet. For reflection and religious study, we suggest themes and readings in Part Two. For a prayerful response, we offer liturgical resources, also in Part Two. And for action in response to these issues, we provide suggestions in Part Three.

These resources are drawn from the rich diversity of faith traditions that informs the work of the Christic Institute. It is our hope that you will be able to use these materials in shaping your own reflection and response, adapting them for your particular congregation, denomination and faith group.
Questions and Answers: The Contragate Project

1) What are the origins of the Christic Institute lawsuit?

The Christic Institute lawsuit originated with a terrorist bombing of a press conference. On May 30, 1984, a bomb blast ripped through a jungle retreat in La Penca, Nicaragua, moments before dissident contra leader Eden Pastora was to address members of the international press. Pastora, commander of one of the contra forces fighting to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, was preparing to denounce the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), the largest contra faction, and the US Central Intelligence Agency for pressuring Pastora’s group to join forces with the FDN.

Eight people were killed in the La Penca bombing, including reporter Linda Frazier, a US citizen. Two dozen more were seriously injured. Among those injured was ABC News cameraman Tony Avirgan. Upon his recovery months later, Avirgan joined his wife and fellow journalist, Martha Honey, in an investigation into the La Penca bombing.

The two journalists uncovered a shadowy network of contras and private contra supporters based on the Costa Rican farm of John Hull, a US citizen and CIA operative. Contra sources confirmed that this group planned and executed the La Penca bombing, as part of an overall strategy to create a united "southern front" of the contra war.

The journalists also learned that the bomb was intended to kill not only Pastora, but the assembled members of the press; and that the act was to be blamed on the Nicaraguan Government.

In Washington DC, Christic Institute General Counsel Daniel Sheehan had also begun investigating the activities of this secret network operating on the "southern front" of the war against Nicaragua. The parallel efforts of Sheehan and the journalists converged, and in May of 1986, the Institute filed a federal civil lawsuit against members of the private contra support network on behalf of Avirgan and Honey.

2) What has the Christic Institute investigation revealed?

Investigations into the individuals behind the La Penca bombing established that they were part of a major criminal enterprise comprised of contras, mercenaries, drug smugglers and former CIA and military officials. This was the same "enterprise" described by Richard Secord in his testimony during the Iran-contra hearings. The La Penca bombing was only one of many criminal activities planned and executed by members of the enterprise in order to further the contra cause.

The most startling revelation has been the evidence of massive drug smuggling into the United States by the private contra supply network, now substantiated by congressional and press reports. Planeloads of cocaine were flown from the Medellin drug cartel based in Colombia to airstrips on John Hull’s ranch in Costa Rica. Christic Institute attorneys have taken sworn testimony from
If a new public judgment is to be formed in this country in response to the Iran-contra scandal, the participation of the faith community is critical. The difficult questions of the means and ends of a moral foreign policy, of the rights and duties of citizens to uphold our democratic values and institutions must be raised and confronted. At the Christic Institute, we know that citizens of faith across the country are beginning to shape a response to these questions, individually through personal reflection, and collectively through our congregations.

In the effort to raise the issues effectively, the Christic Institute seeks guidance and support from the broader religious community. From the members of our Advisory Board to individuals who plan the majority of our speaking events, we look to citizens of faith to bring this message to their congregations and communities.

Highlights of this work include:

Advisory Board and Communications Alliance

Thirteen religious leaders representing eight different denominations or faith groups provide guidance on the ContraGate Legal Project as Advisory Board members. Additionally, over twenty religious organizations have committed to disseminating information on the ContraGate Project and related issues, as members of the Communications Alliance. (See the list of Advisory Board and Communications Alliance members, p. 8)

Electoral Work

The Christic Institute has worked with religious coalitions in New Hampshire and Iowa to raise the unresolved issues of the Iran-contra scandal within the 1988 election dialogue and debate.

The New Hampshire Council of Churches (through its Peace and Justice Task Force) and the Iowa Interchurch Agency for Peace and Justice (through its Commission for International Peace and Reconciliation) have independently issued a series of questions to each of the presidential candidates. Drawn up in conjunction with the Christic Institute, the questions focus on the constitutional crisis created by lawless covert operations; on the contras and the evidence of their drug smuggling; and on the Christic Institute lawsuit and the need for criminal prosecution of members of the illegal contra supply network.

The candidates have responded to these questions, and both religious bodies have compiled and publicized the responses. The questions and background information were also sent to the congregational networks of the 14-denomination Iowa Interchurch Agency and the New Hampshire Council of Churches. Concerned local groups and individuals were encouraged and organized to participate in the electoral process by questioning the candidates at local forums and debates. The joint effort was very successful; and the Christic Institute has now expanded its "Question the Candidates" campaign.
Resolutions of Support

In June 1987, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) passed a resolution urging congressional investigations into the policies and operations behind the Iran-contra scandal, as well as Christic Institute allegations of contra drug running and the long history of such illegal covert activities. Christic Institute staff testified before two committees of the General Assembly on the importance of these issues, and worked with the Advisory Council on Church and Society to draft and seek passage of the resolution. (See p. 27)

Information-Sharing

The Christic Institute regularly provides information on issues related to our lawsuit to church public policy advocates, primarily through the Washington Inter-Religious Staff Council. The Council includes the Washington offices of the Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian, Brethren and Mennonite Churches, among others, and seeks to educate and lobby Congress on issues of importance to religious constituencies. The Christic Institute provides relevant information to these groups on issues such as contra drug smuggling.

Speaking Engagements

Christic Institute senior staff regularly address gatherings of major denominations, to share information on our lawsuit and to seek support and guidance in our Contragate Project. Addresses given from Summer 1987 through Winter 1988 include:

* General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church
* United Methodist Women's Convocation
* Unitarian Universalist General Conference
* American Friends Service Committee Board Meeting
* Presbyterian Peace Fellowship National Board
* American Jewish Congress, Maryland Chapter
* Annual Conference of United Methodist Churches, Southern California/Nevada
* United Church of Christ Synod

Funding Support

A significant portion of the Christic Institute's funding comes from religious organizations. As of February 1988, the Contragate Project/La Penca Lawsuit has gratefully received major support from:

* Church of the Brethren
* Congregation of St. Joseph
* Congregation of the Most Holy
* Episcopal Church
* Franciscan Sisters
* Kurth Religious Trust
* Marianist Sharing Fund
* Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
* Presbyterian Church (USA)
* Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul
* Sisters of Mercy, Chicago Province
* Sisters of St. Joseph
* United Church Board for World Ministries
* United Methodist Church, Board of Global Ministries: World, Nat'l, Women's Divisions
* Veach Program of the Unitarian Universalist Society
* Weston Priory
The Contragate Project Advisory Board

- Robert Alpern, Director of the Washington Office, Unitarian Universalist Association
- Rev. Craig Biddle, Consultant, Episcopal Diocese of Washington
- Peggy Billings, Associate General Secretary, World Division, General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church
- Robert McAfee Brown, Professor Emeritus, Pacific School of Religion
- Rev. Robert Drinan, S.J., former member of Congress, Professor of Law, Georgetown Univ.
- Lila Garrett, television producer
- Rev. Joseph Hacala, S.J., Director, National Office of Jesuit Social Ministries
- Russell Hemenway, Director, National Committee for an Effective Congress
- Rev. John Humbert, General Minister and President, the Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ)
- Randall Kehler, Chair of the Executive Committee, Exploratory Project on the Conditions of Peace
- Dr. Joseph Lowery, President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- Eli S. Rivera, Interim Assistant General Secretary, National Division, General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church
- Rabbi David Saperstein, Co-Director and Counsel, Religious Action Center of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations
- Eleanor Smeal, former President, NOW
- Bishop Dale White, Resident Bishop, N.Y. Annual Conference, United Methodist Church
- Doris Anne Younger, General Director, Church Women United

The Communications Alliance

American Baptist Churches
Americans for Democratic Action
Asia Resource Center
Center for International Policy
Center for New Creation
Church of the Brethren
Church Women United
CISPES
Clergy and Laity Concerned
Coalition for a New Foreign Policy
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Disciples Peace Fellowship
Friends Committee on National Legislation
IMPACT
Intercommunity Center for Peace and Justice
Interreligious Task Force on Central America
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Jesuit Social Ministries
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
Maryknoll Sisters
Medical Mission Sisters of North America
Neighbor to Neighbor
National Campaign for a Nuclear Freeze
National Council of Churches of Christ, Office of Human Rights
NETWORK
New Jewish Agenda
Nicaragua Network
NISGUA
National Organization for Women
Partners for Global Justice
Pax Christi USA
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Quixote Center/Quest for Peace
Religious Task Force on Central America
Sanctuary Media Project
SANE/Freeze
Society of African Missions
Sojourners
Southern Baptist Peacemakers
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United Church of Christ: Board of World Ministries; Office for Church in Society
United Methodist Board of Global Ministries: Board of Church and Society; Federation for Social Action; Women's Division Offices of Public Policy and Int'l Affairs
United States Student Association
Washington Office on Latin America
Washington Office on Haiti
Washington Peace Center
Witness for Peace
Women Strike for Peace
World Peacemakers
Women's Coalition on Central America
Resources
for Reflection
Themes for Reflection

The following is a collection of themes relating scripture to critical policy and moral questions we face today. Drawn from a number of sources, these reflections do not represent a comprehensive review of these issues and their theological implications, nor a definitive interpretation of scripture. They are offered here to spark reflection, discussion and debate, as examples of how we might seek insight and guidance today from scripture and our faith traditions.

The Covenant and the Constitution

The teachings of Exodus take us to the roots of our Judeo-Christian tradition for insights into our current moral and constitutional crisis.

The story is familiar. Delivered from slavery, the Israelites were led to Sinai by Moses. There they entered into a covenant with God, their liberator. The covenant defined a new relationship, with clear roles and mutual responsibilities. "Listen to my voice, then I will be your God, and you will be my people." (Jeremiah 7)

The Israelites had fled a life of oppression as slaves in Pharaoh's Egypt. Now free, they looked to a mutual agreement, a living covenant between themselves and their God. Each party was called to be responsible and accountable to the other, unconditionally. God provided the framework of law, reflected in the ten commandments, within which the people were to govern themselves. God's law represents the basis for a just society; living in justice would be the people's reward for following the law.

We have inherited the age-old struggle to create and uphold a just society. One small slice of this history is embodied in our own efforts in the United States to forge and sustain a democratic society with "liberty and justice for all."

Two hundred years ago, the founders of our nation created the US Constitution. Although imperfect in its origins, the Constitution defines our form of self-government, and engages us in a partnership of rights and responsibilities, mediated by our elected representatives. The founders feared unbridled power that was neither delegated nor limited by the people. Concerned that the centralization of power would lead to tyranny and oppression, they designed an open and accountable system of checks and balances, with power divided among three branches of government. The choice of a federal form of government was a deliberate one: the Latin word foedus, from which "federal" derives, means "covenant."

The ancient Israelites wrestled with the burden of responsibility that accompanies freedom. Conditioned by the false security of slavery, the Israelites were tempted to surrender their freedom and to renounce the responsibilities of the covenant.

When the people demanded a king to rule over them, God told Samuel, "Obey their voice; only, you must warn them solemnly
and instruct them in the rights of the king who is to reign over them." Samuel returned to the people and said, "This will be the procedure of the king who shall reign over you: he will take your sons and... appoint for himself commanders of hundreds, and some to... make his implements of war... and you yourselves will become his slaves. Then you will cry out on that day because of the king whom you will have chosen for yourselves..." So warned, the people nonetheless insisted, "We want a king." (Samuel 8) The consequences were disastrous, as predicted, and the populace suffered greatly.

The struggle repeats itself today. The drafters of our Constitution explicitly rejected a system in which a single leader would hold absolute power. Power was to reside in the people, and the people, in turn, would maintain an active and responsible citizenship. Yet in the name of "national security", we have surrendered many of our rights and responsibilities to those who would "lead" us; and we have witnessed the centralization and abuse of power.

Today we face a constitution in crisis. The scandals of Watergate and the Iran-contra affair are warnings of what is to come if we fail to re-claim our rights and duties as citizens -- our right to know, our duty to make informed decisions about the direction of this country in the world. We have watched as our leaders conduct covert and illegal policies in our names, associating with drug dealers and engaging in criminal activity. We see "secret networks" operating outside the bounds of our law, accountable to no one. As the effects of these covert activities are extended to our own citizens, we see our cities suffer from the devastation of a drug crisis heightened by US officials' cooperation with drug dealers, and our democratic institutions subverted by violations of law and the Constitution. Slowly, we begin to feel the effects of living with lawlessness at home.

The authority by which we govern ourselves is our Constitution: we are now called to protect and defend it, and to uphold the covenant. (See Notes 1 and 3)

**Idols and Enemies**

The first of the commandments which framed the covenant between God and God's people is unmistakable: "You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3) Idolatry -- the service or worship of a false god -- was also the sin most widely condemned by the Hebrew prophets.

The idols the ancient Israelites rejected were Pharaoh and the false security of tyranny. The scriptures condemn other false gods which still hold appeal today, such as the the idolatry of money and of unjust law.

Our challenge today is to say "no" to one of the most alluring idols of our time: the idol of "national security", and the state which serves it. The "national security state" demands from us the unyielding allegiance that belongs to God alone. Evolving from a set of policies and institutions that often stand in stark contradiction to our democratic and religious ideals, this "state within a state" has corrupted our constitutional system. In the name of national security, this state claims the right to do as it chooses to protect us from our "enemies". It ignores challenges from other nations, and lies, deceives and withholds information from the citizens who would challenge it from within. The national security state answers to no higher moral authority nor to its citizens. It will justify criminal means to destroy its enemies and achieve its ends; its activities have included assassinations, drug and gun smuggling.

Investigations into the Iran-contra scandal have begun to expose this false god. The idol of national security is not embodied in any one individual, administration or policy. Yet when our leaders hide their illegal actions under the guise of "national security", when they deceive us and demand that we not question their actions, they are asking us to bow before this idol.

In Christian terms, the national security state reflects a modern-day Caesar. In response to the question of obligation to the state and its leaders, Jesus' principle is instructive to us today: "Render to Caesar..."
the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (Mark 12:17)." To shed light on the age-old question of exactly what is to be rendered to which, theologian Robert McAfee Brown points to two principles at work in "this struggle between our allegiance to God and to Caesar: first, our temptation is frequently to render to Caesar a great many things that should be rendered only to God; and second, Caesar's temptation is always to want to be God and thereby claim our total allegiance." (Note 2, p. 39)

In order to reject the false gods of national security and the state, we must reserve our deepest allegiance for God. And we must maintain a vigilant and active citizenship, taking care to exercise our judgment as citizens of conscience, rather than surrendering it to those who promise us a false "security".

In order to sustain and justify itself, the national security state must create an all-powerful enemy, an "evil empire". Communism has become that enemy, so that any action taken or crime committed in the service of anti-communism remains unquestioned. The full weight of this principle is reflected in the words of General Jim Doolittle, in reviewing covert operations for President Eisenhower: "It is now clear that we are facing an implacable enemy . . . There are no rules in such a game. Hitherto acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply . . . If the United States is to survive, long-standing American concepts of 'fair play' must be reconsidered. We must . . . learn to subvert, sabotage and destroy our enemies by more clever . . . and more effective methods than those used against us."

These words illustrate how serving the idol of national security leads us away from the principles of our faith. The New Testament tells us to "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also." (Luke 6:27-28) The message is not one of helplessness in personal affairs or naivete in political affairs. Rather, we are urged to "be wary as serpents, innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16) We are called to act morally and wisely -- to recognize that illegal and immoral acts against perceived enemies serve neither our interests nor our ethics, and only ensure an endless succession of new enemies.

Our task is to transform the love of power in our nation into the power of love and truth. (See Notes 2, 3, 1)

Secrecy and Darkness

The covert and illegal activities of the national security state have been carried out both by "secret networks" of private citizens, and by officials in our own government. In both cases, those who carry out these shadowy operations prefer the darkness of secrecy to the light of openness.

The New Testament reminds us, "... though the light has come into the world, men have shown that they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light . . ." (John 3:19-21)

A fundamental tenet of our democratic system is openness and public accountability. Those who operate in secrecy cannot be called to answer to us as citizens, or to our elected representatives. The long history of covert operations has established that secrecy is used to stifle public debate and discussion on these operations and policies.

As citizens of faith, we must be the first to come forward and say that when activities are not evil or illegal, they need not be shrouded in secrecy and darkness. Our best protection from secret crimes is exposure; from darkness, light. We are a government of the people; to be responsible in our judgment, we must be informed. For Christians, to shed light on these individuals and their activities is to affirm the ways Jesus lived and worked: "I have spoken openly to the world . . . I have said nothing secretly." (John 18:20) (See Note 3)
Truth and Light

As we go forth to confront the darkness, we are steadied by our knowledge that "a light shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower." (John 1:5) And as John was sent "as a witness to speak for the light," so we must step forward to speak for truth.

A commitment to truth guides us as people of faith in our work. The statement "you will learn the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32) is instructive for each of us. Our faith teaches that truth is important not only in personal affairs, but in the activities of our government. Our responsibility, then, is to expose the lies and to call to task the liars.

To do so requires that we expose the policies and apparatus of the national security system, in order to confront an entire institution built on lies and deception. In the pursuit of "national security" through covert operations, we have learned that it is the policy of the government to lie. The National Security Directive that defines covert activities stipulates that they be "so planned and executed that any US Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons, and that if uncovered the US government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility." This "deniability," by definition, represents the opposite of accountability.

When it is the understood practice of government officials to distort the truth, the basis for public trust is destroyed. The argument for "necessary lies" fails for a society committed to democratic deliberation and ethical choice. We are called, then, to expose those institutions and individuals who would destroy the truth, remembering that "these are the lies that would lead us astray." (Amos 2:4) (See Notes 1, 2, 3)

Vigilance and Prophecy

A commitment to truth cannot be defined narrowly: our task is to search out the truth, to speak it and to live it. These times call us to vigilance and to the ancient prophetic role of "speaking truth to power."

The Israelites strived to live by God's law, yet they faced times of grave national crisis and uncertainty. In these times, the Hebrew prophets stepped forward, to remind the people of God's calling. The prophets' interpretation of the crisis, and their calls for justice, drew public attention. Generally from the poorer classes, the prophets often lived on the margins of society. They dared to confront those in power, and to question the direction of the nation, in the name of social justice: "The prophet taught in concrete terms and moved men to action," explains Mordecai Kaplan, "because he addressed himself to his people's civilization, trying to change its course, opposing its idols and putting up before it new ideals."

The powerful denounced them as traitors to their country; the less powerful ignored their message. Yet the prophets are presented to us in Hebrew scripture and the Torah as those who best understood the nature of the crisis of the times.

God called on Ezekiel, as a prophet, to "speak to the members of your nation. Say to them, 'when I send the sword against a country, the people of that country select one of themselves and post him as a sentry; if he sees the sword coming against the country, he sounds the horn to alert the people. If someone hears the sound of his horn, but pays no attention, the sword will overtake him.'" (Ezekiel 33:1-6)

Our responsibility in these times is to be vigilant, to be "watchers at the gates" waiting for any threat to our democracy, warning all who will listen of approaching danger, internal or external. Regardless of the breadth of our responsibility or the range of our view, we are called to be sentinels, to watch for signs of danger, and to name them for what they are to our world.

"So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour." (Matthew 25:13) (See Note 2)
Faith, Hope and Responsibility

Our call to vigilance need not be shouldered as a burden, with fear and trepidation, but accepted joyfully, with faith and confidence. The scriptures give us profound hope, reflected in stories of reversal and renewal in times of grave crisis. Isaiah declared: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the humble, to bind up the broken-hearted... Ancient ruins shall be rebuilt and sites long desolate restored... Let me rejoice in the Lord with all my heart... for he has robed me in salvation as a garment and clothed me in integrity as a cloak... For Zion's sake I will not keep silence, for Jerusalem's sake I will speak out, until her light shines forth like the sunrise..." (Isaiah 61-62)

The message is one of faith, hope and responsibility. The spirit of hope comes from our understanding that God is just, and God's mission is to bring justice to our ways and our world. Our faith tells us that we can therefore overcome today's injustices, that God's vision of justice will prevail in our own time of crisis. And our sense of responsibility grows from the recognition that, like Isaiah, we are called to be part of the struggle to bring justice to our world. We, too, draw strength from the knowledge that "the spirit of the Lord God is upon us."

Theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel described the relationship between faith and responsibility with insight. God needs us, Heschel writes. God's intention cannot be fulfilled without our work, as God's children on earth. Our challenge is to take up the unfinished task of bringing justice to the human world. One way to take on that challenge is to begin two parallel journeys: an inward journey toward a deepening personal faith and commitment, and an outward journey to bring that faith to bear on the social issues of our time, as citizens of faith. The inward or personal path may be pursued through prayer, reflection, and dialogue with friends and family. The outward and collective journey calls us to join others in expressing that personal faith in our approach to active citizenship. (See Note 5)

In the moment that we assume personal and collective responsibility for the wrongs of our government, we become free and empowered to right these wrongs, to restore to just order our nation and its priorities. Heschel writes, "Some are guilty, all are responsible." When understood as the disruption of right order in our souls or in our society, sin may be either personal or social and structural. In his recent Encyclical on Social Concerns, Pope John Paul describes "structures of sin," and the need to address both individual and institutional sources of evil. Our response must be at once personal and social.

Within the Jewish tradition, the personal path is reflected in the concept of teshuvah, the process of repentance for transgressions and of return to the correct observance of Jewish ethical law. And the collective act of social renewal is expressed in the notion of tikkun olam -- the just repair and restitution of human society.

In these times of crisis, the points of convergence between our personal journeys of faith and our work in the world become critical. Our faith inspires and reminds us that we were given the capacity of choice. We are called today to choose justice and right order, in our hearts and in our world. (See Notes 2, 4, 5)

Notes and Resources


3. A Statement of the Church of the Brethren on Covert Operations and Covert War. Elgin, IL: Church of the Brethren.


Vigil for Hope
In a Time of Crisis

The following liturgical texts are offered as suggestions for reflection and worship. Combined with other resources and adapted for your congregation and faith tradition, these ideas may be integrated into a service of worship or program of study. Feel free to use all or a combination of sections. The readings, themes and prayers recommended here are appropriate for Christian churches and communities; most are also suitable for synagogues and many may be adaptable for the congregations of other faiths. Please note that some readings from Christian and Hebrew scripture are not quoted in full; consult your Bible for the complete text.

INTRODUCTION

This liturgy is presented in the form of a vigil, an ancient form of worship for the Christian church and the Jewish community. Vigils were kept at night when the community felt the need to stay awake in the face of some great danger. One of the oldest vigils is the Passover. While the fear of death roamed through the land of Egypt, the Israelites kept watch, waiting for the dawn and their redemption from slavery. The Easter vigil of the Christian church follows this pattern.

The vigil is a natural response to fear and sorrow. Confronted with peril or tragedy, we cannot sleep. We seek the company of others. United with our friends and family, we find the strength to survive until the light banishes our fear.

The following texts are suggested as a prayerful response to the moral crisis we face at a time when our own government has broken the law and the public trust by conducting criminal covert activities. This crisis should not leave us with a sense of despair, but with a renewed determination to work as believers for the ideals and values we cherish as a nation.

1. A NATION OF LAWS

Theme: The United States is a nation of laws. No one is above the law. The concentration of power into the hands of a few individuals undermines the foundation of our laws--the United States Constitution--and threatens the liberty of every citizen.

Readings:

The republican is the only form of government which is not eternally at open or secret war with the rights of mankind.

Thomas Jefferson, 1790

We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America.

Preamble to the Constitution, 1787

Some say "might makes right", but I say our strength against enemies is based in a Constitution which believes that "right makes
might." Let every lover of liberty, then, swear never to violate the laws of the land or the solemn principles of the Constitution.

Abraham Lincoln

Shame on the tyrant city... No warning voice did she heed, she took no rebuke to heart, she did not trust in the Lord or come near to her God. Her officers were lions roaring in her midst, her rulers wolves of the plain that did not wait till morning, her prophets were reckless, no true prophets. Her priests profaned the sanctuary and did violence to the law. But the Lord in her midst is just; he does no wrong; morning by morning he gives judgment, without fail at daybreak.

Zephaniah 3:1-5

Silence for reflection

Prayer:

Almighty God, you created us in your image, to love and serve you in freedom and in peace. Give our nation a passion for justice. Help us to use our freedom for the liberation of others, and not to be squandered selfishly for our own ends or misused cynically as an excuse for exploitation of others.

Song: O God of Earth and Altar

O God of earth and altar, bow down and hear our cry, our earthly rulers falter, our people drift and die; the walls of gold entomb us, the swords of scorn divide, take not thy thunder from us, but take away our pride.

From all that terror teaches, from lies of tongue and pen, from all the easy speeches that comfort cruel men, from sale and profanation of honor, and the sword, from sleep and from damnation, deliver us, good Lord!

Tie in a living tether the prince and priest and thrall, bind all our lives together, smite us and save us all; in ire and exultation aflame with faith, and free, lift up a living nation, a single sword to thee.

Kings Lynn
English melody
Adapted by Ralph Vaughan Williams
Words by G. K. Chesterton, 1874-1936

2. THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

Theme: The "national security" system requires a cloak of secrecy. Deception is practiced not only to keep secrets from enemies, but from the people in whose name the state wages covert warfare. Only an enlightened and courageous citizenry, seeking truth above all else, can protect its liberties and restore the true honor of the nation.

Readings:

The Lord's arm is not so short that he cannot save nor his ear too dull to hear; it is your iniquities that raise a barrier between you and your God... Your hands are stained with blood and your fingers with crime; Your lips speak lies and your tongues utter injustice. No man sues with just cause, no man goes honestly to law; all trust in empty words, all tell lies... They do not know the way to peace, no justice guides their steps; all the paths they follow are crooked; no one who walks in them enjoys true peace.

Isaiah 59:1-8

The World rests on three things: Truth, Law and Peace.

Rabban Simeon ben Gamliel
The Mishnah

Love and truth are the two ways that lead the soul out of the inner jungle. Love offers an answer to the question of how to
live. In Truth we find an answer to the question of how to think. . . .
It is impossible to find Truth without being in love, and it is impossible to experience love without being truthful, without living Truth.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, 1973

Silence for reflection

Prayer:

O God, your love is wider than all the universe and your mercy greater than the heights of heaven. When we are tempted to break faith with you, put a new song of love on our lips, that we may sing your praises to all nations on earth.

Song: The Lord Will Come

The Lord will come and not be slow, his footsteps cannot err; before him righteousness shall go, his royal harbinger.

Truth from the earth, like to a flower, shall bud and blossom show; and justice, from her heavenly bower, look down on us below.

Rise, God, judge thou the earth in might, this wicked earth redress; for thou art he who shalt by right the nations all possess.

The nations all whom thou hast made shall come, and all shall frame to bow them low before thee, Lord, and glorify thy name.

For great thou art, and wonders great by thy strong hand are done: thou in thy everlasting seat remainest God alone.

York
16th century melody
Words by John Milton, 1608-1674

3. IDOLS AND ENEMIES

Theme: The national security state makes an idol of itself and demonizes its enemies. The more we fear the enemy, the more we worship the state and its works. When ideology dominates our minds, our enemies lose their humanity and become an absolute evil. Their destruction becomes an obsession, justifying any crime and any abuse of power by the state. But when enemy images break down and we learn again to recognize the humanity of those we oppose, the state’s claims are no longer absolute.

Readings:

God spoke, and these were his words:
‘I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
‘You shall have no other God to set against me.
‘You shall not make a carved image for yourself nor the likeness of anything in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth.
‘You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.’

Exodus 20:1-5a

National security justifies a military and political system that has replaced the older political systems of democracy and freedom. . . . Where is the prophetic church of Christ? If we believe that God is the creator of all life and the ultimate source of our security, why do we allow Caesar to seduce us into believing our lives can be made better by the state at the expense of others?

Dorothee Soelle, 1987

The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state.

Martin Luther King Jr., 1963

War has always had an adversary who hardly ever comes forward as such but does his work in the stillness. This adversary is speech, fulfilled speech, the speech of genuine conversation in which people understand one another and come to a
mutual understanding. Already in primitive warfare fighting begins where speech has ceased; that is, where people are no longer able to discuss with one another the subjects under dispute or submit them to mediation, but flee from speech with one another, and in the speechlessness of slaughter seek what they suppose to be a decision, a judgment of God. War soon conquers speech and enslaves it in the service of its battle cries. But where speech, be it ever so shy, moves from camp to camp, war is already called in question. The cannons of war easily drown out the word; but when the word has become entirely soundless, and on this side and that soundlessly bears into the hearts of men and women the intelligence that no human conflict can really be resolved through killing, not even through mass killing, then the human word has already begun to silence the cannonade.

Martin Buber, 1957

Silence for reflection

Prayer:

God of the prophets, we confess that we have not always expressed our best, nor helped to bring out the best in our country. We have been slow to ask our leaders to obey the law and to abide by the truth, not to worship national power, not to support corrupt governments, not to panderm to merchants of death. And so, we speak up, we will not run away from trying to do justice and to make peace. .. . So be it.

Prayer of Confession, alt.
Sunday Worship Service
June 14, 1987
Montclair Presbyterian Church,
California.

Song: O God of Every Nation

O God of every nation,
of every race and land,
redeem the whole creation
with your almighty hand;
where hate and fear divide us
and bitter threats are hurled,
in love and mercy guide us,
and heal our strife-torn world.

From search for wealth and power
and scorn of truth and right,
from trust in bombs that shower
destruction through the night,
from pride of race and nation
and blindness to your way,
deliver every nation,
eternal God, we pray!

Lord, strengthen all who labor
that we may find release
from fear of rattling saber,
from dread of war's increase;
when hope and courage falter,
your still small voice be heard;
with faith that none can alter,
your servants undergird.

Keep bright in us the vision
of days when war shall cease,
when hatred and division
give way to love and peace,
till dawns the morning glorious
when truth and justice reign
and Christ shall rule victorious
o'er all the world's domain.

Llangloffan
Welsh melody
Words by William Watkins Reid, b. 1923

4. WATCHERS AT THE GATES

Theme: Believers who learn the truth cannot evade the responsibility to act. It is no longer possible to retreat to neutral ground. We become watchers at the gates, warning the nation of approaching danger. But as watchers, we can also see the first light of dawn, the far-off signs of the coming reign of God, when justice will "roll on like a river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Readings:

To listen to a story . . . is to play a part in it, to take sides, to say yes or no, to move one way or the other.

Elie Wiesel
When evil men plot, good men must plan. When evil men burn and bomb, good men must build and bind. When evil men shout ugly words of hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glories of love. Where evil men would seek to perpetuate an unjust status quo, good men must seek to bring into being a real order of justice.

Martin Luther King Jr.

The necessity of the times, more than ever, calls for our utmost circumspection, deliberation, fortitude and perseverance. Let us remember that "if we suffer tamely a lawless attack upon our liberty, we encourage it, and involve others in our doom." It is a very serious consideration... that millions yet unborn may be the miserable sharers of the event.

Samuel Adams, 1771

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will exist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted....

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1961

I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel....

Ezekiel 33:1-9

Keep awake then; for you never know the day or the hour.

Matthew 25:1-13

Silence for reflection

Prayer:

Keep us awake, O God, to watch with you through the long night until the dawn. Then, when the light penetrates the darkness in the heart of our nation, we shall celebrate the festival of unending day.

Song: Sleepers Wake!

Wachet auf, 16th century melody,
Words by Philipp Nicolai, 1556-1608

5. DO NOT DESPAIR

Theme: Clinging to God and forgiving our enemies, we find strength for the long journey from darkness to the truth.

Readings:

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.

Abraham Lincoln, 1860

Therefore, putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his or her neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, 4:25-32

A great Day of Atonement must come over the world. Life must be remolded. Jews and Christians alike must turn back to the origins of faith. We must choose a path of which we can say with the utmost certainty that it is the good path, God's path, the only one to be followed. More than at any other time in our history we must be armed morally... Our house must be put in order, and the order must be a just one...

Sholom Asch, 1941

Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.
**Song: My Life Goes On**

My life goes on in endless song
above Earth's lamentations.
I hear the real, though far-off hymn
that hails a new creation.

**Chorus:**

No storm can shake my inmost calm
while to that Rock I'm clinging,
since Love is Lord of Heaven and Earth
how can I keep from singing?

Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear the music ringing.
It sounds and echoes in my soul:
how can I keep from singing?

**Chorus**

When tyrants tremble, sick with fear,
and hear their death knells ringing,
when friends rejoice from far though near,
how can I keep from singing?

**Chorus**

What though the tempest round me
roar!
I hear the truth, it liveth!
What though the darkness round me
close!
Songs in the night it giveth.

**Chorus**

Quaker hymn
Words adapted by Ed Gutfreund

**6. HOMILY OR MEDITATION**

**7. LITANY OR FREE RESPONSIVE PRAYER**

**8. BENEDICTION**

Let love be genuine.

Hate what is evil,
hold on to what is good.
Love one another as brothers and sisters.

Never tire in your commitment,
be aglow with the Spirit,
serve the Lord!

Rejoice in your hope,
be patient in tribulation,
be constant in prayer.

Bless those who persecute you;
bless and do not curse them.
Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep.

Live in harmony with one another:
Do not be self-righteous, but associate with
the lowly; never be conceited.

Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought
for what is noble
in the sight of all.
If possible, so far as it depends on you, live
in peace with everyone.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves!
Leave it to the wrath of God,
for it is written: "Vengeance is mine,
I will repay, says the Lord."
On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry,
feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him drink;
for by so doing you will heap burning coals
upon his head."
Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good.

You have only one obligation:
to love each other;
for we who love our neighbors
have fulfilled the law.
The commandments--You shall not betray,
You shall not kill, You shall not steal--and
any other commandment,
are summed up in this one sentence:
"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Love does no wrong to a neighbor,
therefore Love completes the law.

Paul's Letter to the Romans,
12:9-21, 13:8-10

Most of the hymns cited are in The Hymnal
1982, published by the Church Pension Fund,
800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017.
Responding in Faith

The following statement is reprinted from the CALC Report, Vol. XIII, No. 5. These reflections are one example of a response to the pressing issues we face; the principles expressed here may suggest themes for discussion or reflection in your group or congregation.

Revelations over the past year indicate more clearly than ever that our society is in a state of moral crisis. The Iran-contra affair, the PTL scandal, insider trading on Wall Street, and charges of misconduct leveled against more than 100 Reagan Administration officials are just a few examples of how serious the situation has become.

We at Clergy and Laity Concerned believe it is time for the religious leaders of our nation to speak out, loudly and clearly, with one voice to provide the moral leadership and spiritual guidance our nation so desperately needs.

That is why we have undertaken the task of circulating the following statement. Working in cooperation with the Theology in Global Context Association, CALC has sent this document to more than 700 prominent national and regional religious leaders all across the United States. We hope that it will receive widespread support throughout the religious community.

The "Resistance Commitment" is the result of several meetings of people that tried to carry out the mandate of the 1983 Erfurt Consultation on the significance of the justification and covenant traditions for a just peace. It is now an invitation to others who may also wish to endorse it and/or respond to it.

We live in a time when tremendous power, concentrated in the hands of a few, threatens the survival of the human family. We live in a time of scandalous idolatry when faith is bent to the service of the state. In order to "resist the powers of evil" today, to whom do we commit ourselves?

1. We commit ourselves to the God of justice as the only true God.

"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Ex. 20:2)

We resist the view that the office of the President of the United States, and that of other high officials, is God-ordained, and therefore above criticism. To equate our faith with national policy is idolatry.

2. We commit ourselves to the God of justice as the only God to be worshipped.

"You shall have no other god to set against me." (Ex. 20:3)

We resist the view that allegiance to our country is the ultimate value of our lives. To equate worshipping God with worship of the nation is idolatry.
3. We commit ourselves to the God of justice as the only God who can claim our loyalty as people of faith.

"You shall not make for yourself any graven image . . . you shall not bow down to them or worship them." (Ex. 20:4,5)

We resist the view that to serve the nation requires us always to seek profit, exploiting both natural and human resources. To equate serving God with the uncritical affirmation of any economic system is idolatry.

THEREFORE...

A. We believe that government has no right to make itself a god, refusing accountability and viewing itself as the source of our salvation. Without restraint, racism, sexism, and classism flourish.

Only God's justice has a right to govern us:

"What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

B. We believe that the military has no right to make itself the key to national survival, claiming our ultimate obedience. Whenever the military establishment is not accountable to the citizenry, our nation becomes a "national security state," increasing the likelihood of acts of lawlessness and terrorism.

We are secure only in covenant with God:

"Some boast of chariots and some of horses, but we boast of the name of God."(Ps 20:7)

C. We believe that business has no right to sell itself as the hope of our human welfare, claiming our ultimate trust. Business often destroys nature, raising havoc with the earth's limited resources. Business often demeans human dignity by making profits more important than persons, especially in the case of women and people of color.

Human well-being depends on business sharing in God's justice struggle for all creation.

"Let the sea roar, and all its creatures, the world and those who dwell in it! God will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples in justice." (Ps. 98:7,9)

September 17, 1987

INITIAL SIGNERS OF THE LETTER

Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., Executive Director, Commission for Racial Justice, United Church of Christ.

Frederick R. Trost, President, Wisconsin Conference, United Church of Christ.

Robert McAfee Brown, Professor Emeritus, Pacific School of Religion.

Frederick Herzog, Professor, Duke University Divinity School.

M. Douglas Meeks, Professor, Eden Theological Seminary.

Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, Professor, Chicago Theological Seminary.

Gayraud S. Wilmore, Professor, New York Theological Seminary.

Dr. Edward M. Huenemann, Director, Theology in Global Context Association.

(Organizational affiliations listed for identification purposes only. For a complete list of signers, contact CALC, 198 Broadway, Rm 302, New York, NY 10038)
What You and Your Congregation Can Do

Educate

Begin by raising the level of understanding among your friends, family and congregation on the many issues raised by the Iran-contra scandal and the Christic Institute's Contragate Project. Consider the following suggestions:

1. Use the "Resources for Reflection" provided in this packet as a focus for personal reflection and prayer. Use the suggested themes and readings to spark discussions with friends and family, on the questions of government morality and citizen responsibility in a democracy.

2. Integrate these issues into an upcoming religious service. Adapt the liturgical resources and scriptural readings provided for use in worship. Lead a sermon or prayer on one aspect of the issue.

3. Form a study group to meet regularly to reflect and discuss in-depth these issues and their theological implications. Your congregation's social concerns committee, Bible study class, or another already existing group may be interested in taking this on as a topic for study and reflection. Use the outline and suggested resources as a guideline, blending topical readings with scripture, and discussion with reflection.

4. Order "The Shadow Government", the Christic Institute's one-hour video on Contragate. Invite your friends and neighbors to view the video at your home, and encourage discussion after the showing. Circulate the tape to others in your congregation who might be interested in providing their own home video showings. Arrange to show the video at a "family night dinner" or other regular gathering at your church or synagogue; or offer to show it at an adult Sunday school class. Consider showing the video at a local or regional religious conference. For other video suggestions, see the Resources section on page 28, or contact the Christic Institute.

5. Arrange to have an article on the Christic Institute's Contragate Project published in the newsletter or bulletin of your church or synagogue. Use the sample article on page 31 provided for this purpose, adapting it to suit your purposes, or write your own.

Organize

Once you have laid a foundation of understanding among concerned members of your congregation, consider ways that you can respond in faith to these pressing issues. Several suggestions are outlined below:

1. Organize a public event for your congregation and the larger community. Arrange to bring a Christic Institute speaker for the event. Consider including in the format a video-showing, a prayer vigil, a panel or debate, and/or testimonies from community members on why this issue has moved them to act. To broaden your outreach, join with other congregations to co-sponsor the event as a religious coalition.

2. Meet with local religious leaders and provide them with information on the
Contragate Project. Ask them to sign on or endorse your statement of support. Discuss the many ways they might assist you in bringing this issue to the larger community.

3. Organize a letter-writing campaign to Congress within your congregation and community. Call on Congress to begin thorough investigations into the unresolved issues of the scandal and the allegations outlined in the Christic Institute lawsuit. You may want to focus on one particular area, such as the contra-drug connection. (See Call to Congress, p. 26) Set up letter-writing tables at appropriate times and places at your synagogue or church, as well as in key locations within your community, such as shopping malls. Provide passers-by with background information and a sample letter; and offer to mail the letters they write.

4. Send a delegation from your congregation to visit your members of Congress at their home offices. Include several religious leaders in your delegation. Come prepared, with a list of your questions and concerns. Contact our Outreach Department for an update and specific action plans. Be clear about what type of action you want your legislator to take. Leave written materials summarizing your points with the staff. Follow up on your visit with a letter.

5. Introduce a resolution or statement of support for the Christic Institute's Contragate Project. A resolution may be endorsed on a number of levels -- from the local congregation, to various structures within a denomination, to a local or state council of churches, etc. For a sample, see page 27.

6. Approach the various bodies within the hierarchy of your denomination or faith group. Provide information on the Christic Institute case and related issues to such bodies as the General Board of your church, or your local and state councils of churches. Ask that they: a) sponsor a series of educational events; b) issue a call to Congress urging thorough investigations; d) disseminate information on the Christic Institute lawsuit to all member congregations, with a cover letter urging congregations to take action; d) pass a resolution of support, sending copies to local media; and/or e) question the candidates (see below). Contact our office for more ideas.

7. Question the candidates. Become involved in the electoral process by posing pointed questions on the issues raised by the scandal, in local forums, candidate debates or letters to congressional and presidential candidates. Before casting a ballot in November, learn the positions of each of the candidates on these critical issues. Use the brochure "Contragate, the Constitution, and the 1988 Elections", available from the Christic Institute, as a resource. Encourage local or state-wide religious coalitions to formally question the candidates, requesting responses from each candidate, to be disseminated throughout the congregational networks and to your local media.

8. Contact local members of our Communications Alliance, as well as other organizations that might be interested in these issues. Call a meeting to discuss the possibilities for educating and organizing in your community.

9. Organize a local campaign to expose the deadly connection between our foreign policy and the drug epidemic. Create a coalition of religious groups to provide leadership on this pressing moral question. Use the Christic Institute's "Contra-Drug Report" as a resource. Approach groups in your community that might share your concern about the issues, such as PTA's, health care providers and youth workers.

10. Use local media to spread the word on these issues. Write a letter-to-the-editor or op-ed. Plan a meeting between your local paper's editorial board and members of your congregation.

11. Contact bookstores and libraries in your church and community to find out if they would be interested in stocking this packet and/or other Christic Institute materials.

12. Take a special collection from concerned members of your congregation, to help with the costs of the Christic Institute's work.
In order to read the nation's pulse on the moral and policy issues raised by ContraGate, members of Congress need to hear from their constituents. The faith community has historically played a leadership role in raising the critical moral questions facing our nation. Our response now is critical. The following sample message may be adapted for letters to your members of Congress. Be sure to make the letter your own, adding questions of interest to you, to which your legislators must respond. Send copies to appropriate congressional committees.

Dear Representative/Senator,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the continuing and unresolved issues behind the Iran-contra scandal. The record of deceit and illegality that has emerged points to a serious constitutional and foreign policy crisis. The existence of what journalist Bill Moyers has called a "secret government" behind the scandal, operating covertly and illegally to carry out foreign policy behind the backs of Congress and the American people, poses a clear danger to our democratic institutions. We look to you, as our elected representative, to hold those involved accountable for their illicit activities.

I am interested in the ways in which you and other members of Congress intend to restore the rule of law to our foreign policy, and to expose and curb the domestic costs of these covert operations. Specifically, the mounting evidence of drug smuggling into the U.S. by the contras and their supporters, released in press reports and testimony from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, demands an immediate response. When our government deals with drug traffickers in pursuit of an illegal foreign policy, then this scandal is part of a greater moral crisis. Will the Congress undertake a thorough investigation into these and other unanswered questions of the Iran/contra scandal? What other measures will be taken to resolve this crisis? I await your response to these pressing questions. Finally, please lend your full support to the investigations underway in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Judiciary Committee.

Sincerely yours,

(Your Name, Name of Church or Synagogue)

House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 224-3121

US Senate
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3121
A Resolution of Support

The following resolution was adopted by the 1987 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Submitted by the Advisory Council on Church and Society, the resolution provides one example of how members of the faith community can provide moral and spiritual leadership in the midst of this constitutional and foreign policy crisis.

Whereas, events in 1985 and 1986 involving the sale of arms to Iran and the diversion of funds to the Nicaraguan contras have raised basic ethical and political questions about the course and conduct of United States foreign policy and the accountability and integrity of governmental processes; and

Whereas, the potential implications of these events are fundamental and far-reaching, involving questions about the moral presuppositions of US foreign policy, the rule of law in the conduct of US foreign policy, the privatization of US foreign and military policy, the control and accountability of instrumentalities of policy and governance, the role and responsibility of Congress in the oversight of intelligence activity and the use of war powers, and the credibility of US anti-terrorism policy, US relations with Israel, the nature of US relations with Iran and Iraq, and the role of the United States in the war between them; and

Whereas, the various investigations into these events are still continuing and there is as yet no assurance of full information about either the events or their implications; and

Whereas, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) has deep historic mission ties to the nations and peoples of the Middle East and has expressed concern that US policy contribute to development of peace and justice in that region; and

Whereas, the General Assembly has also repeatedly expressed concern over current US policy in Central America, including specific opposition to actions such as those it appears may have been taken contrary to law;

Therefore, the 199th General Assembly (1987) expresses deep concern over the revelations of the secret transfer of arms by the United States Government to Iran and the diversion of funds realized by their sale to the contra forces seeking to overthrow the government of Nicaragua:

- Urges Congress to insure that its investigations include not only matters related to violations of law but also full examination of the apparent policy that led to those actions, namely the evident but officially denied commitment to overthrow an elected government in violation of treaty obligations of the UN and the OAS.

- Particularly urges investigation of the charges made by the Christic Institute's lawsuit that massive amounts of drugs have been smuggled into our country to illegally fund the contras and other covert operations; and that this activity has been planned and conducted by a secret team of former government officials and CIA operatives who have been active over 25 years.
Resources for Study

The following outline provides one way to isolate and examine the key issues embedded in the Iran-contra scandal and the Christic Institute lawsuit. For those who have been introduced to the Institute's case and want to deepen their understanding of its implications, this outline allows for in-depth study into four critical issue areas. A short introduction frames each subject area. A selected list of available print and audiovisual resources is also provided, drawn from independent investigations into the scandal and related issues conducted by congressional committees, policy analysts, journalists, and public interest organizations such as the Christic Institute. It is the convergence of evidence emerging from these various investigations that demands our attention and urgent consideration. For further suggestions, or more information on how to obtain these resources, please contact us at the Christic Institute.

I. The La Penca Bombing and Investigation

The La Penca bombing is the point of origin for the Christic Institute lawsuit. The story behind this bombing of an international press conference—which killed eight people and wounded two dozen more—is a study in the criminal conduct of clandestine networks such as the private contra supply operation.

The reports of the ensuing investigation by US journalists Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, who were injured by the bombing, make the criminal activities of such private networks immediately real and comprehensible to concerned US citizens: the bombing provides a lens to understand the complex issues raised by such covert operations.

Resources


II. The Private Networks

Operating behind the La Penca bombing, the illicit Iranian arms sales and the secret contra supply effort were interlocking clandestine networks of private citizens, including arms and drug dealers, mercenaries, and former military and intelligence officials. There is a long history of US government
agencies contracting private citizens—including drug dealers—to carry out foreign policy missions. The Iran-contra investigations revealed that private citizens such as Richard Secord were "off-the-books" operatives for the Reagan White House's Iran-contra arms deals.

The Christic Institute lawsuit charges that the "enterprise" described by Secord in testimony before the Iran-contra committees constitutes an unlawful foreign policy apparatus, that has engaged in covert operations involving gun and drug smuggling, money laundering and political assassination for over two decades.

Covert private networks such as the enterprise pose a direct threat to our democratic institutions. Unaccountable within the democratic system, they represent a dangerous "privatization" of US foreign policy, through the continuing use of non-governmental organizations or personnel to carry out policy initiatives.

Resources


III. The Shadow Government

The partnership between unelected officials of US intelligence agencies and clandestine private networks has created a virtual "shadow government," operating dangerously parallel to—and independent of—our democratic institutions. In carrying out secret foreign policy initiatives against the will of Congress and the American people, members of this shadow government have placed themselves above the law in the name of "national security."

The existence of a shadow government that not only sanctions and shields the criminal activities of private networks, but engages in its own unauthorized covert operations, reveals a broader constitutional crisis. Covert operations such as the illegal contra supply program deny Congress its constitutional authority to declare war and to appropriate funds. The layers of secrecy and deception surrounding covert operations violate Congress' constitutional mandate to oversee Executive Branch agencies such as the National Security Council and the CIA, thus distorting our system of checks and balances.

The institutions and policies of the shadow government can be traced to the National Security Act of 1947 and the early years of the Cold War; the driving force behind its covert activities has been an interventionist foreign policy.

The long history of activities and abuses by members of the shadow government suggest that the Iran-contra scandal is not an aberration involving a few "overzealous" US officials, but is deeply rooted in particular US policies and structures. The scandal has now opened the door for a thorough public examination of the origins, institutions, policies and functions of the shadow government. Citizens must begin to challenge the use of covert operations as an instrument of foreign policy, and to redefine "national security" and America's proper role in the world.

Resources


to obstruct law enforcement investigations into contra drug and gun running.

**Origins of the Lawsuit**

The lawsuit originates from parallel investigations into the private contra aid network by Christic Institute General Counsel Daniel Sheehan; by journalists Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, the two plaintiffs represented by the Institute; and by a small group of investigative reporters in the United States.

On May 30, 1984, a terrorist bomb exploded during a press conference held by dissident contra leader Eden Pastora in La Penca, Nicaragua. Eight people -- including reporter Linda Frazier, a United States citizen -- were killed. Two dozen were seriously wounded.

Tony Avirgan, who covered the press conference for ABC television, was among the badly injured. After recovering from his wounds months later, he joined his wife and colleague, Martha Honey, to investigate the forces behind the La Penca bombing.

Together, the two journalists discovered a shadowy network of CIA agents, contra leaders, and mercenaries based on Costa Rican farm property owned by John Hull, a North American rancher and CIA operative. This group, according to contra sources, planned the La Penca bombing.

Christic Institute General Counsel Daniel Sheehan was also investigating the activities of these men on the "southern front" of the war against Nicaragua. In early 1986, he was told by a former U.S. military intelligence officer that secret contra support operations were managed by retired CIA and military officers such as Richard Secord, John Singlaub, Theodore Shackley, and Thomas Clines.

Sheehan learned that these men--years before the Reagan Administration came to power--had created their own private, "off-the-books" weapons companies and secret bank accounts to conduct covert operations abroad. Ironically, many of these men were forced out of government by the Carter Administration after being linked to Edwin Wilson, the renegade ex-CIA officer who sold weapons and terrorist training to Muammar el-Qaddafi. President Carter and his CIA Director Stansfield Turner "cleaned house" at the CIA by dismissing 820 individuals from the agency's Operations Directorate in the late 1970s.

The parallel investigations by the Christic Institute and Avirgan and Honey were joined in May 1986 when the Institute filed its civil lawsuit on behalf of the two journalists.

**The Contra-Drug link**

The most startling revelation of the Institute's lawsuit is that the contras and their supporters have fueled this nation's drug epidemic by financing their secret war in part through narcotics smuggling into the United States. Planeloads of cocaine were flown from the Medellin cartel in Colombia, which is responsible for 80 percent of the cocaine smuggled into this country. The drugs were taken to airstrips on John Hull's property in Costa Rica, then shipped to the US. Profits from the drug sales were used to buy weapons for the contras.

Former contra drug pilot Michael Tolliver testified to Institute attorneys that he flew contra weapons to Honduras and Costa Rica under the direction of veteran CIA operatives Felix Rodriguez and Rafael "Chi Chi" Quintero, and returned to the United States with shipments of cocaine and marijuana. He said he once returned with over 25,000 pounds of marijuana, which he flew directly into Florida's Homestead Air Force Base, where the drugs were unloaded.

Two current congressional investigations lend support to the lawsuit's allegations of contra drug trafficking. The Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations chaired by Senator John Kerry (D-MA), and the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, chaired by Rep. William Hughes (D-NJ), are both investigating contra-drug links. Last February, a former money launderer for Colombia's Medellin drug cartel testified before the Senate subcommittee that he
arranged the transfer of $10 million in
cocaine profits to the contras between 1982
and 1985. He said the transfers were made
with the help of veteran CIA agent Felix
Rodriguez.

That testimony adds further questions about
Vice-President George Bush's role in the
Iran-contra affair. Bush met personally with
Rodriguez three times, and, according to the
Vice-President's own office notes, discussed
"resupply of the contras" with Rodriguez in
the spring of 1986. These meetings took place
while Bush chaired the Reagan
Administration's national anti-drug task force.

A New Watergate?

During the Iran-contra hearings last summer,
Richard Secord dismissed the Christic
Institute's lawsuit as "the most outrageous
fairy tale anyone's ever read." However,
shortly thereafter, the congressional
committee learned that Secord and Lt. Col.
Oliver North diverted $130,000 of the Iranian
arms profits from a Swiss bank account to
discredit the Institute and its investigation.
The lawsuit, Secord told the Washington Post,
threatened to "knock out" the illegal military
aid network to support the contras.

The domestic face of the Iran-contra scandal
clearly resembles Watergate. The Nixon
Administration's "plumber's unit," it should be
remembered, was created not just to spy on
the Democrats, but to "fix" leaks about secret
White House bombing and invasion plans in
Southeast Asia. Now, according to the Wall
Street Journal, Independent Counsel
Lawrence E. Walsh has asked a grand jury to
explore allegations that Secord and North
"ran an illegal domestic spying operation
targeted at some Reagan Administration
critics," such as the Christic Institute.

The Institute's lawsuit and investigation
confirm that many questions about the Iran-
contra scandal remain unanswered. In the
name of "national security," our government
has conducted secret wars, traded with
terrorists, broken laws, obstructed justice,
tolerated drug trafficking, and deceived
Congress and the public. The public now has
the right--indeed, the duty--to demand
complete answers to this unresolved scandal.

The American people cannot allow the books
to be closed on the Iran-contra affair. We
must recognize the pressing need and the
historic opportunity--created in the 200th
anniversary year of our Constitution--for
establishing an enlightened foreign policy
and preserving our democratic system.

For more information on the Christic
Institute lawsuit and how you can help,
contact: The Christic Institute, 1324 North
Capitol St. NW, Washington, DC 20002 (202)
797-8106. Call our 24-hour Contragate
Hotline at (202) 667-2634 for the latest news
from our investigation.

The flame of hope, the Omega of
resistance and the circle of unity make
up the Christic Institute symbol.
A Call to Action From the Faith Community

"The Christic Institute, through its Contragate Project, issues a challenge to us as people of faith and as United States citizens: will we hold accountable those who break our laws, violating the most fundamental human rights of citizens of another country? This litigation calls on the American legal system to apply fundamental principles of justice to reign in a renegade foreign policy."

Rabbi David Saperstein
Religious Action Center
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

"The Contragate Project is an exceptional opportunity for peacemaking. It is our best chance to hold accountable in a court of law those men who have defied the will of the American people, and the laws of the United States, to wage a war of terror against the people of Nicaragua. The Contragate Project will bring the facts about the criminal conspiracy into the open, so that the American people can act to prevent a recurrence of this shameful war."

Bishop Dale White
United Methodist Church

"The Christic Institute has done this country a great service by investigating and exposing violations of law carried out by the contra network."

Reverend Jesse Jackson

"Those responsible for corrupting our youth and imperiling our future through the deadly merger of drugs, greed and militarism mortgage the fate of generations with the high interest of death and destruction. They must be brought to justice. SCLC wholeheartedly supports the Christic Institute in its stand for truth and justice."

Reverend Joseph Lowery
President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference

"This is, by far, the most important case we've ever undertaken. The public policy implications are enormous. If the members of this secret network can conduct these activities -- arms and drug-dealing, assassination programs -- with impunity even after the recent revelations of the Iran-contra scandal, then I think democracy in this country is in very serious trouble."

Rev. William Davis, S.J.
Co-founder, Christic Institute

JOIN THE THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS WHO WANT TO LEARN THE WHOLE TRUTH.

For more information, please mail this coupon to The Christic Institute, 1324 North Capitol Street, NW, Washington, DC 20002.

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Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution of $__________ to support the Christic Institute's investigation and lawsuit.

Yes, I want a 1988 subscription to Christic Institute publications. For $20, I will receive regular issues of the Contragate Alert and Convergence newsletters and all special mailings this year.

_________ Send me additional copies of "Contragate: A Moral Challenge to People of Faith." $7.

_________ Send me the new, Court Declaration of the Christic Institute, Inside the Shadow Government, outlining the history and activities of the secret network. $15.