

Iranamok operations to be legalized?

by Herbert Quinde

On Aug. 3, the Senate voted up S. 2834, the bill which is the intelligence appropriations authorization for fiscal year 1991. The bill now goes to the House.

As passed, S. 2834, through bipartisan agreement, would make legal "the use of third countries or private parties outside normal U.S. government controls" to fund covert operations or carry them out on behalf of the United States, as was illegally done during the infamous Iran-Contra affair. Besides violating the basic sovereignty of the U.S. by leaving it vulnerable to manipulation by a foreign nation or well-endowed private interest, the bill would have Congress surrender its "power of the purse" and oversight function, thereby eliminating any form of checks and balances.

A Senate report prepared in order to explain the bill states that the intent of S. 2834 is not to use the "lessons of recent experience" from the disastrous Iran-Contra scandal to curb Executive branch abuses and counterproductive covert operations, but "to establish a more effective statutory framework for Executive-Legislative cooperation in the field of intelligence." The bill, in effect, would make lawful the content of the unconstitutional Reagan-Bush administration Executive Order 12333 which provided the mandate for Project Democracy, otherwise known as the "secret government," operations. The bill explicitly adopts the language of E.O. 12333 in permitting the President to use any Executive branch agency to carry out an intelligence operation, domestic or foreign. Current law gives the President the right to deploy *only* the CIA to carry out covert operations.

A hypothetical application of the law might involve, for example, U.S. complicity in the assassination of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein by a team of Syrian hitmen. According to U.S. intelligence and law enforcement sources, Syria's intelligence service, which routinely funds terrorist groups that have murdered American GIs in Europe, finances its operations through trafficking in narcotics grown in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. But if monies derived from poisoning America's youth can facilitate a U.S. foreign policy objective, it is considered all the better.

Unfortunately, such logic is the net wisdom gained by the nation's lawmakers from the slimy affair associated with Lt. Col. Oliver North. It comes as no surprise since the congressional investigation was a whitewash. Nonetheless,

two years later, accusations and evidence continue to mount that North and his Project Democracy cronies were knee-deep in the international narcotics trade. Now, it seems, Congress is on its way to passing legislation which would make pushing dope "legal," if it is "necessary to support the foreign policy objectives of the United States and . . . important to the national security of the United States."

Ends justify the means

There are ample precedents during the Iran-Contra fiasco to document that the Reagan-Bush administration rationalized that the ends justify the means. During North's trial last year, documents were released that portrayed his soliciting arms from intelligence agents of the Red Chinese People's Liberation Army for the Contras. Communist China is known to export 40% of the heroin that hits the streets of U.S. urban centers each year.

Did North know what he was doing? His own diaries, recently declassified, answer in the affirmative. In entry after entry, North records in his own handwriting the evidence that his "patriotic" operatives in Central America were dealing in dope. In a Jan. 14, 1985 entry, North seems to be covering up for CIA operative John Hull. An American rancher in Costa Rica, Hull had an airfield on his property which was used to fly in arms for the Contras and fly out dope on the return trips, according to a Senate investigation. The entry reads "Rob Owen—John Hull—no drug connection—believes." Owen was one of North's bagmen to the Contras.

The Hull story was not the first time North and his co-conspirators had evidence of dirty dealings. On Sept. 26, 1984, a documented case of dope pushers financing the Contras was made available to FBI special agent George Kiszynski, of the FBI foreign counterintelligence division in Miami. Reportedly, the report was made available to North's colleague, Oliver "Buck" Revell, then the number-two official at the FBI.

Special Agent Kiszynski had been given a copy of a report by a Miami Police Department investigator who interviewed a group of anti-Castro terrorists. The report, subsequently filed as defense evidence in an Iran-Contra related court case, provided extensive details concerning narcotics trafficker Francisco Chanes.

According to the Miami Police Department report, "Subject Chanes was giving financial support to anti-Castro groups and the Nicaraguan Contra guerrillas; the monies come from narcotics transactions." The report continues by describing that two of Chanes's anti-communist dope pushers, Pedro Gil and Rolando Valdez, "are associated with an American who owns a ranch in the northern part of Costa Rica near the Nicaraguan border. The owner of the ranch is known as John Hulls [sic] and the ranch has an airstrip. In October 1983 a load of ammunition and firearms was unloaded on that airstrip."

The Senate bill would now make such actions legal.