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Disturbing the Peace

I came down here to raise hell," said Steven Carr, 26, as he lit up a Marlboro in the visitors' area of La Reforma prison outside San José, the capital of Costa Rica.

Carr said he came to Costa Rica "to go to war....My brother was in Vietnam, and I was really pissed that I didn't get to go....I grew up with John Wayne movies. I was in ROTC, the Civil Air Patrol, and I was weaned on that stuff."

Carr got tired of waiting for his chance at combat, so last March he decided to become a real-life Rambo and traveled to Costa Rica to fight "the communists."

He wanted to join the contras—the U.S.-backed rebels trying to overthrow the leftist Sandinista government of Nicaragua, which lies on Costa Rica's northern border.

For six weeks, Carr lived out his dreams. He was armed and transported to the contra camps by anti-communist groups he said were led by Cuban exiles and a farmer from Indiana who Carr and Glibbery said was a CIA liaison in Costa Rica.

The high point of Carr's short-lived career came around mid-April, when he claims to have participated in a raid on a Sandinista camp a day and a half's march inside Nicaragua. He thinks about 30 Sandinista troops may have been killed.

Carr believes bad publicity about that raid may have contributed to the narrow defeat of one of President Reagan's requests for aid to the contras last April.

He added he believes the defeat of the contra aid ultimately may have led the CIA to arrange for his arrest. Carr said that the day after the House vote, he and four other foreign-born adventurers were sent by an alleged CIA liaison to a contra camp in Costa Rica, where they were arrested hours later by Costa Rican public security forces.

Some people dismiss Carr as nothing more than a crazy adventurer, but his story has serious implications. He is a link in a chain of private groups and indi-

viduals in the United States who stepped in to help the contras in Costa Rica and Honduras after Congress refused to extend funding for the rebel movement in mid-1984. These private groups have provided the contras with an estimated \$25 million in arms, ammunition and supplies since then. Some organizations also are sending men to train and fight with the rebels. Their leaders—who include retired military officers—also pass military intelligence and other information to top administration officials.

Leaders of some groups say they plan to continue their efforts, even though Congress approved \$27 million in so-called "humanitarian" or non-military

aid to the contras this summer. Critics of aid to the contras contend that no matter what it's called, the aid package is a back-door way of funding the contras' military effort. But the private groups supporting the contras say Congress hasn't gone far enough. They say their help continues to be needed because the CIA and the Pentagon are still prohibited from providing direct military aid to the contras.

For example, retired Army Maj. Gen. John Singlaub—who runs the most effective fundraising operation—says private efforts are still necessary to fill the gap left when the CIA was prohibited by Congress from giving assistance to the rebels.

Singlaub and other private contra supporters say their actions are encouraged and supported by the president. Reagan has spoken openly for months about the need to remove the Sandinista government in "its present structure," and the administration has supported the

contras' efforts to overthrow the Nicaraguan government since the early 1980s. The White House defends its actions by saying the Sandinistas are a repressive, anti-democratic regime committed to exporting revolution throughout Central America.

Those who oppose aid to the contras believe it involves the United States in an undeclared war against a sovereign nation, and that it helps fund rebels implicated in numerous atrocities.

Some Members of Congress say the "privatization" of the war, accomplished with the Reagan administration's encouragement, is circumventing the congressional ban on U.S. military assistance to the contras. They say some of these

activities may violate the spirit—if not the letter—of the Neutrality Act, which was designed to keep private citizens from becoming involved in conflicts with countries with which we are at peace.

Rep. Jim Leach (R-Iowa), a member of the congressional Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus, calls these private groups "international vigilantes" who are engaging in "privately funded terrorism." He warns that the administration's decision to allow private groups to "take foreign policy into their own hands" by supporting the contras could have grave consequences for the United States.

What would happen, he asks, if the United States decided to negotiate with the Sandinistas, and the contras and their private U.S. supporters didn't want to go along? "What we've done is unleashed a force that's accountable to nobody,"

Leach says.

A congressional staffer who works on Central American issues adds, "Can you imagine what these private [groups] would say if Jane Fonda and leftist groups in the U.S. started raising money to buy arms and ammunition for the Sandinistas? They'd be howling in outrage. Yet that's exactly what they're doing for the contras."

Interviews with contra supporters in the United States and Costa Rica raise other troubling questions. One is whether the CIA is still assisting the contras, despite the fact that Congress—through what is known as the Boland amendment—barred all government entities involved in intelligence activities from giving military or paramilitary assistance to the contras.

Another is whether the White House's National Security Council (NSC) is also circumventing the Boland amendment by coordinating or directing the contra activities and by channeling funds to the contras. The NSC, according to its literature, advises the president on integrating domestic, foreign and military policies relating to national security, and also "provides direction to the CIA."

In early August *The New York Times* reported that the NSC had been advising the contras about military operations and ways to contact private U.S. funding

sources. After the *Times* disclosure, some Members of Congress said they believed the NSC's actions may have violated the Boland amendment.

House Intelligence Committee member Rep. George Brown Jr. (D-Calif.) said, "It's my opinion that they're in violation of the law and the clear intent of the Congress," although he acknowledged that the administration may have found a "loophole" in the law.

Ultimately, these activities raise a much larger question: Do they represent a new way for our government to use private citizens as surrogates in a military conflict in total disregard of Congress' constitutional responsibilities to declare war and to determine whether funds should be provided for U.S. military activities?

When he left his Naples, Fla. home last March for Costa Rica, Steven Carr had no idea that the events that followed would have international repercussions. All he was looking for was a little excitement.

Carr talked about his experiences in late July during an interview at La Reforma prison, 15 miles outside the Costa Rican capital of San José.

He had been there since late April, when he was arrested with four other men—another American, two Britons and a Frenchman—who allegedly were also working with the contras. The five were charged with possession of explosives. A trial date had not been set at the time of the interview.

Carr and one of the Britons, Peter Glibbery, met me in the visitors' area of the medium security section of the prison. No guards accompanied the two men. They simply walked into the room—a large, cheery office—sat down at a wooden table and started to talk.

Carr immediately made several things clear. His checkered past includes military service, a short stint as a door-to-door magazine salesman in Bangor, Maine and a criminal record. He was on probation for grand theft when he came to Costa Rica. Carr and Glibbery said they are not mercenaries. "We didn't expect pay," Glibbery said. "It would have been nice; I wouldn't have refused it," Carr added. He said he spent over \$1,000 of his own money to come down to Costa Rica.

"We were just stupid ideological people" who wanted to fight communism.

Carr's and Glibbery's experience with the contras is a story of arms smuggling and alleged Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) covert activities. The men said these activities included discussions about having the contras carry out terrorist operations in Costa Rica and blaming it on the Sandinistas.

Carr's saga began in June 1984, when he visited Costa Rica for the first time.

His stepfather, a Naples businessman, had some friends who told him to contact Bruce Jones, an American who owns two farms and an interest in a citrus nursery in northern Costa Rica. Jones was later declared *persona non grata* and forced to leave the country because *Life* magazine published an article earlier

this year identifying him as a "key" CIA liaison with the contras.

Carr said Jones told him he couldn't join the guerrillas until he had learned Spanish, so Carr returned to the United States.

Carr said he corresponded with Jones and that last January he met him in Miami, where Jones led Carr to members of Brigade 2506, a contra group led by Cuban exiles, including sev-

eral survivors of the abortive 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. Leaders of the group wanted to establish a base camp in southern Nicaragua, and Carr was to show them how to set up perimeter defenses and stage raids.

First, however, he helped them obtain weapons. U.S. law forbids American citizens who aren't licensed from exporting arms, but Carr was undeterred. He said that during the weeks he spent in Miami, he helped collect 50-caliber machine guns, M-16 rifles and a 20mm cannon.

He said they also got lethal equipment from Tom Posey, the head of Civilian Military Assistance, an Alabama-based group that recruits people to fight with the contras. Peter Glibbery says it was Posey who helped him get to Costa Rica.

Posey has acknowledged to reporters that he provides the contras with fighting men, but denied that he deals in weapons.

Carr said he also got help obtaining weapons in Miami from another American—Robert Thompson, a former Florida law enforcement officer who was later arrested and jailed with Carr in Costa Rica.

Carr said Thompson told him he had been with the largest contra group, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), in Honduras the previous year.

Carr said that while he and Thompson were in Miami, Thompson ran into some Dade County, Fla. police officers who were off-duty. "They said, 'We'll bring some stuff that we've got in our clo-

sets at home,' so they brought us a case of shotgun shells, gas masks, flight jackets, flares."

Thompson denies this. He said in an interview that he came to Costa Rica to write freelance newspaper articles about the contras and was using his time in prison to write fiction. He has issued a statement calling Carr and Glibbery "crazy people" and disassociating himself from their statements.

Carr flew to Costa Rica in early March. He said he zipped through customs with the help of someone who had been associated with the country's public security forces.

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José, Carr went to Muelle San Carlos, a settlement about two hours north of the capital. There he picked up his weapons and supplies, which he said had been shuttled from El Salvador by private plane to a remote dirt airstrip in Costa Rica.

Glibbery was already in Costa Rica when he met up with John Hull, a farmer and landowner who Glibbery said acted as a CIA liaison in Costa Rica.

Hull, originally an Indiana farmer, is said to be a naturalized Costa Rican citizen who has extensive holdings in northern Costa Rica, including a citrus nursery that he owns along with Bruce Jones.

The Life magazine reporter who wrote the story about Jones' alleged CIA involvement said in a recent interview that several sources in Costa Rica told him that Hull also was a CIA liaison. Sev-

eral contra representatives in San José confirmed that Hull works with them.

Hull could not be reached for comment. He broke one appointment for an interview at his Costa Rican farm and did not respond to several phone calls. In the past, he has told reporters that he supports the contras' cause and allows wounded rebels to be evacuated from his airstrip. But he has denied working for the CIA and supplying the contras with weapons and equipment.

A spokesperson at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va. said, "As a matter of policy we don't confirm or deny allegations of agency employment. [Furthermore,] if you recall, Congress cut off CIA involvement with the contras, and we adhere to our legal obligations."

Glibbery said Hull told him that he finances contra operations in Costa Rica and southern Nicaragua with \$10,000 a month sent by the National Security Council. Glibbery said Hull told him the money is deposited in a Miami, Fla. bank and that Hull once joked "God help me if the IRS finds out about it."

When advised of this allegation, a White House official laughed and said, "The NSC has not sent \$10,000 or any other amount of money" to finance contra activities in Central America. "That's totally absurd," the official added. "We don't do those kinds of things."

Glibbery said that at one point Hull took him to a sawmill in northern Costa Rica and showed him a stash of M79 grenades and land mines. Glibbery thought the mines might be useful for the contras,

need [them] to do an embassy later on. ... I'll never forget those words."

Glibbery and Carr added that Hull at one point discussed "blowing a few holes in Los Chiles," a town in northern Costa Rica, and making it look as if the Sandinistas had carried out the attack. The implications of such an action are especially disturbing in light of President Reagan's statements that he believes Nicaragua is a terrorist nation. The administration is considering retal-

iating against the Sandinistas for any terrorist incidents in Central America.

Carr said Hull became more cautious as the congressional vote concerning giving aid to the contras approached last April. The vote was expected to be very close, and Carr said Hull was concerned that negative publicity about contra activities might cause representatives who were undecided about the aid package to vote against it.

Carr said that for this reason Hull decided a contra raid on the Sandinista out-

post of La Esperanza should not take place. But Carr said he went along when one of the Cubans decided to carry out the raid anyway. He said he and about 20 rebels marched to La Esperanza, fired rocket-propelled grenades at the Sandinistas while they were eating dinner, and may have killed about 30 Nicaraguans.

Carr said he believes the raid was the beginning of the end of his contra career. He said bad publicity about the raid may have contributed to the narrow de-

feat of the contra aid package in the House two weeks later. Carr and Glibbery said that the day after the House vote, Hull instructed all five of the foreigners who were with the contras to go to a contra camp inside Costa Rica. There they were arrested by the Costa Rican Rural Guard.

Carr said he believes Hull set them up because the CIA regarded them as loose cannons. "I feel John Hull had us set up because the CIA wanted us out of the way," Carr said.

He added that he and Glibbery kept silent after their arrest because they believed Hull would help get them a lawyer who would quickly obtain their release. When this did not happen, the two men began telling their story to Costa Rican reporters.

Carr and Glibbery may cast themselves as idealistic adventurers, but they represent a movement that has become a major force in the Central American conflict. The two men are part of an informal network of private individuals

and groups who have been arming, training and fighting with the rebels since Congress refused to extend funding for the contras in mid-1984.

One of the key people in this network is citrus farmer Bruce Jones, the man who led Carr to Brigade 2506 in Miami.

Jones himself was identified as a "key" CIA liaison last spring by Life magazine, which also printed photographs of Jones training contras on his farm.

After seeing the magazine, Costa Rican officials declared Jones persona non grata and said Jones, who was in the U.S. at the time, could not return to Costa Rica.

Jones freely admitted in an interview that he provided logistical support for the rebels, but denied he worked for the CIA. Steve Robinson, the Life editor who worked on the story, said Jones' CIA connection was confirmed by a number of sources in Costa Rica. "Not one iota of information has passed across my desk that would refute a single thing in the story," Robinson added.

Since he couldn't return to Costa Rica,

Jones settled in a middle class subdivision carved out of the desert on the south side of Tucson, Ariz. Jones does not look like a man involved in international intrigue. When we met at his home for an interview recently, he was dressed in camouflage shorts and an open-necked shirt.

Jones said he spends his days managing a pistachio nursery, keeping in touch with Hull about the citrus business and raising money to provide weapons, ammunition and supplies to the contras.

He recently helped organize the Tucson chapter of the U.S. Council for World Freedom, the American arm of the World Anti-Communist League, whose leader is retired Army Maj. Gen. John Singlaub, the most influential U.S. fundraiser for the contras.

Jones said the group is providing information about the Central American situation and is raising money for the rebels. Ironically, Jones said that the Life piece has helped rather than hurt his current efforts to aid the rebels. After the article appeared, people called him saying, "Here's \$100" or "Here's \$5,000."

Jones said his group also plans to provide food, clothing and medicine to the contras. Jones pointed out that such non-military assistance—whether provided by the U.S. government or private groups—helps the contras militarily because the money the rebels ordinarily would spend on these items can be used to purchase weapons.

Jones said he is now coordinating his activities with Singlaub. In fact, Jones

met with Singlaub one day in July when the retired officer visited Tucson to speak to the "River Rats," a group of U.S. fighter pilots who fought in Vietnam and were meeting to dedicate a park at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. Jones said he and Singlaub were going to discuss forming a national organization to coordinate private U.S. fundraising efforts so that arms, ammunition and equipment could be channeled to the contras more effectively.

Singlaub—whose military career came to an abrupt end in 1977 after he publicly disagreed with President Carter over troop commitments in South Korea—agreed to be interviewed in Tucson following his speech to the River Rats. He is a short man who gazes intently at people he is talking to.

Singlaub spoke proudly about his work with the rebels, whom he calls "freedom fighters." He said that in the last year he has raised "tens of millions of dollars" for arms and ammunition, and millions more for non-military supplies.

Singlaub bristled at suggestions that he might be circumventing Congress with his activities. "It's our view that we are ahead of the view of the Congress," he said. "We believe that Congress was fooled by the massive disinformation program of the Sandinistas" when it refused to continue to fund the rebels in 1984.

Singlaub added that he believes the House and Senate's decision last summer to renew so-called non-military aid to the contras "was a better representation of the will of Congress. But there are some hard-core left wing [Members of Congress] like [Reps.] Michael Barnes [D-Md.] and [Edward] Boland [D-Mass.] and Ron Dellums [D-Calif.] and quite a few others that have always supported the communist organizations around the world. They tend to believe that socialism is the wave of the future and the best foreign policy of the United States is to cooperate with these socialist moods."

Singlaub said that he has assisted the contras by setting up an overseas bank account to handle weapons purchases. (U.S. law prohibits Americans who aren't licensed from sending weapons abroad.) He said that when U.S. contributors want to be assured their money will be spent on arms and ammunition, he gives them the foreign bank account number and tells them to send the money there. But he hastens to add that he makes it clear they can't claim the contributions as a tax credit.

Singlaub believes his activities have the approval of the White House and

added that he understands that President Reagan "has been informed" of what he is doing. "Now occasionally I make telephone calls to friends [in the administration] and say, 'Look old buddy, this is what we're about to do and if you have any objections to this, if you think I'm doing the wrong thing, send me a signal. Otherwise this is what I'm going to do...' and I say, 'If at any time you think I'm doing something that's dumb, send me the word.' Well, until I get some word, I'm going to continue to do what the freedom fighters want me to do."

Singlaub told one reporter that he consults with Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North, the National Security Council's liaison with the contras. North's role in providing military and fundraising advice to the contras and his visits to rebel camps in Central America have drawn heavy criticism from some Members of Congress, who say the White House has improperly used the NSC because Congress barred government entities involved in intelligence activities from helping the contras.

Singlaub said he has tried to carry out some of the functions that Congress has prohibited the CIA from performing. And he added, "Now, I'll admit that the good many years that I've had serving in the CIA, gives me a feel probably [of] what they were doing, which probably makes me more efficient."

But he denied that this violates the law, and insists neither he nor his fundraising groups have direct CIA connections. "That's absolutely absurd," he said.

Currently Singlaub says he's invited about 100 U.S. groups "with similar goals" but no "international connection" to become part of a Coalition for World Freedom. He says the coalition can help "democratic revolutions," such as the contra movement, raise funds and counter "disinformation" programs. In addition, Singlaub said he supports the work of a number of organizations concerned with Central American issues including:

Civilian Military Assistance, Decatur, Ala.—Provides supplies to the rebels and recruits people to fight with them. This is the group that Peter Glibbery said helped him get to Costa Rica.

The Western Goals Foundation, Alexandria, Va.—For the last several years the foundation has been sending "humanitarian relief supplies," such as clothing, to the contras, according to a spokesperson.

The Council for Inter-American Security, Washington, D.C.—Brings rebels to the United States to speak to different groups and arranges for journalists and others to visit with contras in Nicaragua. The Council has also helped raise money for one of the contra groups according to a spokesperson.

The American Security Council, Boston, Va.—Conducts educational and lobbying efforts regarding Central American issues, Singlaub said.

The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.—A conservative think tank, the foundation denies that it is involved in the contra movement, although it does support the ideological goals of the contras.

The Conservative Caucus, Vienna, Va.—The caucus has been lobbying hard to restore government funding for the contras.

Singlaub said he is also involved with several organizations working to help Nicaraguan refugees—people who have had to leave Nicaragua because of the conflict in that country. This type of assistance helps the contras' military effort in several ways. Many contras benefit directly because they operate out of refugee camps. An estimated 2,500 rebels

live in refugee camps in Costa Rica alone, according to a source in San José.

Also, many contras' families reportedly are refugees, and the rebels have had to allocate money to support them. Fernando "El Negro" Chamorro, leader of a contra group called the Nicaraguan Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARN), echoed the feelings of many contra leaders when he said in a recent interview, "We have had to maintain the families of the combatants and also the refugees. That is a moral responsibility." But he said when the contras get "humanitarian" aid from the United States, the contras can then use their own money to buy weapons and bullets. (See related story, page 23.)

Singlaub says he also helped the Nicaraguan Freedom Fund, a refugee assistance group originally organized by the conservative daily *The Washington Times* by putting fund officials in contact with the contras.

Singlaub is on the board of directors of yet another group—Refugee Relief International Inc. This tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation, which provides medical services to refugees, was set up with the help of the Omega Group Ltd., which publishes *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. One of the top people involved with the magazine, Col. Alexander McColl, served under Singlaub in Vietnam.

In addition to Refugee Relief International, *Soldier of Fortune* is involved in several projects that provide direct assistance to the contras.

Most people dismiss *Soldier of Fortune* as a publication for mercenaries

who love to tell war stories. But it is much more. A magazine with a slam-bang writing style that sells about 200,000 copies a month, *Soldier of Fortune* is also involved with the El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund, which provides non-lethal equipment such as boots and uniforms to the contras.

And although *Soldier of Fortune* editors insisted in an interview that they do not recruit people to fight with the contras, the magazine has been sending "private sector military professionals" to

Central America to train and advise the rebels. These men, typically ex-military personnel and *Soldier of Fortune* staffers, spend time with different contra groups and then frequently write about their experiences for the magazine.

Sometimes, however, the magazine's instructor-journalists get involved in the fighting in various places. *SOF* founder and publisher Robert Brown once told an interviewer, "I've been shot at many times for this magazine. It's always been worth it."

SOF's most recent trip to Costa Rica took place last winter. The team traveled to San José to make contact with the contra group called FARN—the Nicaraguan Revolutionary Armed Forces.

Editors said the *SOF* team traveled with FARN leaders into southern Nicaragua and then spent several days instructing the contras in combat skills such as how to shoot down Russian-made helicopters. The June 1985 issue of *Soldier of Fortune*, whose cover is adorned by actor Sylvester Stallone attired in "Rambo, First Blood II" garb, carried a breathless, first person account of the training team's activities.

Alexander McColl, director of special projects for the Omega Group, said that *SOF* is considering sending more training teams to Costa Rica.

The magazine is involved in other efforts as well. One goal, McColl said, is to increase public awareness about "the threat" of communism in Central America, and it does this not only through the magazine but through television appearances and other high visibility operations. For example, *SOF* founder Robert Brown's recent offer to pay \$1 million to any Sandinista who defected with a Soviet high tech Mi-24 helicopter made the front page of *USA Today* and numerous other publications.

"The whole plan, you know, is you buy the helicopter for \$1 million and then you turn around and sell it to U.S. or other free-world intelligence for about \$2 million, and then you've got \$1

million left over to buy beans and rice for the troops. That's how that works. You know, we may be dumb but we're not stupid," McColl said. "The more profit we make, the more fun and games we can play in Central America."

McColl said the staff maintains close relations with members of the Reagan administration and shares military data and other information that they acquire on their trips to Central America.

He said the editors "have access to various very senior people in Washington. We can go in and sit on the guy's doorstep and tell him what's going on and so on."

He denied, however, that the group has any connection with the CIA, as some Reagan administration critics have alleged.

McColl, who has a Harvard law degree, also denied that *SOF*'s activities circumvent congressional restrictions on U.S. government involvement in Central America.

"The president makes foreign policy and we are simply attempting to carry on as much of the president's foreign policy as our rather limited resources permit," McColl said.

"What we have been trying to do, both in Salvador and in Nicaragua, is to carry forward the objectives declared by the commander-in-chief and president, and which the Democrats in the House of Representatives were doing the best they could to sabotage."

Another American who is trying to carry out the president's foreign policy goals is John Cattle, a gunrunner who spends about six months a year in Central America.

Cattle, who mixes Christian dogma with anti-Sandinista rhetoric, is the head of the American Freedom Fighters Association of Camden, Tenn., which supplies arms, ammunition, equipment and fighting men to the contras. In an interview in July in San José, Cattle said he was in Central America to carry out God's will.

Cattle said he complies with U.S. law by purchasing weapons in places such as Jamaica and Canada. He has no doubt that the White House approves of his conduct.

He is contemptuous of the *Soldier of Fortune* types who have come to the region. He said they have come not to fight, but to seek "fame and glory." He said *SOF* magazine founder Col. Robert Brown is "a viper playing on the lives of the people here for his own gain."

Cattle said the American Freedom Fighters include thousands of fundraisers and about 40 "hell raisers" who buy guns, munitions and equipment for the rebels and fight alongside them.

Cattle, who described himself as a "profoundly religious" person with "a little bit of violence" in his background, said he spends much of his time inside Nicaragua with the Miskito Indians and Creoles who are fighting the Sandinistas. He carries in his wallet pictures of himself with the rebel fighters, along with snapshots of his wife and two little girls.

Cattle said one of his priorities is to strengthen the contras' southern front, which runs along the Costa Rican-Nicaraguan border 200 miles north of San José.

During his current trip, Cattle explained, he planned to try to lay the groundwork for setting communications and supply lines through Costa Rica to ensure an uninterrupted flow of guns and ammunition to the rebels. Cattle was upset that some Costa Rican officials were making this task difficult for him.

"How can they expect the freedom fighters to get a foothold in southern Nicaragua if they can't get supplies regularly? The Costa Rican government has no right to criticize [the contras] for hitting the Sandinistas and then running across the river" into northern Costa Rica, Cattle said.

Cattle hoped the "problem" with Costa Rica could be resolved by the time he returned in September.

He added, "Somebody from the U.S. government, maybe the ambassador... should sit down with these people and jerk them up and tell them what's going on."

Cattle agrees with the objectives of President Reagan's Central American policy, but he is concerned about the way the policy is being carried out. He is especially disgusted with the CIA. Cattle said he runs his own intelligence operation in the area, which he claims does a better job of keeping tabs on the Sandinistas than the CIA does. The government's agents "don't know how to get out in the dirt and get information," Cattle said.

"You want to know how to find a Company [CIA] man in Tegucigalpa?" he asks. Just go to the major hotel, "and there's a big round table... They're all there playing with their girlfriends, waiting for someone to come in from the field and tell them what's going on," Cattle said scornfully.

Cattle has even less regard for Members of Congress.

Refined

"Congress doesn't mean anything in regard to the law. God's word is the law. The Bible is the law and I believe every word in it," he said.

"President Reagan has let us know that he's pleased with us. He hasn't told us in so many words, but he's let us know," Cattle declared.

Cattle predicted that the contras would overthrow Nicaragua's Sandinista government before the conclusion of Reagan's second term, with or without the help of Congress.

He said he "wouldn't bet peanuts" that the new government of Nicaragua will be a democracy, but added that isn't his problem.

"I have one job: To overthrow communism. The new government may be a dictatorship. Hopefully it won't be as bad as Somoza's, but who knows? The big thing is, it won't be communist," Cattle said.

"I am profoundly religious. As I see it, there are two armies—the Sandinistas' army and God's army. I'm in God's army. My job on this earth is to try to destroy the work of the devil." ●

Jacqueline Sharkey, who is bilingual, is an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Arizona in Tucson. She is a former Washington Post copy editor and was a Fulbright fellow in Colombia. Her research and trip to Costa Rica were financed by a grant from The Fund for Investigative Journalism, Inc. Kathleen E. McHugh and John S. Day also contributed to this article.

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A long car trip over deteriorated roads brought writer Jacqueline Sharkey to a contra camp not far from the Costa Rican border.

Behind The Scenes At A Contra Camp

This is Antonio*. What can I do for you?" the voice on the phone asked cautiously. "Someone in the United States gave me your name," I replied. "They said I should talk to you about what is happening here regarding Nicaragua. I'd like to set up a meeting."

I was in San José, the Costa Rican capital, trying to establish contact with the Nicaraguan Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARN), a small group of contras. I had recently been to Boulder, Colo. to interview members of the *Soldier of Fortune* magazine training team that had worked with FARN in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and I wanted to visit the contras' camp to see how they operate.

FARN is one of about 10 Nicaraguan rebel groups trying to overthrow the

leftist Sandinista government of Nicaragua. While these groups have gotten considerable publicity since they started their activities in the early 1980s, their numbers are actually relatively small. An estimated 15,000 Nicaraguans belong to contra groups, out of a total population of three million.

Some experts believe the numbers would be even smaller if the CIA had not begun organizing, arming and advising contra groups. The CIA spent an estimated \$80 million providing the rebels with weapons, training and logistical support before Congress refused to extend funding for the contras in mid-1984. The House and Senate acted after learning that the CIA had helped supervise the mining of Nicaragua's harbors—an action the World Court later ruled was a violation of international law. Members of Congress were later incensed that the agency had written a manual instructing the contras on how to "neutralize" Sandinista officials.

The largest contra group, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), has been controlled to a great extent by the CIA. According to media reports the agency directed the FDN's military strategy for years and selected many of its leaders. The agency was embarrassed when it was revealed that some of these leaders were members of former right wing dictator Anastasio Somoza's National Guard—an organization known for its brutality.

The FDN has received more negative publicity during the last year, when human rights organizations have documented its involvement in numerous atrocities in Nicaragua.

The CIA has long encouraged the FDN to gain control over the other contra organizations. This has proven difficult. The FDN operates out of Honduras, on Nicaragua's northern border, and has not been able to establish a strong base in Costa Rica. One reason is that some Costa Rica-based rebel leaders are for-

* *Common Cause Magazine* has changed his name for the story.

Continued

mer Sandinistas who are reluctant to cooperate with the FDN because of its links to Somoza's National Guard.

The FDN has made progress, however. Earlier this year it got several Costa Rica-based contra groups to join it in forming the United Nicaraguan Opposition, an umbrella organization that will coordinate military and political efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas.

FARN, the group I visited, is a member of this organization. It formerly had some ties with the Nicaraguan Democratic Force and fought out of Honduras, but last year its leader, Fernando "El Negro" Chamorro, decided to reorganize his group and move to the southern front.

FARN differs from the FDN in several ways. It is much smaller—only about 200 people. It has communications and supply bases in northern Costa Rica and military camps in southern Nicaragua. It does not have the FDN's reputation for committing atrocities. And FARN members say the group does not have the FDN's history of extensive CIA ties. I was

especially interested in FARN because it has received most of its funding from private U.S. groups such as *Soldier of Fortune*. I wanted to see what life was like in one of its camps, so I asked one of my U.S. sources for a FARN contact in San José. He gave me Antonio's name.

Antonio arranged to meet me in the bar of the small hotel where I was staying in San José. He arrived several minutes early. A stocky man with curly hair

and brown eyes, Antonio said he moved his family from Nicaragua to San José several years ago because he found the Sandinistas' policies too repressive. Shortly after arriving in Costa Rica, he began working with the Nicaraguan rebels. I had assumed we would conduct our meeting in Spanish, but Antonio said he had gone to school in the United States, and proceeded to speak the rest of the evening in beautiful, idiomatic English.

He said FARN had had "serious problems" obtaining supplies and equipment, although the situation had improved in the previous months. He added that private U.S. aid had enabled FARN to survive, but the group really wanted continuing help from the U.S. government. Antonio said the non-military assistance approved by Congress this summer was a start. He pointed out that it would enable the rebels to use money they now allocate for food, clothing and health care to buy weapons and ammunition instead.

When I told Antonio I wanted to see

the FARN camps, he agreed to arrange a visit. Several days later he arrived at my hotel dressed in Jordache jeans, a short-sleeved shirt and old combat boots. We climbed into a slightly battered orange Fiat at 4:15 in the afternoon and set off for the war.

We drove for hours through Costa Rican mountains. The semi-tropical foliage was a deep green that shimmered in the evening light. As darkness fell it began to rain, and the air became heavy with the smell of the fertile soil.

"Costa Rica is such a beautiful country, but a lot of people here don't seem to realize what a serious situation they're in," Antonio said. "They think because they are neutral and democratic, that they can avoid dealing with what is happening. But they can't."

He denied that the contra groups are causing problems for Costa Rica, which has declared neutrality in the Central American conflict.

"FARN has never had military bases in Costa Rica. All our bases are in southern Nicaragua. We believe Costa Rica is one

of the great democratic countries. We respect Costa Rica's neutrality."

But Antonio admits that members of Costa Rica's public security forces are supporting the contras' military effort, which is a violation of the country's neutrality, but he isn't troubled by this. The Costa Rican government "can't control what individuals do in some cases," he shrugged.

Four hours after we started, we turned onto an isolated dirt road, which quickly deteriorated into a mass of rocks and potholes. We were in a high, wide valley, surrounded by darkness. Occasionally a flash of lightning from a storm over the distant mountains illuminated the empty landscape.

"I hate being on this road at night," Antonio said. "Bad things can happen around here."

Ten minutes later, a rear tire exploded. Antonio was furious. He was also nervous. He opened his small leather bag, took out a gun and slipped it in his waistband.

The jack was broken and the car

wouldn't stay up. Finally, three *campesinos* wandered by and offered to help. They lifted up the car and held it steady while Antonio changed the tire.

About 10:30 we pulled into a small Costa Rican farming community near the Nicaraguan border. We were going to spend the night with a family sympathetic to FARN. The family provides food, shelter and transportation for members of the group, and its house is a rendezvous point for rebel leaders.

The house did not look like a center of guerrilla activity. A child's bicycle sat

near the front door. The comfortable living room had two overstuffed chairs, a TV and a vase of silk flowers on the coffee table. A ceramic plate hanging in the dining room read, "*Que la paz del Señor sea en este hogar*" ("May the peace of the Lord be in this house").

We awakened at 6 a.m. It seemed like a normal day. The children were getting ready for school. Madonna's "You're an Angel" blasted out of the radio. The aroma of fresh coffee wafted out of the kitchen. The only incongruous elements

were the gun sitting on the dining room table and the crackling of the shortwave as Antonio and his Costa Rican host made contact with the FARN camp.

FARN's third in command, Comandante Miguel, joined us. A report had just come over the radio that Eden Pastora—the famous Commander Zero, a former Sandinista leader who heads another contra group in southern Nicaragua—had disappeared. Reports said he had been traveling in his helicopter over Nicaraguan territory the previous afternoon when his pilot reported trouble, then broke contact.

There was considerable speculation about whether Pastora had run into trouble or whether the whole thing was a publicity stunt. Pastora, who once enjoyed widespread popularity among contra leaders and the Costa Rican people, has lost some of his support in the last year. "He's become a media darling," several San José journalists later told me.

Antonio and Comandante Miguel said that although there was a chance Pastora

had been shot down by Sandinistas or had had mechanical problems with the helicopter, it was more likely that the incident was "just part of a show."

"He'll show up in a day or two saying his helicopter went down and he had to battle his way through hordes of Sandinistas, but in the end he triumphed and made it safely back to camp," Miguel said scornfully.

(That afternoon, Pastora's helicopter was found in Costa Rica. The next day, he was reported to have "miraculously" escaped serious injury and to have returned safely to one of his camps in southern Nicaragua.)

We finished our breakfast—steak and onions, fresh bread, cheese—and set off by jeep for FARN headquarters. We traveled on a rutted dirt road, past rice fields and cacao plantations.

After half an hour, we pulled up to a small wooden building. Several armed men sat out front. A poster of Rafael Calderon, a candidate in Costa Rica's 1986 presidential election, decorated one wall.

I was introduced to Comandante Jose Robelo, FARN's second in command. We climbed into another jeep for the journey to FARN headquarters, which lies in the middle of a farm that Robelo said was donated to the group.

It was a 30-minute journey through rain forest. The jeep lurched through mud a foot deep. Sometimes the road got so bad that Robelo simply drove through the trees, and we ducked as the branches whipped through the open windows.

About halfway through the trip Robelo turned to me and said, "You are in Nicaragua now."

Eventually we came to a sign that read, "Mined. Entry Prohibited. Military Zone."

We passed several men in combat fatigues carrying automatic weapons. They waved as we drove by.

Finally we entered another clearing about half a mile inside Nicaragua. It was dominated by a wooden building with a corrugated tin roof. This was once a farmhouse, painted bright turquoise

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Finally we entered another clearing about half a mile inside Nicaragua. It was dominated by a wooden building with a corrugated tin roof. This was once a farmhouse, painted bright turquoise

and fuchsia. Now it is FARN headquarters. The paint has faded almost to gray, and several walls are camouflage green and brown. A picture of the Sacred Heart hangs over the main entrance.

Inside, five machine guns and camouflage gear hung on the walls. Several other weapons were on a long wooden table covered with a red-and-white checkered tablecloth.

About a dozen young men in camouflage gear were lounging on the porch, eating lunch and watching a small black

tery. Another was reading a paperback western. Their weapons—mostly G3 and AK-47 assault rifles—were slung over their shoulders. One young soldier walked by with a machine gun in one hand and a guitar in the other.

Several women in fatigues were cooking. One spoke softly to a parrot sitting on her shoulder.

Comandante Chamorro came out to greet us. His face is sharp angles and hard planes. He said he has been fighting the Sandinistas for four years.

Chamorro said his group operates along the southern edge of Lake Nicaragua, from the Rio Frio in the east to the Rio Sapoa in the west. He said FARN has several small, mobile bases in the area, but adds that his troops do not actually control much territory.

He said his men are fighting "with the hope that the situation will change soon—with the help of the United States Congress."

At the same time, Chamorro and Ro-

belo were careful to distance themselves from the U.S. government. They insisted they would accept U.S. assistance only if no strings were attached.

"Neither the CIA or the Pentagon is going to direct our military effort," Chamorro said.

He said FARN would also like to receive more private military training like that provided by *Soldier of Fortune*. But he hastened to add that FARN doesn't want individuals like Steven Carr trying to join his group. "It would only cause problems if we accepted foreign troops," he said.

Chamorro explained that one of the Sandinistas' most objectionable policies is that they have allowed foreign advisers from Cuba and the Soviet bloc to come to Nicaragua. "We are fighting against interventionism," he said.

I find it interesting that Chamorro does not note the irony in the fact that the contras have encouraged advisers from the United States to come to Nicaragua.

Chamorro offered to show me one of

the training bases where the *Soldier of Fortune* team had worked. It was a half hour's march from headquarters. The base consisted of a series of plastic tents, where the soldiers sleep on wooden pallets raised several inches above the mud.

As we arrived, about three dozen soldiers were going through field exercises. They work here a minimum of 15 days before being sent to camps deeper in Nicaragua.

Most soldiers ranged in age from late teens to early 30s, but one was a boy of 12. Antonio said the boy, Francisco, was the unit's mascot.

cisco's face as he came off the training field. When he held his AK-47 upright, it was almost as tall as he. Francisco is an orphan. "This is my home now," he said.

Chamorro suggested visiting one of the camps closer to the fighting.

The forest closed in on us 20 yards from FARN's headquarters. Although it was 2 in the afternoon, the trees formed a canopy so thick that it looked like twilight.

We slogged along a narrow path that at times was little more than an animal trail. The only sounds were the chattering of birds and the squishing of our boots as we sank into the mud and rotting foliage that covered the forest floor. Twice we waded across streams, and I scrambled to get my camera and notebooks over my head as the water climbed past my knees.

Occasionally there were scenes of incredible beauty. At one point the trail was blanketed by tiny purple blossoms. At another, a family of tiny turquoise frogs hopped across the path and took refuge under a brilliant orange flower.

After an hour and a half we came to a series of clearings where people maintain small farms. They stared silently as we marched by.

We finally reached the outer perimeter of the camp and were greeted by several armed FARN members drinking Cokes. Shortly before we reached the base, a cloudburst began. Within seconds we were walking through a wall

of water.

About a dozen armed men greeted us as we arrived at the base, which Antonio said was about a mile from the place where FARN troops had been fighting the Sandinistas in recent weeks. The unit commander, Emiliano, proudly showed me his *Soldier of Fortune* shoulder patch. Antonio said many men operating out of this base have them.

This camp, like the training facility, consisted of a wooden structure on stilts and a series of plastic tents. The building contained a radio and a weapons room, where assault rifles were neatly lined up.

One wall was decorated with a group of pictures. Antonio wanted to make sure I saw one in particular. It was a shot of Ronald Reagan talking with Adolfo Calero, head of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force. The handwritten message under the picture said, "To Adolfo Calero—your struggle for justice and democracy in Nicaragua will prevail. Ronald Reagan."

"That picture is in a lot of camps," An-

tonio said. "It provides us with so much encouragement." He added that the rebels are grateful that the president has supported private efforts to raise funds for the contras. "That enabled us to move ahead," he said.

On the way back to San José, our jeep kept sinking past its axle and getting stuck in the mud. The four-wheel drive didn't work properly, so a half-dozen FARN soldiers followed us. When the vehicle got mired, we all got out and helped them push. We kept trying to move the jeep off the side of the path, but it kept slipping back into the same ruts.

I remembered the words of another Chamorro, Edgar Chamorro, an FDN leader who left the rebels and is now a major critic of the U.S.-financed contra war. "My people are dying and it's all for nothing," Chamorro has said. "We have taken the wrong road."

It took us a long time to move the jeep to solid ground. ●