

Welcome to our forum

From: Mark Hull (mhull@sjmercury.com), Mercury Center

Date: Saturday, August 17, 1996

Comment: Discuss the series and ask questions in our forum moderated by the reporter of this series, Gary Webb.

When will it end?

From: Larry (lar-jen@interaccess.com), Chicago

Date: Sunday, August 18, 1996

Comment: The story of the CIA using cocaine the Contras is over a decade old. Though evidence is abundant, few Americans are aware of the crimes.

The San Jose Mercury News articles show that CIA Contra cocaine continued flowing into the USA after the Sandinistas lost power in Nicaragua.

The US government has done nothing to stop it. Neither President Bush, President Clinton nor Senator Dole have ever done anything to stop the CIA-assisted drug pipeline. As a matter of fact, evidence exists that all three hindered investigations into the crimes. Why?

With crack cocaine from the CIA-Contra operations flooding the streets of America, raising violence and destroying lives, America can tolerate the crimes no longer.

As an election approaches, the candidates remain silent on the problem. Americans cannot allow the silence to continue. We must raise our voices and demand our government to bring the guilty to justice and stop CIA drug pipelines. Unfortunately, the guilty are in power.

Thank you, San Jose Mercury News! You have done a great service to our nation.

Larry

Great series so far!

From: Ken Cook (kencook@tiac.net), Chelmsford, MA

Date: Sunday, August 18, 1996

Comment: I am part of a group of citizens on the Internet who have been following the allegations surrounding Iran/Contra and it's alleged drug connections with great interest.

We have been talking for years of how the CIA circumvented the Boland Amendments (which prohibited U.S. aid to Nicaragua) by bringing drugs into this country and using some of the profits to fund their covert operations.

We have been able to document, through books and other sources, the massive drug smuggling that went on at Mena, Arkansas during the mid-80s under Bill Clinton's nose. Contra pilot training occurred there also as well as millions of dollars in drug money being laundered through Bill Clinton's Arkansas Development Finance Authority (ADFA).

Let me make the point however that this scandal is strictly bi-partisan. For George Bush, Oliver North and possibly even Ronald Reagan himself knew of these goings-on and aided and abetted in the coverup.

The lives of many good people who tried to expose this have been destroyed.
I am extremely pleased that the San Jose Mercury News has the courage to expose this sickening scandal and I look forward to the next two installments.

Regards,
Ken Cook

Mena connections

From: Gary Webb (garywebb@aol.com), Sacramento, CA

Date: Sunday, August 18, 1996

Comment: From what I could tell, the Mena, Ark. situation was connected to the Contras' East Coast cocaine operation, which was exposed in the mid-1980s by a pair of enterprising AP reporters, Bob Parry and Brian Barger, who were almost universally trashed for their efforts. John Kerry's Senate Subcommittee did an credible job of nailing down that operation and there were a number of cross-pollinations between that drug operation and the one we're writing about. Anyone interested in the details of the East Coast operation should read the Kerry Committee report. That might be something we could post here if enough people were interested in seeing it.

Additionally, the CIA inspector general announced an investigation into the Mena connection last week. Better 10 years late than never, I suppose.

Phony Drug War or massive conspiracy?

From: Brenda Grantland (fearno1@nbn.com), Mill Valley, CA

Date: Sunday, August 18, 1996

Comment: In 1992 I heard the rumor that the Iran Contra conspirators were smuggling cocaine into the country, but I never thought it would be confirmed as the truth. Now this whole phony drug war makes sense. This allows a sick bureaucracy to achieve several of their evil goals at once -- generate revenue for their illegal war, wipe out the black community with a massive drug epidemic, and create a national emergency to justify the repeal of the Constitution -- all at once. This is sick! Thank you Gary Webb for having the guts to write this story, and thank you Mercury News for publishing it.

Remember the Christic Institute

From: John (75454.374@CompuServe.com), Corvallis

Date: Sunday, August 18, 1996

Comment: Do you remember the Christic Institute about ten years ago when they filed charges against the "Secret Team" (which included Secord) under the RICOH statute. It never came to trial because the Miami judge threw it out? You never hear of the Institute anymore. My question is, what was the final disposition of their suit and does the Christic Institute still exist?

Thank You

From: Bill Enloe (enloe@mediacity.com), menlo park

Date: Sunday, August 18, 1996

Comment: I just want to thank you for the in-depth coverage of the recent article "Dark Alliance". While the story itself, and most of the information contained in it, is over ten year old, and therefore hardly news to those with access to information about what really goes on in the world, it is refreshing to see this type of story covered in the mainstream press.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Bill Enloe

Tip of the iceberg

From: Shooshie (shooshie@onramp.net), Dallas

Date: Sunday, August 18, 1996

Comment: It is indeed a good thing to see this information presented in such an organized way. The timeline and the pipeline (animated maps) lay out over two decades worth of information more clearly than I have ever been able to understand it.

After fifteen years of wading through conspiracy theories, lies, and fragments of the stories, I believe The Mercury might yet tell me the whole story.

Now, what is the connection to the BCCI, the Iran/Contra story, and other activities of the 80's? Is the S&L scandal involved? However big the cocaine story is, it seems like the tip of a much larger iceberg. Will we someday be able to see the whole picture, complete with names of US public figures involved?

Time to End Drug Prohibition

From: Dr. Lawrence Hunter (hunter@intr.net), Potomac, MD

Date: Monday, August 19, 1996

Comment: Gary Webb's breathtaking revelations demonstrate the evil locus between the scourge of crack and the CIA's immoral "secret" wars. It is the obscene profits that prohibition brings that set in motion the process that has led to so much death and misery.

It is time to end drug prohibition and with it, the profits and violence that attract the CIA and the Crips and the Bloods. As Webb shows so convincingly, only the little guy goes to jail; the leaders not only go unpunished, but get fabulously wealthy.

Compare the failure of fifteen years of expensive and destructive "war on drugs," with the amazing success of anti-smoking efforts over the same fifteen years. Clearly, the answer is to end prohibition and take a public health approach to reducing drug abuse.

Time to End Drug Prohibition

From: Dr. Lawrence Hunter (hunter@intr.net), Potomac, MD

Date: Monday, August 19, 1996

Comment: Gary Webb's breathtaking revelations demonstrate the evil locus between the scourge of crack and the CIA's immoral "secret" wars. It is the obscene profits that prohibition brings that set in motion the process that has led to so much death and misery.

It is time to end drug prohibition and with it, the profits and violence that attract the CIA and the Crips and the Bloods. As Webb shows so convincingly, only the little guy goes to jail; the leaders not only go unpunished, but get fabulously wealthy.

Compare the failure of fifteen years of expensive and destructive "war on drugs," with the amazing success of anti-smoking efforts over the same fifteen years. Clearly, the answer is to end prohibition and take a public health approach to reducing drug abuse.

ACCOUNTABILITY!!!

From: Matt Smith (dalem@condorsys.com), San Jose

Date: Monday, August 19, 1996

Comment: I am grateful for the truth I have discovered in this article, and I thank the MN for printing it. I had never before supposed that the government of my country would be responsible for the destruction of its citizens. To me, this seems like a can of worms that should have the power to rock Capitol Hill and have the people of this country screaming for the heads of those responsible. I want accountability! I want justice! I hope and pray the apathy that pervades this country will not keep this story from shaking them to their core. This should scare people. This should anger people, especially those whose lives were destroyed or aotherwise affected by the actions of their government.

Kerry Committee Report

From: j h woodyatt (jhw@wetware.com), san francisco

Date: Monday, August 19, 1996

Comment: Gary Webb and his associates have done a very good job exposing the connection between crack cocaine and the Nicaraguan contras.

Add me to the list of people who would like the URL for the Kerry Subcommittee report on this "East Coast" drug operation that appears to be connected to all this rattling around about Mena, Arkansas.

It wasn't paranoia

From: Debra Evans (devans@netscape.com), Mountain View

Date: Monday, August 19, 1996

Comment: For years the Black community has complained that it has been sacrificed by politicians and the police as the area where drugs were allowed to exist. Mainstream society always dismissed the protests as the ravings of extreme militants. Now on the front page of the local paper is proof that what people have been saying has actually been going on. Hopefully, in the future, the dominant culture will listen when people from ravaged neighborhoods have something to say.

Do I think U.S. gov would allow drug sales? Yup!

From: A. Hopping (wren@pacbell.net), B.C. Canada

Date: Monday, August 19, 1996

Comment: Whether it wants to or not, the U.S. gov is allowing drugs to be sold. I only have faith that time will solve the problem. And replace it with a new one.

Don't buy drugs. Fight to keep the souls of your kids. Stand for right things. Honor yourself and others.

Simplify.

Don't worry too much about it.
You'll be dead soon enough.

Some answers for you

From: Reporter Gary Webb (garywebb@aol.com), Sacramento, CA

Date: Monday, August 19, 1996

Comment: First of all, I discovered that our ruthlessly efficient online editor, Mark Hull, has already posted some of the transcripts of the Kerry Committee hearings. They're available in the Library section here.

Second, thanks to everyone who has called, e-mailed and written so far. Your response to this project has been very encouraging. Since I've been living with this story for so long, it ceased to shock me long ago. I'm glad to see it still has some punch.

As for some of the specific questions: the Christic Institute, as far as I can tell

"Opportunities multiply as they are seized."- Sun Tzu

From: Matt Robbins (mrobbins@dl.com), Cupertino, CA

Date: Monday, August 19, 1996

Comment:

To me the root of this issue is the alliance between the CIA and organized crime. This alliance which was spawned at the end of WWII when the

OSS went into Europe (mainly to work with the remains of the branch of Hitler's SS Intelligence that already had a network of spies throughout Eastern Europe and Russia). This is when the Mob first was allied with US Intelligence in Italy to help control elections and the shipping docks.

The problem is that this alliance has gotten far out of hand because of the cloak of secrecy and "National Security" that can be invoked by the CIA. This brings me to my main point which is: Of all the major world events since WWII it has been discovered by somebody somewhere that the CIA had a hand in it. (i.e., Korean War, Vietnam War, Kennedy assassination, Watergate, Contra-Gate, hundreds of assassinations, and now the crack epidemic to mention a few! There is also an overwhelming body of evidence to support this statement.)

Which brings me to my next point. Unless your employer, the mainstream media, Vietnam and Korean Vets, the Kennedy family, the black citizens, and the rest of the people of the USA, combine their will to change the power of the CIA, nothing will change and the CIA will continue as before. So if your article is just to sell some newspapers and not change anything, then all you are doing is making a dime to pay the bills, which is not far from what the CIA and all drug dealers are really doing.

I challenge the Editors and owners of the SJ Mercury to use this story as a springboard to publicly tell the US and World all about the real history of America and the CIA since WWII. (I also suggest starting with the JFK story and the ongoing work of the JFK Assassination Records Review Board). Do this and you will spark the change necessary to restore our once great democracy. Otherwise nothing will change no matter who you vote for in Congress or as President. It is the CIA that is the greatest National Security threat to our Democracy and our society. (Not to mention our well earned tax dollars.)

DO NOT QUOTE OR REPUBLISH (ANYWHERE)!!!

From: Kenneth Spain (kenneth.spain@sybase.com), NYC

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: Congratulations on your excellent expose'. This is what the First Amendment and its spirit of the law was meant to convey; namely just what your newspaper has done. Please call Nightline, 60 Minutes, and the other credible news shows.

Further, I wish to convey the sentiments of our citizenry, in that there should be some significant form of accountability. Some significant restitution needs to be addressed to those caught up in this nightmare. For those in prison, serious indoctrination, first on this article series, then on becoming a citizen (in a productive fashion), perhaps some serious Boot Camp discipline, and finally some sort of sentence readjustment (read reduction or parole based on participation and personal commitment to change). This is one, but not necessarily the only way, for our society to apologize for the State Sanctioned crimes against humanity (and since this was one or two communities, as your article stated, it qualifies for the actual term GENOCIDE) to those who were targeted and abused and have had their lives corrupted by our penal system, as well as those who willingly or unfortunately were victims of this crime.

Perhaps, this was the notion and objective behind the term "getting treatment".

Who's to say, but something NEEDS to be done to restore these victims to whole.

(NOTE: it is terribly difficult to type out or review or correct spelling errors in this micro-text window)

DO NOT QUOTE OR REPUBLISH (ANYWHERE)!!!

From: Kenneth Spain (kenneth.spain@sybase.com), NYC

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: Congradulations on your excellent expose'. This is what the First Amendment and its spirit of the law was meant to convey; namely just what your newspaper has done. Please call Nightline, 60 Minutes, and the other credible news shows.

Further, I wish to convey the sentiments of our citizenry, in that there should be some significant form of accountability. Some significant restitution needs to be addressed to those caught up in this nightmare. For those in prison, serious indoctrination, first on this article series, then on becoming a citizen (in a productive fashion), perhaps some serious Boot Camp discipline, and finally some sort of sentence readjustment (read reduction or parole based on participation and personal commitment to change). This is one, but not necessarily the only way, for our society to appologize for the State Sanctioned crimes against humanity (and since this was one or two communities, as your article stated, it qualifies for the acutal term GENOCIDE) to those who were targeted and abused and have had their lives corrupted by our penial system, as well as those who willingly or unfortunately were victims of this crime.

Perhaps, this was the notion and objective behind the term "getting treatment".

Who's to say, but something NEEDS to be done to restore these victims to whole.

(NOTE: it is terribly difficult to type out or review or correct spelling errors in this micro-text window)

What price, Democracy?

From: Chris Despopoulos (cud@adobe.com), Santa Cruz, CA

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: The story of Nicaragua is unbearably tragic. A murderous dictatorship is installed by the US. When the citizens rid themselves of Somaza, the US responds by claiming they must destroy the Sandanistas to save the world for Democracy. And how do they -- er, I mean WE -- do that? By sacrificing untold numbers of American citizens to the nightmare of Crack.

How many people have suffered addiction? How many families broken by gang violence? How much vitality has been sucked from communities that could otherwise have contributed to the culture, knowledge, and yse, even the tax base of America? How can a cost be assigned to this miserable policy of ours to "save the world for democracy" no matter what?

How can Bush, Secord, North, and Poindexter sleep at night? How can any American sleep at night knowing these traitors are free, and even hailed as heros?

How can anybody take seriously the current shrieks for personal accountability after we all allowed Regan and Bush to hide behind plausible deniability?

How can any thinking person say he is proud to be an American?

Christic Institute

From: Chris Despopoulos (cud@adobe.com), Santa Cruz, CA

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: Part of the indictment against Bush included evidence that Bush, Secord, and North were involved in supplying a fleet of airplanes to the biggest opium magnate in the Vietnamese theater.

Do those names sound familiar?
I hope so.

Just another harmless co-inkie-dink?
I doubt it.

what happened?

From: Bret Bailey (bailey@corp.sgi.com), Sunnyvale

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: Thank you for having the courage to print this story. I've had little to no respect for the Merc(and all MAINSTREAM media) for years now because of the biased journalism.
For once I agree with your biases!! Imagine that!

p.s. What happened to all the content that was in the forum yesterday?

-Bret

Kerry subcommittee/Upcoming in drugs

From: Mark Hull (mhull@sjmercury.com), Mercury Center

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: Hello there. In response to the thread about Sen. Kerry and the subcommittee questioning, selected transcripts can be found in the library, or by heading directly to <http://www.sjmercury.com/drugs/library/25.htm>

Also, while the three-day main series is over, the story is only beginning. We'll continue to update this page with new stories that Gary Webb files. Tomorrow, we'll feature new content and there should be another new story this weekend. Keep an eye out, and thanks for the input.

Mark Hull
Mercury Center

TEST

From: Mark Hull (mhull@sjmercury.com), Mercury Center

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: This is a test.

This story is more earthshattering than WaterGate and Iran/Contra COMBINED!

From: Sylvanus Bent (sylvanus-avis.bent@worldnet.att.net), Cupertino, Ca

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: I don't know whether to cry or to scream.

I've heard these rumors before, but now there's no denying it.

This is treason and genocidal murder.

This could rock the '96 elections and dominate the Capitol Hill agenda for years.

I congratulate the Gary Webb and the Mercury News for breaking this story.

When will Gary be on Nightline, NBC, NPR or any other major TV / Radio news program?

DOES THE RIGHT HAND KNOW WHAT THE LEFT HAND...

From: Eric Forbes (keystone@znet.com), Santa Cruz, CA

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: Unfortunately, I am not surprised by the information in this series of articles. But

I am grateful for the MN as a mainstream paper for publishing it.

One of the issues that grabs my attention is the inequality of sentencing for those who have information to share with the prosecution.

This strategy seems to be used most often with organized crime in the mostly vain hope that the guys who have been caught will implicate the guys who have yet to be caught. Evidently, what ends up happening is that the guys at the top are rarely if ever caught, the guys in the middle are given light sentencing in return for all their help, and the guy who knows nothing gets hit with the full force of the law. Are we supposed to think this is fair?

I agree with one of the other contributors to this forum who said that these kind of problems will only reoccur as long as the intelligence wing of the US government is unaccountable to the public. Obviously, we can't trust the Congress or the Presidency to stop things like this from happening.

I also agree with another contributor who noted that the temptation to deal in drugs lies with the huge profits that can be gained from them for whatever ultimate purpose you could dream up. Prohibition does not seem to be working. Neither does the lopsided reliance on enforcement.

Does the DEA know what the CIA is doing? Talk about bureaucratic conflict! (All humor aside, is it ever going to stop?)

Hopefully, more of this kind of information escapes into the public awareness, enough to force a thorough rethinking of the Drug War.

Thanks for the good work, Gary Webb and the MN, keep it up.

Now I know the meaning of outrage.

From: Candyce Gleason (clg@microweb.com), Richmond, CA

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: After reading bits and pieces of stories regarding this conspiracy over the past decade, it is really shocking to see the story presented in such a format. This is what journalism used to be about...the truth.

This is not only a story of racist conspiracy, but one of how much we are at the mercy of the powerful elite in this country. Racism is detestable, targeted genocide is unforgivable.

It's time to demand answers and accountability for these crimes.

That our own leaders would do this to us, and I do mean "us," makes me shake with anger and fear.

I'll be back here for updates. Again, thank you.

Candyce Gleason

great opening to the tip of the iceberg...

From: Susan Guberman-Garcia (susan@belize.com), Fremont, Calif.

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: This is an excellent series. I am glad to see a representative of the corporate media publishing what those of us who listen to Pacifica (KPFA) have known for years: That the US government is nose deep (you should pardon the expression) in dope dealing...and that the "war against drugs" is in fact, a war against young people of color...a way to perpetuate racism, destroy a community, and desensitize the American people to a loss of their civil liberties all at the same time.

I hope your series does not fail to implicate Oliver North, George Bush and yes: COLIN POWELL in what we know was a narcotics conspiracy run at the highest levels of the US government.

I hope you also do not fail to discuss

the abuse of the "classification" stamp as a way to keep the American people from knowing the sordid deeds of their "leaders."

May this story become a first step in repealing the National Security Act of 1949 and reinstating the right of the American people to know what their government is doing.

What was Senator Dole doing...

From: S. Kramer (ar912@lafn.org), Encino, CA

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: ...while all this was happening. And he has the nerve to blame Clinton for the increase in teenage drug use?

Great Job

From: Altaf Bhimji (altaf@wco.com), San Jose

Date: Tuesday, August 20, 1996

Comment: Thank you for the excellent coverage of this subverting of democracy...I highly doubt it that other media outlets will actually pick up on the story, or that it will have any impact on the corrupt CIA, the two so-called "major parties" or on the elections...this story, like others will probably be ignored and life will go on, until we Americans actually decide we want a change...and I don't just mean a change from one special interest party to another... Altaf

Journalism as it should be

From: Lucio Benedetto (lucio@ix.netcom.com), Chevy Chase, MD

Date: Wednesday, August 21, 1996

Comment: This is an enlightening series and inspiring series. I and a friend run a Website dedicated to exposing what's left out of much of so-called investigative journalism, focusing on the Washington Post. It is exciting to see a major news daily focus on an issue that for so long has been either derided or utterly ignored by the Eastern Big Boys like the Post or The New York Times. The story of the CIA's collusion with drug dealers during Reagan's war against the people of Central America must be told, with the proviso, of course, that Iran-Contra is only one small piece of a larger and darker panorama of corruption and violence perpetuated by the National Security State (skeptics should check out the fine bibliography included in the Library). I hope your series is only the beginning and that, unlike your more cowardly establishment colleagues, you choose to further probe these activities, revealing that they are not "aberrations", to use the favored term of the government investigators, but part of a deeper historical continuity that for too long has been hidden from the eyes of the American public. Bravo!

P.S. I am going to link readers of PostMortem directly to your site so that they may read this wonder series. It's about time we had an example of informative investigative journalism to celebrate.

Lucio Benedetto

PostMortem - Probing, puncturing, and dissecting the Washington Post
<http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/1848/>

Good work!

From: JD (aaa@bbb.com), Boston

Date: Wednesday, August 21, 1996

Comment: Sadly, I'm not surprised by what has been uncovered. Even just reading the Federal Register, I'm frequently shocked by the things that the President orders to be done. I can only imagine that the things that remain secret are even worse. Your article has helped uncover the nature of those things.

Sadly, too, change is unlikely to come soon. The Democrats and Republicans have a stranglehold on American politics, and neither party has the least interest in telling the truth.

Take it wherever it leads

From: David Borja (dab@vnet.ibm.com), Sunnyvale

Date: Wednesday, August 21, 1996

Comment: I commend you for your excellent research and articles detailing the contra/"crack" connection and the CIA's collusion in this criminal activity. Like Matt Smith of San Jose, I want accountability and justice! I encourage the Merc news to stay with this story and take it wherever it leads. All citizens of good will, no matter which way they lean politically, must demand that the government stop hiding criminal activity behind the veil of "national security".

At the same time, we must avoid the lynch mob mentality that manifests itself in the hysterical left wing rhetoric ("Targeted genocide", "Reagan's war against the people of Central America", etc etc) of so many of the responses in this forum. The details on CIA involvement, who ordered what, who knew what, are still missing or hidden. What is known is that the contras smuggled cocaine into the US to finance their war and the CIA (and possibly others) allowed this to go on. For the paranoid left, evidence isn't necessary

before they burn Reagan, Bush, et al at the stake. Responsibility and criminal activity may indeed have taken place at the very highest levels but until we have evidence, let's avoid tossing out names and accusations.

Oliver's Army?

From: Bruce Tennant (bruce433@erols.com), Lanham/Seabrook,MD

Date: Wednesday, August 21, 1996

Comment: So the Republicans saved America from the communists. Who will save America from the Republicans?
