

CONVERGENCE

The Christic Institute

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Lawsuit identifies 'secret team'

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Christic Institute names key Iran/contra suspects months before scandal

By RUSTY MARTIN and ANDY LANG

In a civil lawsuit filed last year in Miami Federal Court, the Christic Institute has charged that the *contra* leadership and their private supporters planned the assassination of an American ambassador to provoke United States intervention in Nicaragua.

The lawsuit, which stems from a terrorist bombing in 1984, also alleges that the *contras* organized a complex operation to smuggle cocaine to several cities in the United States.

But the principal issue in the case, says Institute General Counsel Daniel Sheehan, centers on the covert operations of a "secret team" of retired Government officials and anti-Communist extremists who organize political assassinations and terrorist attacks on a global scale. According to Institute sources, the "team" was reactivated by Lt. Col. Oliver North to train and equip the *contras*.

The lawsuit was filed in May 1986 in United States District Court, Southern District of Florida. Institute attorneys are acting as "private attorneys general," using a Federal statute directed against organized crime to prosecute a shadowy group whose activities until now have been a carefully guarded secret.

The case will be heard in Miami by Judge James L. King. On Jan. 30 King denied motions filed by the defendants to dismiss the lawsuit, preparing the way for a jury trial next year.

The ruling means that the Christic Institute now has almost the same investigative powers as the Special Prosecutor and the special Congressional committees appointed to probe the Iran/*contra* scandal, including the power to subpoena bank records and interrogate witnesses under oath.

The lawsuit named the key suspects in the Iran/*contra* arms deal six months before the scandal surfaced in the press.

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