

CONVERGENCE

The Christic Institute

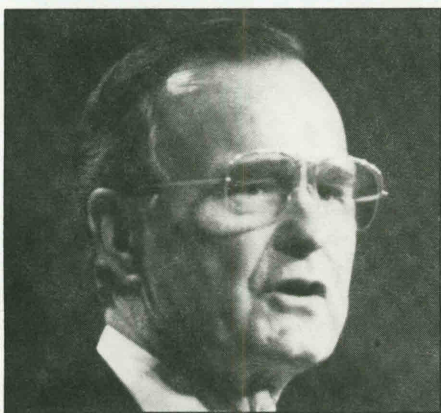
Summer 1991

One Dollar

Washington, D.C.

Will the U.S. extradite John Hull?

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Costa Rica charges C.I.A. operative with terrorist murder

By RICK EMRICH

The Government of Costa Rica on April 19 asked the United States to extradite U.S.-born rancher John Hull, a naturalized Costa Rican citizen who supported the Nicaraguan *contra* rebels from 1982 through 1986. The Costa Ricans have accused Hull of murder, drug trafficking and "hostile acts" against Nicaragua in violation of Costa Rica's neutrality.

This appears to be the first time a foreign government has asked the United States to turn over a major *contra* supporter for trial on criminal charges stemming directly from the U.S.-supported rebel operation.

The extradition request could become a political nightmare for the Bush Administration. The President has been dogged by charges that he was involved in the illegal *contra* support operation during his term as Vice President under Ronald Reagan.

The Costa Ricans have charged Hull, 70, with engineering a terrorist bombing on May 30, 1984. The attack occurred while moderate *contra* commander Edén Pastora was meeting reporters at his jungle outpost in La Penca, Nicaragua. Pastora survived, but five others—including three journalists—were killed and twenty injured. Hull is also a defendant in *Avirgan v. Hull*, the Christic Institute's lawsuit against the La Penca bombers.

Hull is also accused of violating Costa Rican neutrality when he used his ranch in Costa Rica near the Nicaraguan border as a base and supply depot for the *contras*. The Costa Rican Government further charges that Hull and other *contra* supporters used the rebel arms supply route to smuggle drugs through Costa Rican territory.

Colombian drug kingpin Carlos Lehder told ABC News in May 1990 that Hull "was pumping about 30 tons of cocaine into the United States a year" from his base in Costa Rica.

If Hull is forced to return to Costa Rica, a trial could confirm allegations that United States officials condoned drug trafficking and terrorism by the *contras* and their supporters. A trial may also underscore the American role in pressuring Costa Rica—a traditionally neutral country—

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