

BOSTON GLOBE
17 December 1986

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 19

FILE ONLY

Figures in Iran arms case are named in Fla. lawsuit

By Ben Bradlee Jr.
Globe Staff

Two central figures in the Iran-contra affair - retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard Secord and his Iranian business partner, Albert Hakim - are part of a renegade team of former and current government agents who have trafficked in arms and narcotics since the Vietnam War to support anti-communist insurgency warfare around the world, according to an affidavit filed this week in a little-publicized federal lawsuit in Miami.

The Reagan White House, through Lt. Col. Oliver North, the recently fired National Security Council aide, tapped the Secord group to run a supply operation to the Nicaraguan contras to circumvent a congressional ban on US aid and to help facilitate the secret sale of arms to Iran, the lawsuit alleges.

The charges are spelled out in a 95-page affidavit filed Monday in a \$23.8 million civil suit brought by Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, a husband-and-wife freelance journalist team, against two dozen contra leaders and several former CIA and military officials. The lawsuit, filed in May after a two-year investigation, stems from the May 1984 bombing of a press conference held by contra leader Eden Pastora in Costa Rica in which five persons were killed and two dozen injured, including Avirgan and Honey. Pastora was allegedly targeted for assassination because he had refused to take up arms with a rival contra faction he considered a puppet of the CIA.

The suit charges the defendants with responsibility for the bombing in the context of a larger conspiracy to sell cocaine in the United States to raise money to buy arms and other supplies for the contra war effort. The lawsuit exposed details of the contra supply pipeline and has taken on new significance since news first broke of the diversion of profits from Iran arms sales to the contras.

The suit is being brought by the Washington-based Christic Institute, a liberal Catholic public interest law firm and policy center best known for winning a \$10.5 million libel verdict for the family of Karen Silkwood, the nuclear worker allegedly contaminated while handling plutonium at the Kerr McGee Corp.

Christic lawyers say they intend to bring evidence they have uncovered to the attention of the independent counsel to be appointed in the Iran-contra affair. Among those named in the lawsuit besides Secord and Hakim are Theodore Shackley, former deputy director of the CIA in charge of covert operations, and his deputy, Thomas Clines; retired Maj. Gen. John Singlaub, chairman of the World Anti-Communist League and active in assisting the contras; Rafael Quintero, a Cuban exile and CIA contract employee during the aborted Bay of Pigs invasion; John Hull, an American businessman who owns a ranch in Costa Rica that allegedly served as a staging area for CIA-supplied weapons for the contras; and Robert Owen, a Virginia businessman and consultant to the State Department who allegedly served as North's liaison with the contras.

The defendants have denied the charges, and at a hearing Monday in Miami on a defense motion to dismiss the case, lawyers for the defense characterized the charges as nothing more than "malicious gossip."

Many of the defendants in the Christic suit are former associates of Edwin Wilson, the ex-CIA operative now serving a lengthy federal prison term after his conviction of shipping weaponry to the Libyan leader, Col. Moammar Khadafi, in the 1970s. In his affidavit, the lead Christic attorney, Daniel Sheehan, names Wilson as one of at least 79 witnesses who are supplying the plaintiffs with evidence, particularly against Shackley and Clines, his former associates in the agency and in private business.

In trying to establish the framework and context in which the Pastora bombing occurred, the plaintiffs allege that the privately financed contra supply operation is rooted in a "secret team" whose core group was Shackley and Clines and which later included Secord, Wilson, Hakim and others. Sheehan argues that this group, disillusioned by what it perceived as the isolationist bent of Congress and the vicissitudes of American democracy, used millions of dollars in profits generated by narcotics trafficking to wage secret, unauthorized terrorist wars against communist groups in Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Iran, Chile, Libya and Nicaragua.

As deputy chief of the CIA station in Laos in 1965, Shackley and his deputy, Clines, helped forge an alliance with Meo tribesmen and, through air and other tactical support, helped one Meo faction gain a monopoly on opium trafficking, the suit alleges. In return for this assistance, the Meo leader turned over a percentage of the drug profits to the CIA.

The suit alleges that the Shackley group skimmed money from this fund and funneled it to a secret bank account in Australia controlled by Shackley, Clines and Secord, who had helped run the CIA's secret air war in Laos from 1966-1968 and that periodically, Secord and Clines would carry suitcases of cash to Australia.

Before the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Shackley group also sys-

Continued

2

tematically pilfered a large weapons cache from US stocks in Vietnam and hidden it in Thailand, according to the affidavit, where it was later used in other "off line" operations. One country where the group was active, according to the affidavit, was Iran, where Wilson, Secord and Hakim, who represented US business interests under the shah, were based in the late 70s

In 1979, after the overthrow of the shah and Shackley's and Clines' forced resignation from the CIA because of their dealings with Wilson, most of the network went private, though Secord was still in the Air Force as director of international programs. By 1979, the suit alleges, Shackley, Clines, Wilson, Secord and Hakim had created a number of corporations and subsidiaries around the world to conceal their operations, which would later include aid to the contras and selling arms to Iran.