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In late June the Senate Foreign Relations Committee went into a secret two-day session to take testimony from Cuban American Ramon Milian-Rodriguez. He is currently serving a 35-year sentence in a federal prison, reportedly in North Carolina. Milian-Rodriguez was first interviewed by Jane Wallace, Ty West and Leslie Cockburn of CBS' WEST 57TH STREET program, which on July 11 aired a segment on Milian-Rodriguez's disclosures to it and to the Senate committee. Milian-Rodriguez said he was one of the supervisors of money laundering for the Ochoa-Escobar cocaine cartel in Colombia handling up to $200 million a month. On camera he stated that he had been asked to launder through a Miami company cocaine money destined for the contras. Later, Milian-Rodriguez told the Senate committee that this contact was Felix Rodriguez. Rodriguez, Bay of Pigs veteran, has long been associated with CIA counterinsurgency projects. Most recently he was assigned to the Ilopango air base in El Salvador to supervise air supply drops to the contras. Phone records and his subsequent testimony to the Iran-contra select congressional committees show him to have been in communication with the White House, with Vice President George Bush's office and with fired National Security Council aide Lt. Col. Oliver North. Milian-Rodriguez told the senators that Rodriguez had solicited $10 million for the contras from the Colombian cocaine barons and that this money had been transferred with CIA participation. The Miami company was identified as Ocean Hunter Shrimp Company in Miami, with accompanying allegations of its involvement in drug smuggling. Ocean Hunter is associated with the Costa Rican-based Frigorificos de Puntarenas, indicated on the CBS program to be a CIA front. In late 1985, Ocean Hunter received $200,000 in State Department "humanitarian assistance" to the contras, at a time when the firm was under FBI investigation. After Milan-Rodriguez's testimony, the senators issued 18 subpoenas, including one to John Hull. Hull has long been rumored as the CIA's man in northern Costa Rica. Milian-Rodriguez also testified that the Colombian cartel had been paying Panamanian Defense Forces commander-in-chief Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega $4 million a month for the privilege of operating in Panama. In a communique released July 18, the Panamanian Defense Forces (FDP) accused Washington of employing "disgusting" methods in its campaign to discredit Noriega and the FDP. A prime example, said the communique, was the use of testimony by convicted drug traffickers such as Milian-Rodriguez to fuel the campaign. The communique went on to provide details of the Panamanian military's involvement in the investigation of Milian-Rodriguez, leading to his arrest and imprisonment. The FDP's National Department of Investigations (DENI), said the communique, was responsible for the drug trafficker's arrest in Fort Lauderdale on May 5, 1983. At the time of his arrest, Milian-Rodriguez was preparing to fly to Panama with $5 million in cash aboard the plane. On the same day, police confiscated 61.4 lbs. of cocaine, several hand guns, a machine gun and two vehicles belonging to Milian-Rodriguez. The DENI informed the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of Milian-Rodriguez's activities in Panama, including stopovers between Colombia and Venezuela and the United States. Panamanian investigators, said the communique, provided evidence of Milian-Rodriguez's "warm relationship" with several bank officials and attorneys in Panama where he opened 12 Panamanian corporations with the...
assistance of the Fernandez Lara law firm. The DENI report also pointed out that as a result of Panamanian assistance in collecting information on Milian-Rodriguez's activities, DEA special agent James Bramble presented a special letter of appreciation to Noriega, at the time a colonel and FDP chief of staff. (Basic data from PRENSA LATINA, 07/18/87, 07/19/87; Alexander Cockburn, "Ashes & Diamonds," IN THESE TIMES, July 22-Aug. 4, 1987. See also "Report on Alleged CIA Involvement in Drug Running to Support Nicaraguan Contras," CAU 04/08/87. This report is based on an investigation aired by CBS' West 57th Street, aired on April 6.)

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