

**Photo disturbance:** "Amy learns her ex-lover has AIDS via the answering machine" and "Kit ends the agony of AIDS" are two of the AIDS-related dramas recently produced by Granby, Conn., artist Laurie Costa. Costa bases her images on real-life stories taken from news clippings, interviews and anecdotes. (She says she has about 1,000 AIDS-related news items on file.) Costa selects key incidents from these sources and writes a script. Professional actors then perform the scenes, which Costa directs and photographs. Although critics have praised Costa's photo-dramas, other reactions are often less positive. "I lost a best friend because of the photographs," says Costa. "She said I was sick and psychotic and asked, 'Why are you doing this?'" Some galleries have rejected Costa's work as unmarketable. "They say, 'We love your work but we can't sell it. Why don't you take it someplace else that's more cutting edge?'" An exhibition of Costa's photo-dramas will open at the Ariel Gallery in New York City next fall.



c 1988 Laurie Costa

to military matters, with discussions of politics to come later.

Despite the series of dialogues held since March 21, neither side is sure of the other's intentions. Until the contras are assured that the government is taking firm steps toward "democratizing" Nicaragua, the contras are refusing to enter the seven cease-fire zones and gradually disarm as was agreed to during the Sapoa talks. The Sandinistas' latest proposal calls for this to occur by July 1.

The Sandinistas worry that the contras are merely buying time. They fear the rebels are using the

talks to give their troops a needed respite before resuming the fighting—possibly with U.S. aid given by a Congress that could blame the Sandinistas for a breakdown in negotiations. For these reasons the government is pushing for a "definitive" end to the war, with complete disarmament by the contras, rather than merely prolonging the temporary truce.

As the talks concluded the two sides agreed to continue in "permanent session" and resume talking April 28. Although they were unable even to finalize technical matters related to seven cease-fire zones into

which the contras have agreed to move, the fact that the meeting happened at all (and in Managua itself) was a positive development.

"It hasn't even been a month since we signed the Sapoa agreement," said Sandinista Gen. Humberto Ortega, head of the government delegation. "This isn't an auto race, the Indy 500, trying to reach 200 miles per hour toward the finish line. Logically the government's hope is to negotiate a definitive cease-fire in the shortest time possible. But in such a complex problem we can't hope for any overnight solution."

—William Gasperini

malans, labor lawyer Marta Gloria Torres and human rights attorney Frank LaRue tried to intercede in the arrests of Castillo and Menchu but were shoved aside. "The people who were waiting for us were clobbered and pushed away," says LaRue. According to observers, members of the diplomatic corps were prevented from greeting the returnees at the airport.

With the opposition leaders in custody, a series of decoy police buses set out in several directions to confuse those who would attempt to track the prisoners.

But for Menchu—whose father, mother and brother were killed by government forces—and Castillo, the encounter with the national police turned out to be relatively mild. A Guatemalan judge interrogated the two for four hours about "acts against the state" that they were alleged to have committed in 1981. The judge found no merit to those charges and freed Menchu and Castillo, who were greeted outside the courtroom by hundreds of cheering students. Menchu later told the students that she was "proud" of them and happy to be home.

LaRue says he believes the detentions were an unsuccessful attempt to intimidate members of the delegation and others in exile who are considering returning home to test the waters of democracy. Guatemala has had civilian rule since 1986.

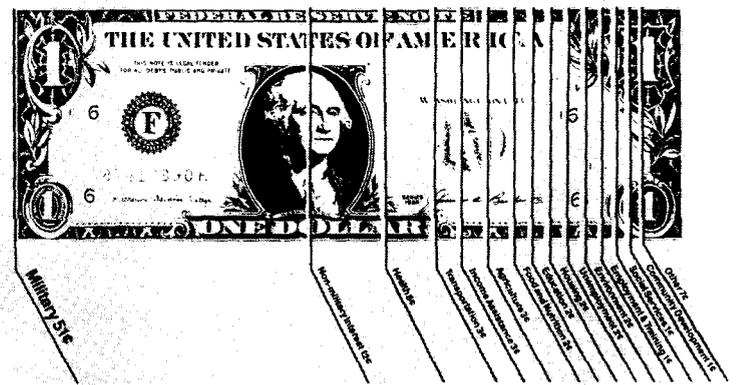
LaRue, who left Guatemala after being hunted by military death squads, said the group will continue its work as planned. "We came because of the peace plan. What we're here for is to see what type of an opening, what measures of democratization are being taken and, ultimately, what kind of participation we can all have." The delegation, which will spend a week in Guatemala, has conducted "bilateral meetings with all sectors of society."

Though the tenseness of the situation has subsided since the airport arrests, LaRue thinks the delegation is still at risk. "There have been leaflets from right-wing death squads threatening the government for letting us in. There has been some destruction at the main offices of the airlines that brought us on the first night. So there's every reason that we should, to say the least, be cautious." —Dennis Bernstein

## The Boulder 10

In an attempt to control anti-apartheid activity, the University of Colorado tried to ban 10 non-students from the campus. One of those non-students was later found on campus and arrested. On March 27 these non-students—now known as the "Boulder 10"—were among 23 demonstrators arrested when police came to tear down an anti-apartheid shantytown. University officials had charged that the shanties were erected without the requisite building permit and posed a fire hazard. The shantytown had been built to protest the university's South African investment policy. The university's board of regents has a policy of "selective divestment"—which means investing only in companies that promise to fight apartheid by legal means and to better the lot of non-white South Africans. University officials have since decided that the non-students "did not appear to pose an immediate threat" to the university. They rescinded the "emergency" ban and dropped charges against the one non-student who was arrested.

## What a 1988 tax dollar buys



The Reagan administration maintains that only 27 percent of the U.S. budget goes to the military. But according to the National Jobs for Peace Campaign, the Pentagon eats up 51 cents of each income-tax dollar. The discrepancy is due to the fact that the government calculates its 27 percent figure by excluding the cost of past wars, foreign military aid and the defense segment of NASA's budget. The government's overall budget figure also includes the cost of Social Security—non-discretionary funds that are separate from the income tax. Social Security was first added to the federal budget pie by the Johnson administration in an attempt to hide the costs of the Vietnam War. Similar obfuscation continues under a Reagan administration that tries to conceal the fact that U.S. military spending has increased from \$140 billion in 1980 to almost \$300 billion today—a buildup that has been directly financed by cuts in social programs.

## Exiles detained on return to Guatemala

Hundreds of well-wishers carrying banners and singing chants of welcome were on hand at the Guatemala City airport April 18 to witness the highly publicized return of four leaders of the United Representation of the Guatemala Opposition. The exiles, who had left the country in 1982 after death threats and assassination attempts, were returning home to engage in the "dialogue of national reconciliation" called for by the Central American peace accord.

Others waiting at the airport were not so enthusiastic about the return. A huge contingent of national police surrounded the airport and gave their own greeting to two of the returning opposition leaders. Dr. Rolando Castillo, former dean of the University of San Carlos medical school, and Quiché Indian leader Rigoberta Menchu were immediately separated from their international observer delegations and taken into custody. They were later released unharmed.

The two other returning Guate-



## HEARINGS

Sen. John Kerry, with staff member, leads the investigation into contra-drug allegations.

# Is Kerry's contra-cocaine probe what it's been cracked up to be?

By Jim Naureckas

**C**ONTRA OPPONENTS HAD LOOKED TO CONGRESSIONAL hearings in early April for a full-scale investigation into charges that the Nicaraguan rebels were involved in drug trafficking. But Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), the lawmaker responsible for the probe, took pains to make clear that his Senate Foreign Relations narcotics subcommittee's hearings were not intended only to explore contra-drug ties.

"I want to emphasize that these hearings

are about the larger aspect of narcotics and narcotics trafficking," he said during the April 4-7 hearings. "What I really hope to do is underscore the way in which clandestine efforts, private aid networks, were taken advantage of by the narcotics process."

Kerry, a consistent opponent of U.S. contra aid, is the one member of Congress who has shown any initiative in investigating allegations that U.S.-backed contras used proceeds from cocaine and marijuana smuggling to fund their war against Nicaragua. But his hearings have so far disappointed many ob-

servers.

Kerry's apparent assumption that the "private aid networks" were "taken advantage of," critics say, overlooks evidence that showed it was the contras and their U.S. associates who were exploiting drug traffickers, not the other way around. Critics also complain that Kerry missed an opportunity to ask the most important question: why was an administration that was waging a "war on drugs" apparently covertly involved with international drug traffickers?

Kerry's cautious management of the hearings was praised by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY), who participated in the hearings although he is not a subcommittee member. If D'Amato, a pro-contra senator, thought his support would dissuade Kerry from any serious condemnation of the contras, the strategy worked: "Kerry's rhetoric was almost indistinguishable from that of D'Amato," notes Larry Birns of the liberal Council on Hemispheric Affairs.

**Bigger fish to fry?** In Kerry's defense, supporters say that the hearings are carefully building the groundwork for further investigations that will cut much deeper—possibly all the way to Vice President George Bush. Documented evidence already indicates Bush has ties to Felix Rodriguez, Oliver North's man in El Salvador. And a major drug figure testified in earlier Kerry hearings that he gave Rodriguez \$10 million in drug profits for the contras. Kerry plans to call Rodriguez in future hearings.

So the fireworks may still come. But thus far, the Kerry hearings have followed in the footsteps of the Iran-contra committee, whose failure to deal with contra-drug evidence necessitated Kerry's investigation. The Iran-contra committee focused on why Congress wasn't informed about the administration's covert actions, not on why those covert actions were going on in the first place. Kerry's focus on the international drug cartel also misses the big picture: how a U.S. foreign policy, based on subterfuge and carried out by people with criminal associations, inevitably led to drug traffickers.

The Massachusetts lawmaker missed a chance to raise exactly that issue when he interviewed contra leader Octaviano Cesar, who took \$4 million or \$5 million from a major cocaine dealer at a time when the Reagan administration was covertly aiding the contras in violation of the Boland

**"How can you not tread on the CIA when the point is to show that the CIA was in collusion with drug smugglers?"**

Amendment. The videotaped interview of Cesar—the brother of Alfredo Cesar, one of the five current contra directors—was played at the hearings.

"I don't want to get overly moralistic here or something," Kerry told Cesar. "But I want to ask you the question because you talk about your need...to support your effort... What happens if the results of the taking of that money are that more kids die on the streets of American cities because they take drugs?"

"I'm not proud of that, but we just didn't have any choice," Cesar responded. "I mean, the U.S. Congress didn't give us any choice." He went on to explain that the alternative was allowing the Sandinistas to murder *campesinos*.

Kerry didn't rebut Cesar's Oliver North-style apology, but he did comment: "I personally liked Octaviano Cesar, and respect him in many ways, and he's a very committed person. But obviously, as he himself said, that doesn't excuse what he's done."

**Poor little contras:** Yet wasn't Kerry's claim that the contras were "taken advantage of" just such an excuse? If so, it was a poor one. The testimony of convicted traffickers George Morales and Gary Betzner shattered the illusion that the contras were innocent victims of the narco-traffickers' plots.

"These gentlemen [Octaviano Cesar and his comrades] approached me seeking assistance, financial assistance, military assistance," testified Morales. "They said that because they had personal knowledge of Washington, that they perhaps could do something about my indictment." He was referring to the drug charges that led to his conviction and current imprisonment.

As a result of the meeting, Morales gave millions of dollars directly to Cesar and his associates. The deal, according to Morales, also allowed the contras to use the drug network's airlift capacities to get into the cocaine trade themselves.

At the contras' request, Morales twice sent his pilot, Betzner, from Florida to Costa Rica

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