

CHALLENGE

AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS' LEGAL ACTION FUND
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Dear AFIO Member,

This letter is being sent to the AFIO membership list; it is an authorized mailing, approved by the Board of Directors in a vote on which I abstained.

On June 8, 1980, a book entitled Conspiracy, by Anthony Summers, was published in New York. The author invites, indeed cajoles, the reader to believe that I was CIA's case officer for Lee Harvey Oswald. The theory expounded in the book is that I may have been point man for "a renegade element of U.S. intelligence", and is based on allegations by a Cuban exile. The book conveniently ignores the fact that the Cuban first related his story 27 months after he had been sent to prison, convicted on a narcotics charge. The book also fails to mention that the Cuban claimed that he had been convicted because CIA had framed him.

I was amazed that a reputable house would publish such a monstrous allegation without insisting that their author at least attempt to interview me. On June 12, I consulted an attorney and, despite the thousands of dollars in expenses he anticipated, I decided to sue the publisher and author for libel, and, possibly, slander.

Then, in a June 25 press conference, four "private researchers" declared that I was involved in the assassination of former Chilean foreign minister Orlando Letelier in Washington in 1976. Working with me in the "cover up" of that murder, they said, were William F. Buckley, Jr., and Ray Cline. Institutionally, CIA, AFIO and Ray's Center for Strategic and International Studies were involved, the ludicrous accusation claimed. (Although there were reporters present, only one newspaper carried the story: New York World, successor to The Daily Worker).

One of the accusants in the Letelier charge was a Fred Landis. He described himself as a consultant to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, a claim which the Committee denies. Landis noted his connection with Counter-Spy. In May, this year, he went to Jamaica to announce CIA involvement in elections there, as Philip Agee did previously. You will recall that on July 1 an editor of the Covert Action Information Bulletin---for which Landis has

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written---released a list of alleged CIA employees in Kingston. Two days later the home of the man named by them as Chief of Station was machine-gunned and bombed. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

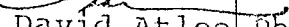
I managed to get through the month of June without being accused of being involved in the Lincoln assassination; nevertheless I decided to take legal action against the Letelier accusation and the Kennedy allegation. Financing both suits is beyond my financial resources. Consequently, I am establishing CHALLENGE, An Intelligence Officers' Legal Action Fund. For a number of reasons, it is best that this effort not be connected with AFIO. Funds raised will be for direct expenses only, and any residue after the Kennedy-Letelier suits will be set aside to assist and support other intelligence officers who may consider legal action against absurd charges. In the event of a financial settlement in my favor, I will return monies advanced to me, plus an appropriate contribution to the Fund.

One of the men who made the Letelier accusation is Donald Freed, author of a new book now in the bookstores. His grotesque novel mixes fictional and real characters. Dick Helms is in the book---in true name---and alleged to be in Bolivia when Che Guevara is slain. A number of other fine intelligence officers, now dead, are defamed in the novel.

Ex-intelligence officers have been battered around in recent years, and we've taken the beating. But I've decided that it's time to challenge this malicious treatment in public print and public forums. I believe a test case should be mounted against writers who defame ex-intelligence officers, dead and alive, by using their names in egregious novels. I also believe that loyal ex-intelligence men and women, working together, should contemplate a class action suit against the people who reveal the identities of intelligence operatives abroad. (A prominent Washington lawyer has assured me this is feasible).

Will you help me launch CHALLENGE? This will be an intelligence officers' legal action---not defense---fund. Your contribution will be tax-deductible retroactively, when we receive such status, but that will take time. Meanwhile a gift from you will help send a signal that ex-intelligence officers are now determined to CHALLENGE those who seem to believe that we don't have our own rights as citizens.

Thanks for your help,


David Atlee Phillips