

Employees Airing Grievances

CIA Shaken by Job Cutbacks

10/4/79
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The decision by Central Intelligence Agency Director Stansfield M. Turner to cut 816 employees from the CIA's Operations Directorate by 1979 has left the intelligence agency deeply shaken and Turner with a major operational problem.

Normally secretive operations division employees, most of whom are accustomed to working out of the public eye, have openly begun venting their grievances toward Turner and the cutbacks to reporters. Turner, in turn, angrily attacked the intelligence agency leakers recently as "crybabies."

In an even more unusual move, several of those included on the initial list of 210 CIA employees scheduled to be fired have sought out legal advice on fighting the cuts. Knowledgeable sources within the agency said last week there is a strong likelihood the cuts could end up being challenged in court through a class-action lawsuit.

Angry intelligence agency members on the dismissal list—a number of whom don't have

enough time in to qualify for a pension — have talked darkly of turning to book writing for a living once they are let go. That threat was underscored by the recent publication of former CIA intelligence specialist Frank Snepp's unapproved version of alleged foul-ups at the conclusion of the Vietnam war.

Critics have also accused Turner of using his tough attitude as a means of winning approval for a slot on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a belief that spawned "Beat Navy" signs on the agency's headquarters' walls before the Army-Navy game. Turner retained his admiral's title when he took over the intelligence agency in March.

Following the first dismissal notices, a pointed six-verse parody of a Gilbert and Sullivan tune from "HMS Pinafore" also appeared on Langley bulletin boards. "He'll be the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations]/ So thinks he; Thus why give a fig/ For the Agency," the ditty ends.

Sources inside and outside the intelligence agency painted an ironic picture of the CIA's

See CIA, A2, Col. 3



STANSFIELD M. TURNER
... inherited recommendation

CIA, From A1

4,500-member Operations Directorate since the first dismissal notifications were hand-delivered. Oct. 31—a move some on the list now are calling the "Halloween Massacre." After nearly three decades of maneuvering and occasionally toppling foreign governments the cloak-and-dagger division is now under attack and having difficulty protecting its own ranks.

"I was rather proud of the work I had done," said an operations division veteran, who described his work to a reporter the other night as "catching spies." "Now I'm being called no more than surplus, and when you think about that it hurts."

At the same time CIA officials said last week they were surprised and puzzled at the intensity of the reaction to the dismissals. Turner called two meetings of 500 senior CIA officials each in August to warn that the firings were imminent. In addition, the director sent out a detailed memo in October explaining how the cuts were being made.

"We never heard a peep of protest until the notices went out," said an agency spokesman. "Now all of a sudden it's all over the place."

The two-sentence dismissal notice was signed by the CIA's deputy director for operations, William W. Wells, although agency officials acknowledged that the abrupt language of the mimeographed notice was at Turner's

urging. The notices were held for three days before being delivered after CIA psychologists warned they could cause serious depression if they were delivered on a Friday.

The notices were worded carefully, according to agency officials, to avoid the prospect of lawsuits. Turner is empowered with unlimited authority to fire CIA employees under provisions of the 1947 National Security Act. Only five suits have ever been filed challenging CIA dismissals, and all were rejected in the courts, according to former CIA general counsel Lawrence Houston.

Spokesmen for the CIA have also sought in recent weeks to play down the effects of the dismissals on foreign intelligence-gathering capability. According to the CIA, only 13 foreign jobs are to be abolished in the cuts, and all of those positions are administrative.

But sources said that among the first wave of those notified they will be fired are CIA station chiefs — top field officers — in West Germany, Norway, Canada, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, Japan, Australia and Luxembourg and the chiefs of smaller satellite field stations in Germany and Switzerland.

"You'd have to be blind looking at that list not to understand the effect this is going to have on intelligence-gathering," a senior CIA official whose name is on the list said this week.

One CIA station chief, who was ordered in to the agency's Langley head-

quarters to sit on a three-man board picking "supergrades"—GS 16s and above—to be fired, returned to his station to find that his two fellow board members had quietly included his name on the list.

Last week, CIA officials, in an apparent effort to calm some of the criticism over the firings, passed the word among senior officials on the list that they could stay on until September if their retirement comes up by then. All the others will be officially fired March 31.

A second wave of dismissal notices is scheduled to go out in June, with the dismissals to take effect late next fall, according to a CIA spokesman.

Turner appeared to back off slightly after telling Newsweek magazine in an interview on those who were to be fired, "I bet there isn't five of them that had personal risk." The director's comment stirred up unusual anger, especially since a number of those on the list had long careers in dangerous undercover work for the operations division.

In a followup letter to Newsweek—which was also posted on CIA headquarters bulletin boards—Turner wrote, "I very much regret having said this," and added that he was limiting his criticism to those who took their complaints to reporters.

Despite the back-and-forth sniping, even Turner's most ardent critics con-

cede there is some room to trim bureaucratic fat from the CIA. Turner inherited a recommendation to cut 1,400 persons in the next six to eight years, but decided to shorten the firings to avoid the agony of prolonged dismissals in a tight-knit agency like the CIA, one official spokesman said.

The major opposition has centered on the brusque methods Turner has used. Critics point out, for instance, that a number of those slated for the embarrassment of a pink slip are senior officials whose retirements could have been quietly arranged. "You wouldn't have had 100 bitter people if it had been done that way," said a CIA official this week.

Other officials worried this week that, under the tightened-up dismissal schedule, confidence in overseas agents may be undermined. Station

chiefs, for example, are sometimes given a year by the CIA to familiarize themselves with their new posts.

"A contact in a sensitive position," said one veteran overseas spy handler, "cannot deal with his handler on a here-today-gone-tomorrow basis."

Agency spokesmen pointed out, however, that there are still plenty of seasoned station chiefs to go around and that the dismissals were decided in such a way as not to upset the 20 per cent of the CIA's information-gathering accomplished by humans.

The cuts, said a spokesman, were undertaken partly in an effort to open up advancement paths for a number of younger officers in the middle grades. Turner undermined that argument somewhat recently by abolishing some of the agency's senior grade slots, according to CIA officials.