

George Loses Bid for Secret CIA Files

Iran-Contra Defendant Chastised by Judge

By George Lardner Jr.
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A federal judge yesterday brusquely rejected a former CIA official's request for "literally millions" of highly classified documents and chastised him for trying to turn his Iran-contra criminal case "into a three-ring circus."

U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth held in a 21-page order that Clair E. George, former chief of the CIA's clandestine service, in effect had asked for permission "to search for a needle in the haystack of the country's most classified secrets, without the slightest indication of what the needle might be and how it might be material to his defense."

George, who headed the CIA's operations directorate from 1984 to 1987, faces trial on 10 felony counts accusing him of obstruction, perjury and making false statements in connection with congressional and federal grand jury investigations of the Iran-contra scandal.

After pleading not guilty last fall, he asked for copies of all presidential findings on every covert action conducted around the world when he was in charge, copies of all documents created for the planning group meetings leading up to those findings, and copies of all CIA op-

erations directorate cable traffic concerning the activities.

Voicing anger at George's "intransigence" for failing to narrow his requests, Lamberth said George could meet his stated goal of describing the scope, demands and priorities of his CIA job without such a massive disclosure.

"The court must now reject the defendant's attempt to turn an Iran-contra case into a three-ring circus involving *all* of the CIA's covert activities throughout the world," Lamberth said.

"Such an absurdly overbroad request for documents *admittedly* not related to Iran-contra in any way is nothing less than an attempt to put all of the CIA's activities on trial—a trial which, because of the country's interest in secrecy regarding covert operations, would never occur," Lamberth said.