

Few Shed Tears Over CIA Spy Chief's Forced Retirement

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The decision of the top CIA clandestine operations officer, William Wells, to retire rather than accept a lesser assignment is not reducing anyone in the agency's cloak-and-dagger side to tears.

It's a case of the executioner lopping off a lot of heads and then getting the ax himself," according to one veteran CIA source. He implied that Wells, the "DDO," or deputy director for operations, might have attracted more sympathy if he had not been the official who processed the list of 210 DDO officers selected for early retirement recently by the CIA director, Adm. Stanfield Turner.

Wells could not be reached for comment, but well-informed sources said the DDO chief got his "ticket" last weekend. He was offered an administrative post at Langley or a senior CIA post in Europe. But either move would have been a step down for the man who has been in direct charge of all CIA clandestine operations and spying activities for the past 18 months.

"The irony of it is that Wells presided over the first cut of 200 or so officers from the clandestine side. Even though he probably didn't sit on the panel himself, the names had to cross his desk," a source said. "Now his number has come up."

SEVERAL SOURCES have said morale at the CIA is at rock bottom because of Turner's housecleaning. Apparently all of the cuts, which eventually will affect 800 persons, are coming from DDO — one of the three major divisions of the CIA. Turner's plans do not envision any similar reductions in DDA (administration) or DDI (intelligence).

It was noted that all of the cuts so far have been of CIA officers, not secretaries and clerks. To veteran CIA officials, this means only one thing: Turner appears not to care very much for the spy side of the CIA.

"Spying is really something he just doesn't like," said one source. "The admiral will tell you how well the U-2 planes photographed the missile sites in Cuba and how well the analysts interpreted the pictures. But he never mentions that it was spies on the ground who sent us the information that got the high-flying planes out on the photo missions that proved the missile sites were being prepared."

In the first batch of 210 persons selected for early retirement under Turner's reduction-in-force plan, there was a mixture of GS-18s and GS-17s, as well as some junior officers with below-average fitness reports. Many of the senior CIA people had their 25 years of service in all ready, but a number of others were let go only a few years before retirement. The CIA is unique in the federal government because anyone

can be fired at any time, even within a couple of years of retirement.

There are perhaps 4,000 employees in DDO, and Turner intends to get rid of 800 of them over a span of years. It is the uncertainty about their future that has caused morale to plummet since the reduction in force became known.

WELLS, AN OLD Far East hand and former chief of European operations, came close to getting laid off last July. But insiders say the threat was removed when he began signing the short notices that went to everyone in DDO, informing them that a cutback was in progress. Presumably, many of the "selected out" clandestine officers heard they were through from their boss, Wells.

Turner appears to be trying to get rid of what is perceived as the "old boy" network at the agency — officers who go back to the days of Allen Dulles, when hardly anyone questioned anything the CIA did and few had any idea what that might be. At the same time, he obviously is disposing of younger officers whose fitness reports or performance records are below par.

Retirement

Whatever Turner's aim, morale was not helped when the rumor got around that he intended to bring in another Navy officer to take over DDO.

One official said it is probably true that Turner is trying to make sure the CIA never again gets out of control — especially his — and that he may be carrying out White House orders to clean house at the agency.

MEANWHILE, President Carter yesterday made it official that he will nominate Frank C. Carlucci III, now U.S. ambassador to Portugal, to be deputy director of the CIA, the No. 2 post in the agency. Carlucci, 47, is a career foreign service officer from Bear Creek, Pa., who has had a varied and adventurous career in government.

Carlucci's nomination is intended, observers believe, to reduce some of the turmoil caused at the CIA by Turner's personnel policies.

Carlucci's experience is wide: He was director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, and was deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget in the Nixon White House. In between, he served as a political officer (not in the CIA, officials declare) in the late 1960s and was nearly chosen by the Carter administration to be undersecretary of state for management.

Turner said last night he was delighted with Carlucci's announcement. He proposed Mr. Carlucci to the president because his varied experience, in the foreign service and other high-level government managerial posts makes him particularly well suited for the position. I look forward to a close and productive association with Mr. Carlucci whom I respect and admire," Turner said.