

Cronkite, Chancellor Anchormen for CIA?

By Lyle Denniston

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With the CIA and a House committee backing their version, TV commentators John Chancellor and Walter Cronkite took to the air last night to deny they had worked secretly for the CIA.

Both of the network "anchormen," Chancellor on NBC and Cronkite on CBS, rejected accusations made earlier in the day by Sam Jaffe, who had been a reporter for ABC and CBS.

Both of them also issued statements yesterday denying Jaffe's comments. The CIA said that the two men "have had no connection with CIA whatsoever." It would not comment on any of Jaffe's other remarks.

JAFFE, appearing on the WTTG program "Panorama," said he had been told by a former ABC colleague that Chancellor and Cronkite, plus ABC News president Bill Sheehan and ABC reporter Lou Cioffi, had provided information to the CIA or the FBI. Sheehan and Cioffi also issued denials.

Although Jaffe did not name the former colleague who allegedly was his source, Jaffe said the person was a White House speechwriter who was working his last day at the White House yesterday. The only person who would fit that description is John J. Casserty, a former ABC reporter who is leaving the White House and will work for the Interior Department. Casserty, in a telephone interview last night, said, "Sam Jaffe is incor-

rect." He dismissed the report as "absurd," and when asked if he had ever told Jaffe anything like that, Casserty replied: "No, I certainly didn't."

He said he was a friend of Jaffe's, and had talked to him many times recently, trying to help Jaffe find a job. Casserty said Jaffe was having trouble getting a broadcast job because he has been identified as a source of information for the FBI when he was working as a correspondent in Moscow.

IN JAFFE'S television appearance here yesterday, he said that he had confirmed the information about the network personalities with former White House speechwriter Patrick Buchanan. Buchanan flatly denied the report, saying, "I have not seen the report, saying, 'I have not seen such a list, and I have no knowledge of it.'"

Jaffe also said that he had been told by sources in the House Intelligence Committee that it had a list numbering between 40 and 200 names of journalists who had worked for the CIA and the FBI, and that the list is "dynamic — some of the biggest names in our business."

A staff member for that committee, declining to comment on anything except the references to Chancellor and Cronkite, said: "We have absolutely no information that they ever had any relationship with the agency." The aide said the failure to comment on any list, or any of Jaffe's statements about Sheehan and Cioffi, was not meant to imply that those other statements were correct.

'Totally Untwue'

The committee has obtained evidence that, as of last year, 11 full-time officers of the CIA were posing as journalists overseas in connection with their intelligence work. They have not been named publicly. The committee also has information that 15 news organizations provided cover for the CIA over the past three years.

IN STATEMENTS released by their offices yesterday, the four broadcast figures said of Jaffe's statements:

Chancellor: "This is not only totally untrue, it's ridiculous. I have never done anything formally or informally for either the CIA or the FBI."

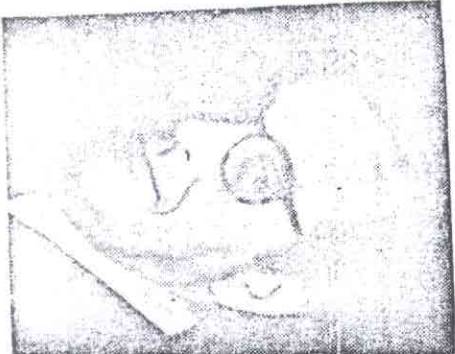
Cronkite: "I have never knowingly had any contact with the CIA in any capacity whatsoever except as a reporter seeking information. I have never knowingly been briefed or debriefed by that organization. Nor have I worked in any capacity, paid or unpaid, with the FBI or any other intelligence organization. The entire idea of newsmen serving as government informants is abhorrent to me. The practice is a clear violation of journalistic ethics and can only serve to impede the collection and free flow of information."

Sheehan: "Mr. Sheehan categorically, without qualification, denies any involvement, formal or informal, with any intelligence organization of the United States or any other country."

Cioffi: "It's totally ridiculous."

The president of CBS News, Richard S. Salant, said, "At least as far back as 1971, Sam Jaffe has been peddling his story about his alleged relationships with the CIA."

Salant added: "My confidence in Mr. Cronkite is as complete as my contempt for Mr. Jaffe Jr. [sic]."



JOHN CHANCELLOR
'It's ridiculous'



WALTER CRONKITE
Idea 'abhorrent' to me