

The Washington merry-go-round

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With LES WHITTEN

WASHINGTON — Not only are CIA agents still engaged in domestic snooping, but they are using fraudulent Defense Department credentials.

Some victims have protested to the Pentagon that they have been harassed by late-night calls. Police have also complained that their townsmen have been hounded by phantom agents.

This has upset Pentagon investigators who are concerned about their professional standing. Yet when CIA operatives have been caught in the masquerade, the Defense Department has ordered its investigators to lie for the CIA agents by saying they work for "another DOD investigating unit."

Although the CIA is forbidden by law to spy within the United States, its continuing domestic investigations appear to be quite legal. The CIA is authorized, for example, to conduct full field investigations of CIA contacts, contractors and job applicants. CIA security men are also permitted to keep a constant eye on contractors doing

work for the CIA and to investigate the unauthorized disclosure of classified CIA information.

These investigations keep eight field offices busy across the country. A spokesman also conceded that the "security investigators do not normally identify themselves as CIA agents but as government investigators."

Their favorite credentials have been provided by the Pentagon. When the Defense Investigative Service was formed in 1972, however, the CIA imposters began getting mixed up with real Pentagon investigators.

In the state of Washington, for example, a CIA sleuth with Pentagon credentials drove around in a gleaming, gold Buick Centurion while the Pentagon agents were relegated to cheaper cars.

The military investigators found out about the Buick fancier after his snooping tactics provoked the ire of the local police. An infuriated police chief called the Defense Investigative Service to protest.

"The guy is an imposter," the police chief was told. But before the man in the gold Buick could be arrested, the regional Defense Department head made a cautious check and discovered the culprit was actually a CIA man who had been authorized to use fake Pentagon credentials.

Other similar incidents finally aroused the regional head to write a blunt memo to Bernard O'Donnell, who was then the deputy but is now the acting director of the Defense Investigative Service.

The memo, dated April 3, 1973, reported: "CIA people in our area... are running around with DOD credentials. Three individuals... are using DOD credentials to conduct background investigations and record checks at the Boeing Company and in the Seattle area."

"The local CIA head stated," continued the memo, "that they are employed by his agency and that they have been using this procedure at the Boeing Company for the last ten years. He requested that this fact not be revealed, especially to the Boeing Company, to avoid breaking their cover."

Another suspected CIA agent, according to the memo, showed DOD credentials to the (Everett, Wash.) police department in order to run a record check on a husband and wife.

The memo cited other CIA men in Pentagon disguise in Washington and Idaho. "At the risk of being facetious," the memo suggested, "I might suggest that if we were to round up all these oddball DOD investigators running around and ship them on down to DOS3 (a Pentagon unit) in Los Angeles, the

backlog (of work) would be cleared up in no time flat."

Other Pentagon officials complained about passing off CIA agents as military investigators. The protests finally led O'Donnell to call a secret meeting at Defense Investigative Service headquarters in mid-1973.

According to two unimpeachable sources, O'Donnell instructed his regional officials to lie to protect the CIA men. "He said for us to explain that they were from another Defense investigating group," recounted one source.

The instructions to lie, according to our sources, came down from the Defense secretary's office, itself.

WATCH ON WASTE: The Pentagon at last is getting serious about conserving energy. Common sense would dictate that saving energy should also save money. But it is too much to expect common sense from the Pentagon.

In the puzzle palace on the Potomac, you see, it costs to save. The military brass have carefully calculated that it will cost a cool \$107 million to save energy.

The Air Force has asked for \$47 million to conserve energy next year. The Army wants \$32 million, the Navy \$28.3 million. Other military agencies, including the supersecret National Security Agency, are asking for \$175,000 to save on energy.

A Defense Department spokesman told us some of the money will be spent for "research and development," some for "reconverting heating plants. He promised these "investments" would result in "reduced operating costs" within five years.