

Legal Defense Fund Being Raised to Aid Prosecuted Agents

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James Angleton, the former counterintelligence chief of the CIA, and other cold warriors are raising a legal defense fund for any intelligence community personnel who are investigated or prosecuted for alleged illegal activities in the line of duty.

Angleton was forced to resign his post in December, 1974, in the wake of revelations of illegal domestic spying by the CIA, some of it under his direction. Angleton contends that such activities, whether by the FBI or the CIA, were ordered by top U.S. officials and justified by national security considerations.

"We're not trying to pre-judge any cases," he said of the direct mail defense fund solicitation.

Angleton talked with reporters yesterday at a luncheon meeting of the American Security Council, a defense-oriented, anti-Communist organization. Many of its members are former high-ranking U.S. military officials.

The other organizers of the defense fund, former Ambassador to Vietnam Elbridge Durbrow and retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Robert C. Richardson III, also are members of the ASC.

Angleton cited statements by Attorney General Griffin B. Bell before a Senate subcommittee last month that the government ought to, but will not, pay the legal fees of FBI agents indicated for break-ins, wiretaps, mail opening or other illegal activities.

In a prosecution authorized by Bell, one former FBI supervisor in the New York City field office was indicted recently in connection with surveillance activities in the early 1970s against the Weathermen, an underground terrorist organization. Similar indictments against other former FBI agents are expected. The Justice Department has decided against prosecuting Central Intelligence Agency officers involved in illegal mail opening.

Rep. Eldon Rudd (R-Ariz. who was for 20 years an FBI agent, argued that Justice Department prosecution of FBI personnel is unfair and that the country's intelligence agencies are hampered in their efforts against the Soviets by the resulting poor morale.

Angleton said he attributed the new administration's inclination to prosecute intelligence personnel primarily to Vice President Mondale, who served on the Senate Intelligence Committee which investigated excesses of the U.S. Intelligence Community.