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Washington Merry-Go-Round by JACK ANDERSON

WASHINGTON — The Central Intelligence Agency has admitted in an extraordinary private letter to Sen. William Fulbright, D-Ark., that the agency has penetrated the police forces of friendly foreign countries.

The remarkable confession by CIA Director William Colby came in the course of a discreet but intensive lobbying effort to keep alive U.S. support for foreign police programs.

Colby told Fulbright that the

"relationships" built up with policemen through these programs have been highly useful in "obtaining foreign intelligence" from foreign constabularies.

The friendly foreign cops, like national police everywhere, are privy to their nation's darkest secrets. And while Colby does not say so, our government sources tell us the foreigners are not above trading a national secret or two for a little CIA cash.

Colby, in his message to Fulbright, delicately skirts the matter of corrupting foreign police, conceding only that the liaisons bring the CIA vital information on "illicit narcotics traffic, international terrorism and hijacking."

Colby's covert lobbying was directed against a bill by Sen. James Abourezk, D-S.D., that would kill U.S. aid to foreign police and prison operations. The measure was drafted after shocking abuses were disclosed in South Vietnamese prisons constructed with the U.S. taxpayers' funds.

The CIA director, who as a top U.S. hand in Vietnam saw the abuses first hand, nevertheless, said, that the Abourezk measure would "appear to restrict activities...by the CIA." The main cutback would be in "obtaining foreign intelligence information" from friendly espionage services and agents "within national police forces..." Colby went on.

Some of the agents in foreign police forces, Colby indicated, had been developed during "specialized training and other support" given by the CIA. In sum, concluded Colby, the CIA recommended that the Abourezk bill "not be adopted."

Colby's lobbying proved effective. In secret session, the committee permitted the CIA to go on supporting foreign police operations.

Insiders suspect that Colby's effort to defeat the Abourezk provision was actually aimed at preserving the International

Police Academy, an institution dear to the hearts of the spooks.

According to Victor Marchetti and John Marks, authors of "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," the Agency has funded training of foreign police at the academy and recruited spies there.

Colby himself wrote to Abourezk last January that the academy, ostensibly run by the State Department, had "called on us in the past for some support for their program. But," he added, "all such support has been terminated."

We also reported last September that the CIA was involved in a Texas bomb school where the academy trained foreign policemen on explosive devices. A State Department official later admitted the CIA provided "guest lecturers" for the course which has now been moved to Edgewood Arsenal, Md.

Footnote: Both the CIA and the academy say no CIA funds are now going into the school. Colby has also personally said support by the CIA for the school has been terminated.