

CIA Steps Up 'Scrub Down' of Agents

Agency May Weigh Rights Violations Against Value of Information

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By Walter Pincus
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CIA Director John M. Deutch has accelerated a worldwide review of CIA-paid agents who work inside foreign governments to see if they are connected to human rights violations, narcotics trafficking or terrorism, according to administration and congressional sources.

The unprecedented inquiry, which began under then-Director R. James Woolsey, gained new urgency in the wake of the Guatemalan affair, where a Guatemalan military officer paid by the CIA, Col. Julio Roberto Alpirez, may have been involved in the murder of an American innkeeper and the torture of the Guatemalan husband of an American lawyer.

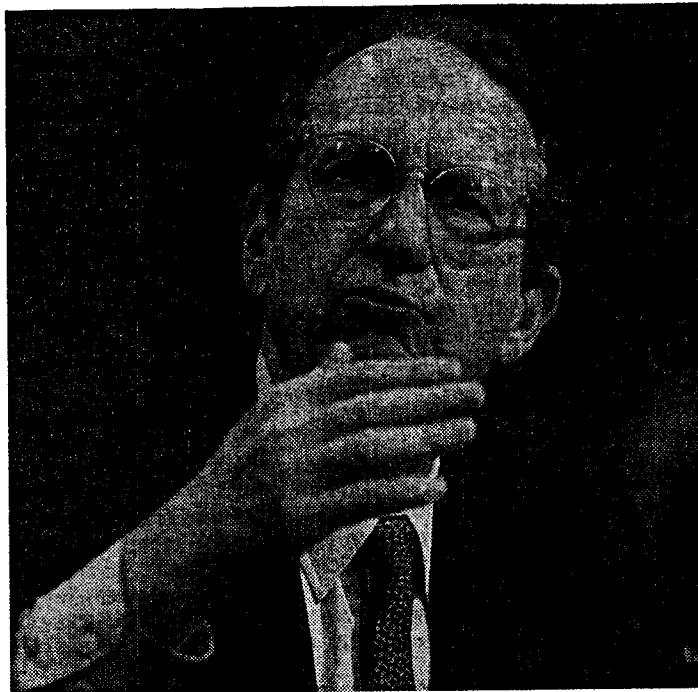
A member of the House intelligence committee yesterday described the review as the CIA "cleaning out the basement." He said the agency has begun to give Congress reports of "a lot of similar incidents" to the situation in Guatemala.

"They are doing a scrub down of their agents," Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.), ranking minority member of the Senate intelligence committee, said yesterday. Kerrey said reports were coming to the intelligence oversight committees but in Asian, African, Middle Eastern, Central American and Latin American countries, where the CIA maintains relations with internal security forces, some officials are associated with activities that the United States would define as human rights violations. In Thailand, for example, the CIA is known to have relations with government officials who violate human rights and traffic in drugs, several sources said.

In a statement Wednesday in conjunction with the CIA inspector general's report on Guatemala, Deutch said that "in cases of counterterrorism and counternarcotics we are, of necessity, drawn into relationships with people of questionable character."

What remains for Deutch to decide, however, is what to do with agents who have troublesome backgrounds and are already on the payroll or in the process of being recruited.

In his statement Deutch acknowledged what many CIA case officers privately say of foreign officials who become paid agents: "The most desir-



BY RAY LUSTIG—THE WASHINGTON POST

Director Deutch must decide what to do with agents already on the payroll.

able potential assets frequently have serious problems."

Deutch has asked his general counsel, Jeffrey Smith, to examine CIA procedures for determining how to handle paid agents who "may have violated human rights or U.S. law."

A senior CIA official said Wednesday that the agency may keep foreign government officials who have questionable human rights records on the payroll if the intelligence information they provide is extremely valuable to U.S. interests.

"I can foresee a case when the decision is made after careful deliberations that we would continue to have a relationship with an individual despite that individual's human rights record because the information that he or she was providing was so valuable that it was worth it," the official told reporters.

He said Deutch wanted guidelines to give CIA officers in the field and at headquarters as to what type of agents they should keep or recruit.

Kerrey suggested that the CIA should have the appropriate congressional oversight committees approve the recruitment of particularly controversial agents. Citing the Guatemalan incident—where the CIA failed to in-

form Congress that one of its agents may have been involved in the murder of an American for fear of legislators' responses—Kerrey said, "The CIA won't ask because they feared what they want would not be approved."

CIA Inspector General Frederick P. Hitz, in his investigation of the Guatemalan affair, recommended that CIA case officers in foreign countries tell their recruited agents that their association with the agency may end if they engage in human rights violations, narcotics or terrorism.

In describing Hitz's view, a senior CIA official said, "There are certain behaviors that we will not tolerate. . . . [The agents] must be absolutely clear in their own minds that if they engage in human rights violations, that's the end of the relationship in terms of remuneration."

In Guatemala, Alpirez was taken off the payroll in 1991 after the CIA learned he may have been involved in the killing of William DeVine, the American innkeeper. The agency later gave Alpirez \$44,000 in accumulated back pay, an action that Hitz criticized and one that was denounced by members of Congress.