

LAPD accused of spying on anti-spying citizen's group

By Joel Sappell
Herald Examiner staff writer

Leaders of a coalition dedicated to exposing and ending political spying by law enforcement agencies claim the Los Angeles Police Department "infiltrated" their group in 1978.

The Citizens' Commission on Police Repression planned to hold a news conference today announcing it would file a lawsuit charging the LAPD's Public Disorder and Intelligence Division improperly spied to gain information about the coalition's anti-spy activities.

The citizens' commission, a coalition of more than 45 community groups, also planned to demand an investigation of their charges at today's Los Angeles Police Commission meeting.

Linda Valentino, a citizens' commission leader, claims that officer Edward Camarillo, while working full-time with the LAPD, was an active member of the group from January to May 1978.

Valentino provided the Herald Examiner with documents from three of the coalition's meetings, signed by everyone who attended. Camarillo's signature appears on all three.

Camarillo, 29, is an LAPD officer assigned to the discovery section, which assists the department in civil suits.

At the time of his membership in the activist group, Camarillo was assigned to the LAPD's personnel division — the same division to which another officer accused of infiltrating community groups was assigned.

The Herald Examiner contacted Camarillo twice yesterday by telephone at his LAPD office, but he refused comment both times. He would neither confirm nor deny the allegation.

LAPD spokesman Cmdr. William Booth also refused comment. Booth said the department will respond to the Police Commission if asked to do so.

The LAPD's intelligence-gathering guidelines, adopted in June, 1976, state that "the political or personal beliefs or preferences of any individual, group, or organization are not of relevance or of concern to the department."

Valentino charges that the department has not complied with those guidelines. Her group's only "crime," she said, is that it opposes police surveillance of lawful political groups.

"The irony and arrogance is incredible," declared Valentino. "I'm outraged."

Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky, who has been a

vocal critic of the LAPD's intelligence activities, is particularly interested in the allegation because during the period of alleged infiltration, the citizens' group was helping him draft legislation that would give individuals access to their police files.

Yaroslavsky introduced his legislation in July, 1978, following the release of a list of 200 organizations on which the intelligence division was keeping files.

About the same time as the list was released, the citizens' commission was instrumental in identifying five LAPD officers who had allegedly infiltrated activist groups in Los Angeles. Those groups, four of which had been highly critical of the LAPD, filed suit against the department. As a result, the plaintiffs recently obtained more than 1,000 pages of confidential intelligence division documents, detailing the activities of those five officers.

But commission leaders are not the only ones outraged by Camarillo's LAPD connection. Attorney Antonio Rodriguez is, too. For three years, Camarillo was a member of an activist Hispanic group that Rodriguez headed — the now-disbanded Center for Autonomous Social Action.

It was Rodriguez who learned of Camarillo's police status a few months ago, and then notified the citizens' commission last week. Rodriguez is joining in the lawsuit.

Camarillo left the citizens' commission in May, 1978, when the commission and other community groups started discovering that LAPD officers were among their members.



Linda Valenino, left, and Jeff Cohen, of the Citizens' Commission on Police Repression.