

Police Commission to probe

Yaroslavsky may join ACLU suit alleging civil rights violations

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The Police Commission announced it will probe charges that the Los Angeles Police Department "infiltrated" an anti-police spying coalition in 1978 that was working closely with City Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky.

The charges, leveled by the Citizens' Commission on Police Repression and reported in yesterday's Herald Examiner, "are sufficiently serious enough to warrant an investigation," Police Commission President Stephen Reinhardt said yesterday.

But Reinhardt warned it would be unwise to "prejudge" the matter

— even if the citizens' group actually was infiltrated. There may have been a legitimate reason, Reinhardt speculated.

To find out, the commission ordered Police Chief Daryl Gates to investigate the matter and report on his findings. The commission, which said it may probe further if necessary, will then forward a final report to the City Council.

But that report may never be made public because of the department's ban on releasing intelligence information, Reinhardt said.

The man accused by the citizens'

commission of infiltration is LAPD officer Edward Camarillo, 29, who was an active member of that group from January to May 1978. Prior to joining, the full-time LAPD officer belonged to a now-disbanded activist Hispanic organization for three years.

The American Civil Liberties Union, in behalf of both groups, yesterday filed a lawsuit, accusing the LAPD of a violation of civil rights and asking the court to rule LAPD's "political" spying illegal.

Councilman Yaroslavsky, an early critic of the LAPD's intellig-

ence-gathering activities, said yesterday that he may also join in the suit against Gates, the LAPD, the Police Commission, former Chief Ed Davis and Camarillo, who in 1978 was working in the personnel division. He now is assigned to a unit which assists the department in lawsuit preparation.

Yaroslavsky said he is "concerned and dismayed" that the LAPD's Public Disorder and Intelligence Division may have "infiltrated the legislative process itself" through alleged surveillance of the citizens' commission.

During Camarillo's documented membership, the group was aiding Yaroslavsky in drafting legislation that would give citizens access to

their police files.

In fact, Camarillo, then a part-time law student, analyzed a draft of model legislation by a Washington, D.C.-based organization aimed at curbing police spying activities.

Although Yaroslavsky introduced a Freedom of Information Act in July 1978, it has yet to be acted on.

The councilman said even if Camarillo's intent was not to spy on legislative activities, "I think it is rather clear that any officer of the LAPD would have reported directly back to his superiors about what was going on.

"To the best of my knowledge," the councilman added, "officer Camarillo did not excuse himself from the meetings when the discussions of legislation took place. I think he ... listened attentively."

The councilman, who said the Camarillo affair "is only the tip of the iceberg," also blasted his council colleagues and the Police Commission for not implementing his Freedom of Information proposal — which might have prevented "these kinds of abuses," he said.

The infiltration issue was angrily raised at yesterday's standing-room-only Police Commission meeting by Linda Valentino and Jeff Cohen, leaders of the citizens' group Camarillo allegedly infiltrated. Also present was attorney Antonio Rodriguez, who headed the Hispanic group Camarillo allegedly spied on from 1975 to 1978.

Valentino, staring directly at Gates, who was seated next to the

LAPD 'spying'

four police commissioners, declared:

"We are not an organization which is threatening the public order, which is blowing up buildings, which is doing anything illegal... Who is the dangerous person you're after in the group... Me? Do I look dangerous?"

Gates calmly interrupted, saying, "Then you have nothing to fear."

"We have nothing to fear?" Valentino yelled back. "We have the abridgment of our civil rights to fear!"

Gates, citing LAPD policy, refused to say whether Valentino or her group had been under surveillance. He did say, however, that the LAPD's intelligence division does not spy on "peaceful groups."

"Why do they (the citizens' commission) believe we are interested in them?" Gates asked quizzically. "I have difficulty with that question... We can't clutter our files with that nonsense."

Yet the citizens commission claims that statement itself is nonsense. Further, they say they have 1,300 pages of confidential LAPD documents to prove it. The citizens' commission received those documents as part of a lawsuit filed against five other LAPD officers who had infiltrated community groups. One of those alleged agents, like Camarillo, was assigned to the personnel division, although he has admitted working with the department's intelligence division.

"We know what those agents

were doing," Cohen of the citizens' commission said. "They weren't investigating for crimes. They were taking down names, political beliefs and who was sleeping with whom."

In other business, the Police Commission began to review actions the LAPD has taken to implement a series of directives included in the board's third Eulia Love shooting report. The commission gave Gates three weeks to report back on whether the department's current policy of weeding out violence-prone officers from minority neighborhoods is effective, and where improvements can be made.