

6-Year Leftist Unit FBI Probe

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The FBI used at least 62 informants and paid them at least \$7,000 for information as trivial as publicly available brochures during a six-year investigation of the leftist Institute for Policy Studies here, according to federal court documents.

The investigation continued despite no evidence of crimes being committed by IPS or its employees. FBI informants gathered reams of information about the personal and political activities of individuals who worked at or visited the policy research think tank at the height of the antiwar years, according to the U.S. District Court documents and interviews with Justice Department and other law enforcement sources here.

The investigation—which the House Intelligence Committee said last year violated the FBI's policy manual because it was not terminated after 90 days—was triggered by a brief 1968 contact between an IPS employee and a member of the Students for Democratic Society, FBI records show.

Although the FBI has previously confirmed that IPS was closely watched in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the extent of surveillance, the amount and types of material that informants produced and the monetary costs are being detailed publicly for the first time in a lawsuit filed by the IPS against the FBI.

The FBI denies it used illegal tactics in spying on the institute. Justice Department attorneys representing the agency in the suit have specifically denied IPS charges of illegal wiretaps and break-ins.

In addition, law enforcement sources familiar with intelligence gathering on the antiwar movement still privately say the agency's close surveillance was justified on the belief that the IPS was in contact with persons involved in violence in the antiwar movement.

IPS officials staunchly deny any wrongdoing concerning the group's antiwar activities and associations and say the FBI network of informants amounted to political spying in violation of First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly.

Court documents show that the FBI first became officially interested in IPS on June 20, 1968, when the Washington FBI field office received a note from the New York FBI field office saying a source told agents in New York that IPS research fellow Arthur I. Waskow had contacted students for a Democratic Society member Jeff Jones in New York.

"Waskow reportedly advised Jones that his name had been included among 50 young intelligent leftist militants recommended to attend a three-

day meeting of the Foreign Policy Association" in New York that summer, the court records said.

Since the FBI "was interested in the possible influence and involvement in the SDS by members of the Communist Party of the United States of America," the FBI then decided to probe IPS as well "to determine its association with SDS," the court files show.

The six-year investigation of IPS thus began "in order to determine its aims, purposes and whether the activities of the Institute and its personnel were in violation of" statutes concerning rebellion and insurrection, seditious conspiracy and advocating the overthrow of the government.

Set in motion was the machinery that injected the 62 informants into IPS at various times over the six-year period. The informants ranged from so-called "street people" recruited to infiltrate IPS meetings to allegedly high-level antiwar movement sources with access to IPS inner offices, according to court documents and federal investigative sources.

In addition, the FBI's own agents would occasionally wander into the IPS offices posing as interested private citizens and pick up printed materials.

Including among the informants listed in court records was the C&P Telephone Company, which the FBI said provided telephone numbers of IPS officials at the bureau's request.

The FBI has named only two individuals among the 62 informants in its court filings, and has named those only because the two people previously disclosed their activity to the press.

One of them, Earl Robert Merritt Jr., was paid at least \$1,600 during a four month period in late 1971 and early 1972, receiving \$600 in November, 1971, alone. Merritt has previously disclosed—and the FBI has confirmed—that he was paid \$20 to \$70 at a time for information concerning speeches, leaflets and other materials at IPS.

On the other hand, Joseph Anthony Barrett was paid about \$1,700 over a one-year period for informing the FBI about IPS activities, according to court records. He was paid \$50 to \$225 at a time by agents for material described in FBI files as "political information," addresses of IPS employees, and information concerning the IPS's fears that the FBI was infiltrating the organization.

Other unidentified informants provided books written by IPS members, information about upcoming IPS seminars, travel schedules of its employees, and memos on internal friction at the organization, according to the Justice Department.

The unidentified informants received payments ranging as high as \$235 for material concerning IPS's affiliate organization to as low as an

otherwise unexplained \$7.54 for "information about an IPS meeting," according to court documents.

IPS official Ralph Stavins ridiculed yesterday the government's payment to informants for publicly accessible materials, saying the organization had an "open-door" policy of providing information about its activities freely to anyone who asked.

"It seems like a waste of government money, doesn't it?" Stavins said.

Law enforcement officials familiar with the use of informants during the antiwar years said the recording of a payment of a specific sum for a specific document does not accurately reflect the amount of intelligence that might have been gathered by that informant.

"A source might tell us information about a lot of people and a lot of activities, and we might put down on a report that we received one tangible piece of material," said one Justice Department employee. "It's ridiculous to say we paid \$225 for a pamphlet."

Other law enforcement officials

Detailed

added that the informants were paid because of the "risky" element of being an FBI source in a movement that was so vehemently opposed to the government's war position. Several informants continue to express fear of being disclosed, as FBI sources even now, the federal officials said.

The Justice Department has even refused in the current lawsuit to disclose information it received from six informants because it says the information could lead to identify of the informants themselves.

In its report last year, the House Intelligence Committee said the Washington FBI office concluded in 1973 that IPS had "fragmented into a wide variety of studies and interests . . . which appear to be within legal limits."

In May, 1974, the Washington FBI office again concluded that a "paucity of information exists that would support the likelihood of IPS or its leaders to be functioning in violation of federal law," the House report added. The investigation then became inactive, according to the report.



Institute for Policy Studies fellow Arthur Waskow is pictured at 1969 rally.