

JACK ANDERSON

The Washington Merry-go-round

F Post 7.12.79

'Dragon Lady' has clout in intelligence community



WASHINGTON — One of the most important lessons of Watergate was — or at least should have been — that "national security" cannot be used as a cloak and dagger by the intelligence community to gut the constitutional rights of individual Americans. The Nixon administration's best and brightest wound up in prison for their unwillingness to grasp this simple truth.

Now, as public outrage has forced some restraints on the FBI, the CIA and other federal intelligence agencies, it is becoming apparent that some members of Jimmy Carter's team are no more willing to tighten the leash on Uncle Sam's undercover agents than the Nixon gang was.

A leader of the "old guard" that wants intelligence gathering unrestricted in the name of national security is Deanne Siemer, 38-year-old Defense Department general counsel. She was named to the powerful post by Carter on April Fool's Day, 1977, but her appointment has been no laughing matter for those who have crossed her path.

Long-legged and short-tempered, Siemer has an abrasive, intimidating style that has earned her the sobriquet "Dragon Lady" in some government circles. Those who are trying to curb the spooks are only the latest targets of her wrath: In her two years at the Pentagon, more than half her original staff has been fired, demoted or forced to transfer. "She's not the most loved person," said one source with dry understatement.

Siemer came to the government from the prestigious Washington law firm of Wilmer, Cutler and Pickering, whose senior partner, Lloyd N. Cutler, was recently retained by President Carter to lobby SALT II through the Senate. The law firm's "in" with Carter may explain the amazing clout Siemer has arrogated to herself in intelligence matters.

This clout has been demonstrated in a number of ways. One of her former aides, Daniel Silver, has been appointed general counsel of the CIA; another, Gil Kujovich, is now executive director of the White House's Intelligence Oversight Board. Sources told us Siemer is currently trying to maneuver another protege, Rick Stone, into Silver's former position as general counsel of the National Security Agency.

Siemer's weight has also been felt in the longstanding bureaucratic feud between the Pentagon and the CIA over which agency should be top dog in intelligence matters. The power struggle is going on in the Special Coordinating Committee, a National Security Council group charged with producing a new charter to let the FBI and CIA know ex-

actly what they can and cannot do.

Sources close to the committee told us that Siemer has succeeded in including in the charter the stipulation that control of intelligence will be given to the Defense Department in time of war. She has also managed to hang onto a bureaucratic plum — the National Security Agency, which will stay under the Pentagon's wing instead of going to the CIA.

Siemer's attitude toward restraints on intelligence activities have astonished some of her colleagues. Sources say she has been the leader of those advocating an intelligence charter loose enough to allow such practices as CIA surveillance of Americans abroad. She has also shown a reluctance to require FBI and CIA accountability to Congress and the public.

Siemer may have breathed fire in the wrong direction, though, when she tried to move in on the Justice Department recently. Justice, whose boss, Attorney General Griffin Bell, is an ol' Georgia buddy of President Carter, succeeded in transforming the Pentagon's dead Dragon Lady into a paper tiger.

The clash occurred over the prosecution of William P. Kampiles, a CIA employee who sold documents to Soviet agents. Although the Defense Department's interest would seem to have been peripheral at best, Siemer demanded participation in the trial, claiming that highly classified material would be endangered if Kampiles' prosecution

wasn't handled her way. The Justice Department resisted Siemer's meddling.

One problem, an administration source told us, was that Siemer's people wanted to protect intelligence secrets at the cost of the defendant's rights. "They didn't care if the kid got a fair trial or not," one official said. At one point, Siemer's office proposed that the Justice Department try to fool the Soviets by prosecuting Kampiles without admitting that he had turned secrets over to the Russians — despite the fact that he had signed a confession to that effect. And, of course, the Soviets already knew what he had sold them.

The Justice Department hoped to use the Kampiles case to restore public confidence in the intelligence community and in the administration's control over it. The White House finally gave Justice permission to try the case as it saw fit.

This didn't stop Siemer. She demanded that one of her representatives be allowed to sit at the prosecution table during the trial. This nervy interference attempt was nixed by Justice.

David Ready, the federal prosecutor in the case, explained that he "didn't want any dead weight at the counsel table." If Siemer's aide had shown up and tried to interfere, Ready added, he would have had the U.S. marshals "come haul him away."

Footnote: Siemer did not return our repeated calls; we visited her office, but she refused to see us. Her deputy Brent Rushforth also refused comment.