

Jack Anderson

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U.S. Helped Train Amin Henchmen

Washington's elite Georgetown enclave, with its expensive town houses, seems a strange training ground for cutthroats who have helped dictator Idi Amin put to death hundreds of thousands of his Ugandan subjects.

Yet we have learned that the Central Intelligence Agency recruited at least 10 of Amin's handpicked henchmen for special police training in a strange "prep school" that the American taxpayers established in the exclusive confines of Georgetown.

These Ugandan police and intelligence agents attended the International Police Academy, ostensibly operated by the Agency for International Development but secretly supported by the CIA. They returned to Uganda to torture and execute Amin's victims.

The academy was located in an old streetcar repair center in Georgetown, not far from the gardened dwellings where such Washington eminences as Dean Acheson, Henry Kissinger and John F. Kennedy have resided. More than 5,000 police agents from 77 governments received training in "the Car barn" before the operation was closed down under congressional criticism in 1975.

Three of the Ugandans went on to take a post-graduate course at the International Police Services Inc., another school hidden away in a Washington brownstone mansion. The school operated as a commercial cover for the CIA for more than a quarter century and exported police equipment to foreign governments paid for covertly with CIA money.

In addition, the CIA had a full-time

police instructor stationed in Uganda in the early days of Amin's regime, and a CIA liaison officer was posted there until the United States closed its embassy in 1973. His duty was to exchange information with Amin's police and intelligence officials.

Shockingly, the Ugandan contingent was brought to this country and trained at Georgetown long after Amin's murderous policies were evident. His victims, indeed, included some Americans.

As far back as July 1971, two Americans were hustled off to a Ugandan military camp from which they never returned. We traced the steps of freelance writer Nicholas Stroh and researcher Robert Siedle, and then published an account of their last days.

According to reports, they were spreadeagled over oil drums, which were set ablaze by tracer bullets fired by Amin's executioners. Their burned bones were dumped into a river by a lieutenant who later signed an affidavit. The officers responsible for the atrocity later were promoted by Amin.

In 1974, we also reported that some of the foreign students at the police academy had written papers favoring torture tactics. The school's administrators denied, however, that torture techniques were taught.

We wrote that many of the academy's graduates later became CIA informants and operatives. We quoted from a secret letter from former central intelligence director William Colby boasting how "relationships" built up during the 15-week training later paid off in "obtaining foreign intelligence."

One of the Ugandan graduates was J. Bigirwa, who went home to work for Uganda's dread Public Safety Unit, which carries out Amin's murder orders. We have also learned the names of other CIA-sponsored trainees from Uganda who later held powerful police or intelligence posts under the bloodthirsty Amin. They include:

- Gerad O. Malinga, an assistant commissioner of police. After his U.S. experience, he was promoted to the Public Safety Unit, which is widely involved in carrying out Amin's genocide against his own people.

- Joseph Wambua Peter, now an investigator for the Ugandan Criminal Investigations Division, known for its brutal interrogations and for arresting innocent Ugandans in the middle of the night for trivial offenses.

- Charles Frederick Sseruwo, currently believed to be a Ugandan police officer.

- John Walusana, a former police officer. He was promoted by Amin to be governor of a province but later lost favor with the dictator. He is now believed to be in hiding from his former Georgetown colleagues.

A CIA spokesman refused any official comment on the Ugandan police training. But we did elicit the unattributed comments of several at the agency who knew about it. "By training Amin's men," one CIA official told our reporter Murray Waas, "we were able to have some influence over the elite in that country and thus have some influence over Amin. It was also a possibility that we could go back to the trainees later for intelligence information."