

The Washington Post

Classified 223-6300
Circulation 223-6100

Phone (202) 223-6000

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 1975

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U.S. Membership in INTERPOL Defended Before Senate Panel

By Douglas Watson
Washington Post Staff Writer

Federal officials yesterday defended U.S. membership in INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization through which police forces in 120 nations exchange information on criminal suspects.

"Television drama to the contrary notwithstanding, INTERPOL has no investigative force of its own and carries on no investigations," Assistant Treasury Secretary David R. Macdonald told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee.

Macdonald was responding to recent charges that INTERPOL "is a self-proclaimed, self-styled, private police force that would be a pathetic joke if it were not for the position they have managed to obtain in our government without the knowledge of Congress."

This allegation had been made by Vaughn Young, director of research for the Church of Scientology's National Commission on Law Enforcement and Social Justice, who called for "a full-scale investigation of INTERPOL."

MacDonald said yesterday that INTERPOL "is unable to do anything other than transmit information or requests for action by one country's police force to another country's police force."

Without INTERPOL, inter-

national police information would be exchanged "in a much more haphazard and costly fashion," he testified.

MacDonald said that in recent years the United States has contributed between \$117,420 and \$147,000 toward its 5.8 per cent share of supporting the budget of interpol—which has a 140-person headquarters in France. He said this does not include a no-time \$135,000 contribution in the past year for anti-narcotics work.

Young's private commission, which says it has conducted a year's probe of INTERPOL, has charged that during World War II it was "a willing part of the Nazi Gestapo and SS." MacDonald testified that a predecessor organization was taken over by the Nazis in 1939, but that INTERPOL was organized in 1946 so as to prevent a future totalitarian seizure.

Louis B. Sims, chief of INTERPOL's nine-person Washington office, said that three Communist countries—Romania, Yugoslavia and Cuba—are among INTERPOL's 120 members but that Cuba has not had an active role since 1959 and that exchanges of police information with the other two countries have been very limited.

The subcommittee chairman, Sen. Joseph M. Montoya (D-N.M.), said, "I think we

ought to be concerned that Americans are not being victimized or their rights invaded under the INTERPOL umbrella."

Sims said that the U.S. office supplies criminal records of Americans to foreign police forces only when it is confident there is a legitimate law enforcement need and does not comply with requests for other personal information.