

Korean CIA Agent Maintained Records

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The high-ranking Korean CIA agent now cooperating with the FBI has told friends that he maintained the financial records of his government's attempts to buy influence in the U.S.

Kim Sang Keun, who asked for refuge in this country rather than obey orders to return to Seoul, served as "administrative aide" to then KCIA station chief Lee Sang Ho in the early 1970s. He had access to lists of operatives, and the amounts of money paid both to and by them, a Korean friend said yesterday.

After Lee Sang Ho returned to Korea in an embassy shake-up in 1973, Kim's role grew in importance

here, though he was not technically the ranking agent.

Kim's decision to aid the widening Justice Department investigation of alleged bribery of congressmen is considered a major breakthrough in the case.

The inquiry has been hampered recently by the unavailability of another key figure, Washington-based Korean businessman Tongsun Park, difficulty in obtaining access to transcripts of intelligence reports detailing the origins of the plan in 1970, and the uncertainties of trying to trace cash payoffs.

Federal authorities officially confirmed yesterday that Kim was indeed talking to the FBI and "seeking to adjust his visa status so he can remain in the U.S." His cooperation was considered sufficiently significant that

Attorney General Edward H. Levi was fully briefed on Kim's status and will participate in the decision on how to treat his visa case, one high level Justice official said.

Until now, Levi has declined to become involved in the sensitive investigation that threatens to touch more than a score of congressmen.

On Capitol Hill, meanwhile, reaction to the latest development in the federal investigation ranged from calls for a separate congressional inquiry to skeptical observations that "there's not a chance in the world that the Democrats will want to investigate themselves."

Rep. Donald Fraser (D-Minn.), whose international relations subcommittee first focused public attention

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on the activities of the KCIA last year, said yesterday, "This case has received so much publicity that the public would think it outrageous for Congress not to investigate."

It was still unclear yesterday whether the House Ethics Committee would instigate its own investigation. Chairman John Flynt Jr. (D-Ga.) announced earlier that he had sent President Ford a letter asking that Justice "share" its information with his committee.

Kim's little-noticed but pivotal role in the Korean government plan to maintain U.S. financial support for the Park Chung Hee regime illustrates the different levels on which the Koreans operated.

Early attention in the investigation pointed to the role played by Tongsun Park and his lavish parties and gifts of cash to congressmen.

Though Kim reportedly did favors for Tongsun Park, such as help him get purchases into this country duty free, sources close to the investigation do not believe he reported to Kim.

Instead Tongsun Park had his own close personal contacts with President Park's Blue House, the presidential compound in Seoul.

In addition to Tongsun Park's activities, however, the KCIA station here apparently dispensed money on its own. A former embassy official said yesterday that during the tenure of Ambassador Kim Do Jung in the early 1970s, large bundles of cash would be delivered to the embassy in diplomatic pouches.

Some of this money, in \$100 bills, was distributed in plain white envelopes on Capitol Hill. Rep. Larry Winn of Kansas said last week that he received such an envelope in 1972 from an embassy representative, but quickly returned it.

The former embassy official, Lee Jai Hyon, said he saw Ambassador Kim personally stuffing \$100 bills in envelopes for delivery to the Capitol.

Kim Sang Keun is considered vital to the investigation because from his position he kept records and made reports on all the transactions.

Members of the Korean community here say Kim Sang Keun was first known publicly as a KCIA agent who kept track of the activities of anti-Park dissidents here. But they noticed that he spent most of his time in the embassy, serving more or less as desk officer.

"We used to refer to him as 'answering service' because he was always at the office, answering the phone for the other agents," one Korean familiar with Kim Sang Kenn's activities said yesterday.

Kim's role as a record-keeper and phone answerer ended when his superior and close associate, Lee Sang Ho, left the embassy in 1973 to return to a high-ranking KCIA position in Seoul.

The new station chief, Air Force Maj. Gen. Yung Hwan, was not a career KCIA officer and was unfamiliar with the details of the influence-buying scheme, according to sources close to the investigation. Thus Kim San Kenn continued reporting to Lee Sang Ho—also known as Yang Doo Wan—but outside the normal chain of command.

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