KKK Front Detective Agency Target of California Officials

By John Berthelsen
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SACRAMENTO, Dec. 13—California officials are attempting to revoke the license of a southern California security firm found to be a Ku lux Klan front apparently intending to obtain weapons permits for the state's Klansmen.

James Cathcart, chief of the Bureau of collection and Investigative Services, said a license was granted in April to a Riverside firm registered under the name KBI Detective Agency.

The KBI initials, Cathcart and other officials learned, stood for "Klan Bureau of Investigation."

KBI, Cathcart said, is headed by Edgar Letson, security adviser to California Grand Dragon Thomas Metzger of Fallbrook. Cathcart said a news clipping from a Ku Klux Klan newspaper tipped him to the firm's true identity.

Letson, he said, received two state licenses. The first, issued in 1977, and made him a private detective. The second, issued in June of 1979, licensed KBI as a private patrol firm.

Cathcart would not reveal details of his investigation . But other sources said Letson had been paying his "security guards" $1 a year for little actual patrolling.

The private patrol license would have allowed KBI's employes to carry weapons. However, Cathcart said, no weapons permits had been issued to Letson or his men at any time.

Cathcart has turned the results of his investigation over to the California Department of Justice so its lawyers can begin revocation procedings.

Cathcart said he may ask the legislature to change the procedure for licensing private security agencies and the people who work for them.

"It is not the intent of licensure to provide security guard personnel for political groups," he said. "If we need to change the law to make that clear, I think maybe we should do it."

"The implication is that any radical group could subvert our license procedure for their own radical purposes," he said.