

Cult's Millions Reported Taken From Swiss Bank

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 15 — A Government official said today that a bank in Zurich had informed the Justice Department that the People's Temple assets, sometimes estimated to total as much as \$8 million, had been removed. The name of the bank could not be learned.

However, there were conflicting reports from different Government agencies about the disposal of the assets. Following queries to the United States Embassy in Bern, the Swiss capital, an Embassy spokesman said late tonight: "We have taken appropriate steps to protect United States interests." The other official, in Washington, said this evening: "The Swiss checked the accounts and they had been emptied."

A Justice Department spokesman said that Mark Lane, the lawyer, and Terri Buford, formerly a business manager for the Jonestown People's Temple commune, reportedly had gone to Switzerland to remove the secret Zurich assets.

The spokesman, Robert Havel, said that early today the United States authorities were informed that "Lane and Buford were reportedly heading for Switzerland." He added, "I don't know that for a fact."

From Memphis to France

Attempts to find Mr. Lane and Miss Buford this evening were unsuccessful. Last Saturday they were in Memphis, Tenn., where the lawyer makes his home. Subsequent efforts to reach them were unavailable. Mr. Lane was seen in France Wednesday, where he appeared on a television program, but Miss Buford was not at his side.

According to one report reaching Washington officials today both Mr. Lane and Miss Buford were seen in Switzerland earlier this week, but this could not be confirmed.

"We're trying to take steps to secure the Government's interests," the Justice Department spokesman said, explaining: "From the outset we said the civil division would see if there was any way to determine whether it could get at the assets of the People's Temple to ease the debt run up in the course of this."

Mr. Havel was referring to outlays by the United States Government in dispatching planes, helicopters and close to 200 Army troops to Guyana to recover the bodies of Representative Leo J. Ryan and the corpses of over 900 People's Temple members who were poisoned or shot after the legislator was cut down Nov. 18 by gunfire at the Port Kaituma airport near the Jonestown settlement.

Those costs were tentatively estimated by the Defense and State Department this week to be about \$3.5 million.

No F.B.I. Surveillance

A spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation said that the agency had no indication where Mr. Lane and Miss Bu-

ford could be found, adding that neither had been under surveillance by the F.B.I.

After the Jonestown tragedy, part of which Mr. Lane purportedly learned about from screams and shots he heard while hiding in the jungle near the settlement the night of Nov. 18, the lawyer disclosed that Miss Buford was his client.

He told reporters that she had come to him several weeks before the tragedy as a defector from the cult founded by the Rev. Jim Jones, who had allegedly asked her to poison a former lover of the cult leader living in this country. Mr. Lane also said that he had given protection to Miss Buford by arranging for her to live in various clandestine dwellings in Memphis and Washington before and after the massacre.

The conflicting nature of the reports about the disposition of the secret account funds and the possibility that Mr. Lane and Miss Buford might have been engaged in their removal was explained by a Government official as deriving from the relative freshness of information reaching the State Department and the Justice Department through different channels.

Justice Dept. Versions

The Justice Department maintained that according to its informants, there had been one transfer of money from a Swiss account of the People's Temple last September, but that the remaining funds were "still there," a spokesman said. Another Justice official said that the Zurich bank had been "alerted some time ago" by United States authorities not to allow Jonestown funds to be withdrawn. "As far as I know the money is still in the bank," the second Justice official said.

It appears there was newer information reaching the State Department through the Bern embassy to the effect that the money was gone and that Mr. Lane and Miss Buford had taken it, from the bank.

The disposition of the temple's funds has been a subject of public dispute since Dec. 4, when Charles R. Garry, a California lawyer retained by Mr. Jones to represent him and the cult in 1977, announced he had filed papers in Superior Court in San Francisco to dissolve the People's Temple's corporate entity.

Assistance for Families

Mr. Garry, who had been at Jonestown along with Mr. Lane and Representative Ryan's party, said on behalf of the People's Temple that its remaining assets should be used to recompense families of the victims of the murders and suicides and to pay claims against the corporation.

He had already split with Mr. Lane, who said at the time of the Garry announcement that Miss Buford had informed him the cult's assets were depos-

ited in the name of an elderly woman who had perished at Jonestown. Mr. Lane added at the time that the woman's son and heir wanted to "use all the money to help the surviving members come back."

Neither Mr. Lane nor Mr. Garry indicated at the time how they would respond to United States Government claims on the assets.

Mr. Garry was resting today in Monterey, Calif., where he has been visiting since Wednesday, associates in his law firm said.