

# Rejection of Secret Police

By J. M. McFadden

Special to The Washington Post.

MONTGOMERY, Ala.—

There'll be no black-suited night-riders under the Omnibus Crime Control Bill.

But the demise of the proposed elite secret police raised new questions of who gets the money and what crimes are stopped in Alabama's use of anticrime aid from Washington.

The black watch was proposed in a report designed to justify \$5.6 million in federal anticrime funds for Alabama next year. It was prepared by an after-hours corporation formed by two newsmen the same day they signed a \$91,570 contract.

Other newsmen uncovered a trail of circumstances surrounding the anticrime program that by last weekend

led to investigations by the state attorney general, federal and state auditors and the FBI.

Congress passed the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Street Act of 1968 to help local governments improve law enforcement at all levels. The over-all appropriation for this purpose in fiscal 1970 was \$215 million with 85 per cent going to the states.

To qualify for funds, Alabama established its Law Enforcement Planning Agency (LEPA) in 1968. Last June 15, LEPA contracted with a private company to prepare its 1971 manual.

This private company, Criminal Justice Systems, was incorporated in the HUNTSVILLE Probate Office at 5:29 p.m. June 15, 1970, after the normal courthouse closing hour, and received a check for

the full \$91,570 the next day, June 16.

The president is Wendall Harris, news director of a Birmingham television station. The vice president is J. E. Lankford, editor of a Huntsville newspaper. Lankford's father R. L. Lankford, is secretary-treasurer.

The new company stated in its contract proposal that it "offers services spanning the length and depth of law enforcement planning in the state." It produced several rough draft copies of a 1,000-page booklet.

Working nights and weekends, the three officers of the company assembled reports from the seven Alabama regions into a statewide manual. The company also received \$19,038.12 for assembling field worker data into reports for two of the seven regions.

The entire manual has not been made public, but the brief section proposing secret night police was spotlighted when the U.S. Justice Department swiftly rejected it.

The proposal was for:

"The creation of a detail which would operate only at night, keeping constant check on the whereabouts of suspects. For practical and psychological reasons, officers of this detail will drive only black, unmarked patrol cars. They will be attired in black uniforms, shoes and caps with no bright or reflective buttons, badges or buckles visible.

"The primary impact of this detail on the criminal community will be psychological—and to this purpose officers will make maximum use of the opportunity to question suspects during the hours of darkness.

# Sparks Ala. Crime-Fund Probe

"In addition, officers will range as far as possible during each night's operation to create the impression that the detail's numbers are much greater than is actually the case."

A Justice Department spokesman said that "to have groups running around in black uniforms could be dangerous." The department ruled that the psychological impact would be a "bad one on law-abiding citizens..."

Last Thursday LEPA announced the proposal for black-clad night-riders had been officially withdrawn.

By then, officials were taking closer looks at other LEPA contracts.

Lt. Gov. Jerre Beasley, after a legislative committee hearing which questioned LEPA's financial status, claimed a Montgomery law firm kept

over \$13,000 of a \$16,500 contract for the local regional law enforcement manual.

A company called Kimbrough and Associates contracted to produce 500 copies of the 164-page "Law Officers Guide to Civil and Criminal Procedure." Beasley said a company officer told him the firm received only \$2,000 plus payment of \$1,232 in printing costs.

Beasley said the law firm of Hill, Robinson, Belser and Phelps was paid \$13,268 for "research, copy, secretarial services and distribution" of the manual. Former Gov. Albert Brewer joined this law firm when he left office last month. Another member, Richard Belser, represented both LEPA and Kimbrough when the contract was signed.

A survey of the state's seven

regions showed none followed the LEPA recommendation to utilize local college facilities to prepare regional reports. All but one hired consultant firms and paid them from \$3,500 to \$5,000 last year.

Gov. George Wallace asked attorney General Bill Baxley to see if the state could get back any of the LEPA contract money. State Auditor Melba Till Allen announced

she was rechecking each contract and said the situation may be presented to a grand jury.

By week's end it was reported the Justice Department had directed a full-scale investigation by the FBI. Auditors from the Atlanta regional office of the U.S. Law Enforcement Assistance Administration were rechecking LEPA contracts.