

CIA White House 'Plants' Called

Nonsense

By Fred Barnes
and Norman Kempster
Washington Star Staff Writers

The White House today denied that any CIA agents had ever secretly penetrated the presidential staff during the Ford or earlier administrations.

Ronald Nessen, the White House press secretary, also asserted that there had been no clandestine CIA infiltration of any other government agencies in the executive branch.

"There has never been any penetration or infiltration of the White House by a CIA agent," Nessen said. While there are CIA employees assigned to the White House, they "are here on duty or on detail or were here with the complete knowledge of the White House," he said.

At least one CIA employe is detailed to the National Security Council at the White House and "there may be a handful of others who work in related capacities," Nessen stated.

Earlier, CIA Director William Colby had called statements that the CIA had infiltrated the White House and other federal agencies "outrageous nonsense."

"There is no truth in it," he said.

NESSEN DECLINED to say who provided him with assurances that there has been no CIA infiltration, and he was additionally unable to explain how these people could be sure

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that no infiltration occurred in earlier administrations.

"I believe the people who told me," Nessen said, "I can just simply say flatly that there are no CIA agents in the White House working in any hidden or undercover role. I am told that in the past there never have been."

Nessen's comments about the CIA came in response to questions from newsmen regarding a report that the House Select Committee on Intelli-

gence has documents indicating CIA infiltration in the White House.

Chairman Frank Church of the Senate Intelligence Committee said his staff will "immediately" begin an investigation of the charges of CIA penetration of the White House.

"I would rather not speculate without having the facts well in hand," Church told reporters. "Of course it is my view that the CIA has no business putting plants into the White House."

Church referred to the allegation as "a new charge" that must be fully investigated.

To show that CIA employes are at the White House in an entirely above-board capacity, Nessen noted that "they are on payroll records, for goodness sakes."

Moreover, they were detailed to the White House on request. "In order to get a detailee, you have to request a detailee," Nessen said. See CIA, A-10



ASKED IF the CIA employees might have reported back on White House activities to the intelligence agency, Nesson conceded that "there's no way I can ever know what every CIA agent at the White House ever did."

Speaking at the regular White House briefing, Nesson cautioned newsmen against "making a mountain out of a molehill" in regard to the question of CIA employees on the presidential staff.

Two members of the House select intelligence committee — a conservative Republican and a liberal Democrat — made public the charges that the CIA spied on the White House in the hopes of saving their deadlocked committee from abolition.

THEY ALSO SAID there are indications that the CIA "inserted" agents at high levels in the Office of Management and Budget, Commerce Department, Treasury Department and perhaps other agencies of the executive branch of government.

Reps. Ronald Dellums, D-Calif., and Robert W. Kasten, R-Wis., told reporters they decided to "go public" with the information because they feared the House Rules Committee was about to recommend disbanding of the CIA committee.

The Rules Committee held a four-hour hearing on legislation to abolish the CIA panel but postponed final action. However, Rules members appeared ready to disband the special intelligence committee which has not met since May because of a dispute

between Chairman Lucien Nedzi, D-Mich., and a majority of the committee Democrats.

THE SUGGESTION that the CIA infiltrated the U.S. government that it was established to serve adds a bizarre new twist to the controversy over the nation's intelligence community.

Previously, the controversy has centered on the agency's clandestine efforts to manipulate foreign governments and into what the Rockefeller Commission described as "clearly illegal" efforts to spy on domestic dissident groups.

Colby indicated in a report to President Ford which was made public Tuesday that the CIA had inserted an agent in at least one government agency, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD).

AN UNDATED MEMO included in the report to Ford said, "Per our discussion with the retiring director of BNDD, Project (cryptonym deleted) will be phased out. CIA will not develop operations to penetrate another government agency, even with the approval of its leadership."

Both Dellums and Kasten said a House probe is necessary to get to matters that were left untouched by the Rockefeller Commission and the Senate CIA committee headed by Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho.

The two lawmakers agreed to supply some of the details after reporters obtained copies of a memo from Committee Staff Director A. Searle Field which said the staff had found "sufficient evidence to warrant an investigation" on several topics.

FIELD'S MEMO said the evidence included infiltration of executive agencies, CIA financial interests profiting from inside information, penetration of domestic news media and "activities to influence domestic politics."

Dellums said the evidence included documents indicating that a CIA operative held a high-level job in the Nixon White House without the knowledge of the former president.

Asked if the operative's function was to spy on White House activities or to manipulate U.S. policy, the California congressman replied: "Both."

The New York Times News Service said the CIA agent held a post in the Nixon White House just below the level of Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman and chief domestic aide John D. Ehrlichman. The Times did not identify the agent.

KASTEN WAS MORE guarded than Dellums in supplying details. He said he did not know how high ranking the operative in the White House was or if there was more than one. He also said he assumed the infiltration was "over a period of more than one administration."

Dellums and Kasten also said the staff has evidence of infiltration of news gathering organizations. Dellums said there was evidence that a former vice president of CBS was a CIA operative.

A CBS spokesman said, "It's news to us. We don't know of any such vice president."

Kasten also said the committee wants to know why

the investments of a CIA pension fund are substantially more profitable than the stock market averages. He said the investigators are interested in learning if the fund is operating on "inside information" gained either from CIA front companies or from CIA operatives in private firms or government agencies.

THE HOUSE CIA committee reached an impasse last month after Nedzi submitted his resignation as chairman under pressure from Democratic members of the committee. In a move that has been interpreted as a vote of confidence in Nedzi, the House refused to accept the resignation. But Nedzi has refused to call a committee meeting since.

However, members of the staff, headed by Field, have been gathering information while waiting for the deadlock to be broken. The House committee staff and the staff of the Senate CIA committee both have been given office space at CIA headquarters.

Kasten said the evidence has been gathered by poring through CIA records and documents and asking questions about them. He said more intensive investigative techniques will not be used until the status of the committee has been cleared up.

THERE WAS no explanation of the sort of CIA document that led Field to conclude that the White House staff had been infiltrated.

The Rules Committee was considering a resolution by Rep. B.F. Sisk, D-Calif., to abolish the CIA panel which he described as "dead in the water."

tee to abolish the present committee and start over with a new panel that would be limited to a probe of the CIA. The present committee's mandate calls for an investigation of other intelligence agencies such as the National Security Agency, military intelligence, the FBI and the Internal Revenue Service as well as the CIA.

Rep. Robert McClory, R-Ill., senior Republican on the present committee, said the panel should be abolished to end the personality conflicts that have blocked its work but that a new committee should be formed with an equally broad charter.

DELLUMS, Kasten and Rep. Michael Harrington, D-Mass., all urged the Rules Committee to stick with the present membership.

Dellums said the House should direct Nedzi to either call a meeting of the committee or resubmit his resignation.

"Why do we all have to go down because of petty personalities?" Dellums demanded.

Meanwhile, Church summoned Atty. Gen. Edward H. Levi and FBI Director Clarence M. Kelly to appear before his Senate CIA committee next week to explain why the Justice Department has not sent the committee FBI files and documents requested almost two months ago.

"We want to determine what the roadblock's been," Church said. He said the department has not refused to provide the documents but has not yet done so.

Committee chief counsel F.A.O. Schwartz said the

material the committee is seeking refers to a series of charges of misconduct by the FBI.

Schwartz said the allegations include political abuse of the FBI, misuse of secret files, wiretapping and bugging, break-ins, disruption of dissident groups, the Huston plan and establishment by the government of bogus radical groups to discredit anti-war activities.

Although the committee is now concentrating on the CIA, its mandate includes the FBI and other intelligence agencies.