

Butterfield connection *F Post 7/12/75* charge denied by CIA

WASHINGTON (AP) — Controversy over the issue of possible CIA infiltration of the White House spread Friday after retired Air Force Col. L. Fletcher Prouty said former presidential aide Alexander Butterfield had been a CIA contact officer.

Later, one of the sources cited by Prouty as the basis for his claim flatly denied the account.

"I'm saying it's not true," the source — who asked to remain anonymous — told The Associated Press.

What was meant by a contact officer remained unclear, but under repeated questioning by reporters, Prouty ruled out the possibility that Butterfield might have spied on the White House for the CIA.

Meanwhile, the CIA issued a statement saying that Butterfield, who first revealed the existence of the White House tapes, "has never been assigned to or worked for the CIA in any capacity."

The agency acknowledged that during his military career and his years in the White House, Butterfield was permitted

access to sensitive agency information, but insisted that he "was in no way under the authority of the agency."

Butterfield could not be reached for comment.

Prouty, who testified before investigators for the House intelligence committee, said he first learned of a CIA-Butterfield connection in 1971 from two Air Force officers who had worked for the CIA for long periods of time.

According to Prouty, the officers suggested that Prouty contact Butterfield, then an aide to White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman, for help on a project involving Indochina prisoners of war through a Washington public relations firm with CIA contacts.

Prouty refused to identify the two former Air Force officers publicly. But one of the officers located by a reporter denied ever telling Prouty that Butterfield was the CIA contact man.

The officer, now retired and working as a Washington lobbyist, acknowledged that he had suggested to Prouty that he contact the public relations firm of

Mullen & Co. for help in getting publicity for his POW project.

But the retired officer, who claimed he had never served in any intelligence capacity, said that at the time he had no awareness of Mullen & Co.'s CIA connection and made no suggestion that it be used as a means of contacting Butterfield.

Asked to respond, Prouty said the other former Air Force officer had told him that Butterfield was a CIA contact man and that he had merely asked the second officer for advice in reaching Butterfield.

"He didn't even ask me that," the officer replied when told of Prouty's explanation.

The controversy began Friday morning when Prouty, a former liaison officer between the Air Force and the CIA, said in a television interview with CBS that Butterfield was a contact officer "as I was at the Defense Department." The job was to "open the doors for CIA operations," he said.