

Butterfield Called Contact; CIA Panel Probing Role

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Retired Air Force Col. L. Fletcher Prouty today described Alexander Butterfield, the man who revealed the existence of the Nixon taping

system, as the CIA's "contact" at the White House.

But Prouty, who once held a similar contact job between the agency and the Air Force, said he assumed that former President Richard M. Nixon knew of Butterfield's CIA activities.

"We always felt the White House knew they were there," he said.

"This wasn't a spying job," Prouty said of Butterfield's post. Instead, he said, Butterfield served as liaison between the agency and the White House.

Most government departments have similar CIA contacts, he said.

See CIA, A-5

Continued From A-1

PROUTY SAID in 1962 and 1963 the CIA contact at the Pentagon was Alexander M. Haig Jr., later to become Nixon's White House chief of staff and now commanding general of NATO forces.

Prouty talked to reporters before he was questioned behind closed doors by the staff of the House Select Intelligence Committee.

A source familiar with the committee's investigation said the panel is investigating Butterfield's role. The source said others in addition to Prouty had said Butterfield had CIA connections.

Two members of the House committee said on Wednesday the staff had turned up evidence indicating the CIA had secretly infiltrated the White House and other government departments. Rep. Ronald Dellums, D-Calif., said he understood that Nixon was not aware of the CIA operative.

ANOTHER SOURCE close to the investigation said the evidence seemed to indicate that the agent's activities were carefully cloaked to prevent detection even by Nixon. This source, however, declined to say if Butterfield was the individual involved.

Butterfield could not be reached for comment, but

his wife called Prouty's description of her husband's role "absolutely false."

Prouty's description of the duties of a CIA contact was sharply different from those hinted at by the House investigators.

Prouty said, for instance, that when he was Air Force contact he arranged military operations to cover spying overflights of Cuba and Quebec.

Prouty said he learned that Butterfield was the White House contact during the spring of 1971 when he (Prouty) was doing some work for the National League of Families, an organization of relatives of prisoners of war.

PROUTY SAID he was directed to Butterfield by E. Howard Hunt, then an employe of Robert Mullen Associates, a public relations firm generally considered a CIA front. Hunt, a former CIA agent, later pleaded guilty to participating in the Watergate break-in.

Prouty related that Hunt once told him, "My contact is Butterfield."

Asked how many government agencies have CIA contacts, Prouty replied, "It would be easier to say how many government agencies do not have contacts."

Prouty was asked if he believed that Butterfield intentionally revealed the Nixon taping system in order to show Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal.

"I never used conjecture," Prouty responded. "I don't know. All I know is he was an Air Force colonel like I was. The country comes first."

Two members of the House committee said Wednesday that committee staff members had seen evidence that indicated the CIA had infiltrated the White House with an agent. One of the lawmakers, Rep. Ronald Dellums, D-Calif., said the agent was in a top policy-making position.

MEANWHILE, a congressman who receives regular briefings from the CIA said CIA employes have been assigned to a number of jobs — including some which are apparently far removed from intelligence work — in the White House and other government departments.

Rep. Lucien Nedzi, D-Mich., described the practice of placing CIA employes in other government posts to refute the claim by two lawmakers that the agency had "infiltrated" agents into the White House and other offices.

"This was done with the departments and in concert with them," Nedzi said. "To state that these individuals were infiltrated is irresponsible."

BUT NEDZI indicated that although the department head knew the identity of the CIA employes, many others in the departments probably did not.

"It is no secret that CIA employes work under cover," Nedzi told several reporters yesterday.

As an example, Nedzi said a CIA employe worked as secretary for Peter G. Peterson, President Richard M. Nixon's chief adviser on foreign trade. When Peterson left the White House post to become secretary of commerce, Nedzi said, the CIA employe went with him.

"This was known to him (Peterson)," Nedzi said.

A Commerce Department spokesman said a clerk-typist was "detailed" to Peterson at the White House and accompanied him to Commerce. The spokesman said Peterson's personal secretary at Commerce had not worked at the White House.

AS ANOTHER example, Nedzi said, a CIA employe "was with AID (Agency for International Development) over a 10-year period." He said the CIA tried to transfer the person to the AID payroll, but AID resisted, apparently preferring to have the salary paid from the CIA budget, which undergoes much less congressional scrutiny.

White House Press Secretary Ronald Nessen and CIA Director William E. Colby both also denied the charge of secret CIA infiltration into executive branch agencies.

But Dellums reiterated yesterday that he had been informed that information collected by the staff of the House Select Intelligence Committee included evidence of a clandestine program to place agents in the White House and other departments.

In the Senate, Chairman Frank Church of the Select Intelligence Committee said his staff will "immediately" begin an investigation of the charges of CIA penetration of executive agencies.

NEDZI TOLD reporters that he assumed the documents he had seen were the ones on which Dellums and Kasten based their statements.

"I have satisfied myself that there is nothing that would suggest infiltration in this memo," Nedzi said. "I have nothing to substantiate that kind of charge and I don't believe there is any truth to it."

But Nedzi added, "I'm not saying that this (use of CIA employes in nonintelligence jobs) should not be looked at."

Dellums and Rep. Robert W. Kasten, R-Wis., both members of the House committee, said they base their statements on information provided by committee counsel A. Searle Field.

If Dellums' and Kasten's charges are ultimately disproven, it could destroy the credibility of the House investigation, which already has suffered because of an often bitter internal dispute.

In an effort to salvage the probe, the House Rules Committee yesterday voted to disband the original committee and start over with a new panel increased from 10 to 13 members.

The objective of increasing the membership was to dilute the influence of a

liberal bloc that includes Dellums and Rep. Michael Harrington, D-Mass.

IF THE HOUSE goes along with the Rules Committee, Speaker Carl Albert, D-Okla., would appoint the committee members. Albert could name an entirely different panel, but several sources familiar with the situation predicted he would rename most of the present membership.