

IRS Aide Defends 'Sex, Booze' Inquiry

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An Internal Revenue Service official said yesterday he considered expenditures for Operation Leprechaun, which gathered "sex and booze" information on 30 prominent Floridians, "money well spent."

E.J. Vitkus, who as assistant regional commissioner for the southeast IRS division had authority over the operation, told a House Ways and Means subcommittee that he approved the plan.

"I see nothing that has happened in the past to lead

me to believe it was improper or inappropriate to do that, I think it was money well spent," he said when asked for his assessment.

Vitkus was reminded that in March IRS Commissioner Donald C. Alexander told the same subcommittee that Operation Leprechaun abused the civil rights of individuals and that it was a mistake.

"If that was his statement, I think it was premature and unfortunate," Vitkus said. "I can honestly say I do not know of a single instance of abuse that grew out of Leprechaun," but "there were mistakes made, no question about that."