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Bureau Makes Partial Admission

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Was FBI Spy Abroad, Man Says

By Elizabeth Becker

Washington Post Staff Writer

The FBI regularly sends Americans abroad to collect intelligence information, according to a Florida man who says he made 10 such trips to Canada for the bureau.

Joseph A. Burton, 42, said in a telephone interview yesterday that he was sent to Canada to infiltrate and disrupt in that country revolutionary Communist groups that may have connections with similar groups in the United States.

James Murphy, an FBI spokesman, confirmed yesterday that the bureau has sent Americans abroad to collect intelligence information, but he would not discuss any specific cases.

Murphy said he knew of no statute that forbids the FBI to send a paid informant to a foreign country on an intelligence-gathering mission. He emphasized that the bureau did not send its own agents abroad, only paid informants, saying that "the FBI is not operational outside the U.S." because of this distinction.

Government officials contacted yesterday were unclear as to whether the sending of informers to another country by the FBI is legal. In the past, the FBI has stressed that it is responsible for domestic intelligence, and the CIA has jurisdiction over intelligence gathering abroad.

Murphy also confirmed that Burton was paid by the FBI in Tampa, Fla. to establish contact with several Marxist-Leninist groups from May, 1972 until July, 1974. He would neither confirm nor deny

that the FBI sent Burton to Canada.

In the telephone interview yesterday, Burton said he was paid by the FBI to set up a leftist front group in Tampa, Fla., called the Red Star Cadre, and to disrupt Marxist-Leninist groups in the U.S. and abroad. His allegations were first reported in yesterday's editions of The New York Times.

Burton said he quit the FBI in July and publicly exposed his cover in Tampa at that time because he had questions about the legality of some of his services.

"It got so Keystone Coppish it was ridiculous," he said. "I told the people in the town and I asked Rep. Gibbons referring to Florida Rep. Sam M. Gibbons) to pass on the information to Congress for investigation."

An aide to Gibbons, a Democrat, said yesterday that information on Burton had been sent to the House Judiciary Committee for investigation.

Rep. Robert W. Kastenmeier, chairman of the subcommittee on Justice, said in a telephone interview yesterday that he did not know whether such activities by the FBI in foreign countries were legal or illegal but the issue would be considered during hearings on the activities of the FBI.

Burton said yesterday he first contacted the FBI in 1972 when he was invited to join the Communist Party.

"They got real excited and sent over agents, disguised as insurance salesmen, and they laid out the plans for the Red Star Cadre," Burton said.

A supervisor for a janitorial company at the time, Burton said he quit work and built the front group, becoming a well-known Maoist in the community. He said he later received from the FBI a monthly salary of \$400 plus \$400 local operating expenses to speak out on local political issues, teach FBI operatives "how to argue like a Marxist—other American Maoist groups.

He said he had little success Leninist," and to infiltrate infiltrating one Maoist organization, the Revolutionary Union, but did infiltrate the October League, another Maoist group.

Because of his activities with American Maoist groups, Burton says he was sent by the FBI to Canada to collect information on and disrupt the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), a Maoist organization. He said he was told to report any evidence that American groups were receiving funds from China through this Canadian party.

"I also joined the Internationalist, a Communist organization made up of Marxist-Leninist Communist parties of countries like England, Ireland, the Philippines besides Canada," Burton said.

During trips to Canadian cities including Toronto, Montreal, and London (Ontario), Burton said he reported regularly to the FBI and that the bureau congratulated him on successfully establishing himself as a Maoist leader. He said he also gathered intelligence information on small Canadian communist collec-

tives, including one called the Morning Sun, at these Internationalist meetings.

Burton said he was afraid that if his true identity was discovered by the Maoist groups he would be left without protection by the FBI because he was working in a foreign country for the bureau.

"I wasn't dealing with student groups but with International Communists," he said.

What finally broke him, Burton said, was his appointment last year by the Mayor of Tampa to help set up an advisory group on police activities.

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