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Shadowy World of Police Informers

by John M. Goshko

(Article on how law enforcement agencies recruit and use informers.)

"So widespread is the reliance on informers that the FBI and other federal agencies are generally thought to employ two informants for each full-time agent. If so, that would mean that the two Cabinet agencies most heavily involved in fighting crime, Justice and Treasury, have approximately 30,000 informers on their payrolls.

"Homer Boynton, a spokesman for the FBI, refused yesterday to discuss the number of bureau informers or other details of the program. To do so, he said, would strike at 'the very heart of our operations.'

Boynton did admit that the FBI spent 3.8 million on its informer program during the 1975 fiscal year.... "