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Publishers Fight CIA Censoring

By Thomas B. Ross

WASHINGTON — (CST) — Random House, Inc., and its subsidiary, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., have indicated they were considering a legal defense against the government's efforts to pre-censor a book they are publishing because it may contain Central Intelligence Agency secrets.

The publishers announced they were concerned to protect the rights of Victor L. Marchetti, former high-ranking CIA official, with whom they had a \$40,000 book contract, though no action has been taken against themselves.

"We are seriously concerned," they declared in a statement yesterday, "that the government may be mis-using its secrecy agreements with employes and former employes to inhibit legitimate analysis and criticism of government operations and government policies."

The Justice Department has obtained a temporary restraining order against Marchetti and is seeking to compel him to submit all of his writings to the CIA for security censorship prior to publication.

The government's complaint asserts that Marchetti signed several secrecy agreements during his CIA service from 1955 to 1969 and, therefore, the agency has the right to purge his writings of whatever it decides to be a national secret.

Marchetti has offered to submit his proposed book to the CIA but only for its suggestions.

A federal district court hearing is scheduled for April 28 but the American Civil Liberties Union plans to file a motion today demanding that the restraints on Marchetti be dropped now.

However, there is a general feeling that the government and the CIA are mounting new pressures on the publishing world.

The Justice Department's suit carried an affidavit from a CIA agent in New York suggesting he may have a network of informants inside the publishing houses.