

CIA's Payroll Reportedly Lists 30 U.S. Journalists

Washington

The Central Intelligence Agency has more than 30 American journalists working abroad on its payroll, some of them acting as full-time agents, the Washington Star-News said yesterday.

Citing an "authoritative source" it did not identify, the newspaper said the names of about 40 full-time reporters, free-lance journalists and trade publication correspondents were listed in the agency's files after a review ordered by director William Colby two months ago.

Colby was said to have ordered a cutback in CIA-foreign correspondent relationships after getting a report on the extent of the situation.

Colby was out of town and not available to discuss the story, and a CIA spokesman said the agency would not comment.

The Star-News said about five full-time staff correspondents representing general circulation organizations, who had served as CIA undercover contacts and were paid on a contractual basis, were being phased out. The reason cited by the newspaper was concern that the relationship

"could most seriously compromise the integrity of the American press in general and possibly cripple its ability to function overseas."

But the newspaper said Colby "has approved explicitly the continued maintenance of more than 30 other CIA agents abroad who are not strict newsmen but who rely on some kind of journalistic "cover" for their intelligence operations."

The Star-News said the source indicated one of its reporters, Jeremiah O'Leary, was mentioned in CIA files as a newsman who was a regular nonpaid CIA contact during an overseas assignment for the newspaper.

Star-News editors said they discussed the matter with O'Leary and other sources "and have found no evidence that either he or

the newspaper has been compromised." The paper said none of the five agents being cut off was a regular staff correspondent of a major U.S. daily newspaper with an established overseas bureau.

Those being retained, the newspaper said, included mostly persons not employed full time by any organization — such as free-lance writers and those on retainer for occasional work, or writers paid for specific work done for a publication.

Another group, the Star-News said, consists of writers for small circulation publications such as trade journals and commercial newsletters. Most of these, the newspaper said, worked secretly for the CIA with the knowledge of their employers.

United Press