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'CIA Diary' Check

By William Gildea

Two Customs Service agents showed up yesterday at Discount Book Shop and Sidney Kramer Books just hours after a newspaper article reported the stores were selling "Inside the Company: CIA Diary," the controversial book by former agent Philip Agee.

It is illegal to import foreign-made books in English by American authors or foreigners living in the United States if copyright is claimed on the material, according to Customs. The paperbacks were marked "not for sale in the U.S.A."

A Customs official said yesterday the department wanted "to verify the place of manufacture . . . to see if they were manufactured in Canada and if they were they'd be seized."

"Yeah, two guys came in here, a little guy and a big guy," said Jim Tenney of Kramer Books. "They were very friendly. They said 'We're not here to hassle you.'"

"They were very nice," said Bob Bialek, president of Discount Books. "It was more of an inquiry."

The question of possible seizure apparently became academic because both Tenney and Bialek reported they were sold out in a crush of business yesterday before the agents arrived.

About 700 books were sold. Discount said it wasn't getting any more, but Tenney of Kramer's said "hopefully" it will have more copies.