

The Army Still Spies on Civilians

By Morton Kondracke

WASHINGTON — (CST) — Despite Army denials that it engages in such activity, a military intelligence unit in Washington regularly infiltrates and reports on civilian political groups, it was learned yesterday.

And in spite of assurances the Army gave to a congressman, the unit has not destroyed its extensive political file on civilians. It has merely classified it to keep it secret.

Agents of the unit, the 116th Military Intelligence Group, have posed as newsmen and photographers at rallies to get pictures for their files and at one time the unit even maintained a video tape truck marked "Midwest News."

Truck Disposed Of

The truck and its taping equipment, purchased at the end of a fiscal year with unexpended funds, was disposed of recently out of concern that the civilian spying activity would be discovered and exposed.

Information on the unit's activities came from sources who asked not to be identified.

Col. Frederick Barrett, commander of the 116th, refused to respond to a request for an interview, saying Army Regulations prohibited it.

Data on the 116th's activities has been supplied to

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Rep. Cornelius Gallagher (D-N.J.), who, with Sen. Sam Ervin (D-N.C.), has been probing Army civilian intelligence gathering.

'Hearings Inevitable'

An aide to Gallagher said that "hearings are almost inevitable" on Army files. Ervin has called for the Army to get out of civilian intelligence activities.

The activities of the 116th appear to contradict official assurances given by the Army Jan. 26 that it never engages in undercover operations in the civilian community.

In answer to a question, the Army said that "for some time, there has been a specific prohibition against military personnel undertaking such activities as undercover operations in the civilian community.

"Exceptions to this policy may be made by appropriate civilian officials, but none have been made."

Despite this statement, the 116th maintains a staff of 20 agents whose job it is to infiltrate political groups and observe politically active persons in the Washington area. Some agents have grown beards and long hair to pass as students on college campuses. Others pose as members of the working press to obtain pictures of those involved in political activities.

Pictures on File

The pictures are kept on file and reproduced for agents attending demonstrations to enable them to identify those participating.

The unit has furnished tape recorders to agents attending rallies so they can clandestinely record speeches and conversations.

The videotape-sound truck

was driven to demonstrations by agents posing as television newsmen for a nonexistent broadcasting company, "Midwest News."

Antiwar March

At one large demonstration, the Nov. 15 Antiwar March on Washington, intelligence agents were assigned to bridges along the Baltimore Washington Parkway to count the number of buses heading for Washington bearing demonstrators.

The political intelligence activities of the 116th are frequently undertaken in concert with two other groups, the 108th at Fort Meade, Md., and the 902d, also located in Washington, which reports directly to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence.

Information collected by the 116th is transferred to a file of 5-by-7 inch index cards. The unit has several

thousand such cards on file, each referring to a different activist in the Washington area.

Complete Card Files

The cards contain a picture of the person, his name, address, occupation and background, a list of the political groups to which he belongs, notes on political meetings and demonstrations he has attended and a summary of his views on political issues.

One person known to be listed in the file is Julius Hobson, civil rights activist and former member of the Washington Board of Education.

Existence of such a file appears to contradict assurances that the Army gave to Gallagher that political intelligence records at local military intelligence groups would be destroyed.

The Chicago Sun-Times received information from the

Army, however, that the only file so far destroyed was the computerized data bank maintained at the U.S. Army Intelligence Center at Fort Holabird in Baltimore.

Information formerly fed into the computer is still at Holabird on paper, and no order has yet been issued to destroy it or files kept at the local level.

San Francisco File

Similar files are located at military intelligence units at Fort Devens, Mass.; Fort Meade, Md.; Fort McPherson, Ga.; Fort Sheridan, Ill.; Fort Sam Houston, Texas; San Francisco and Honolulu.

Other files are located at Fort Monroe, Va., and a microfilm file, containing FBI reports as well as Army information, is kept by the Army's Counterintelligence Analysis Division in Alexandria, Va.

Shortly after Army Gener-

al Counsel Robert E. Jordan III gave Gallagher assurances about the destruction of the files, a meeting was held at the 116th to inform agents that the unit would continue its activities unabated.

The only activity to be discontinued, the agents were told, was operation of the computer in Baltimore. The agents were told that they would continue to infiltrate and monitor local political groups.

However, the agents were informed that all files and operations of the 116th were to be classified to prevent release of any information about them either to the press or Congress.

The agents were warned that disclosure of the information would subject them to court-martial or prosecution in civilian courts "for violation of national security."