

Chotiner Defends Political Spying

By David S. Broder
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President Nixon's re-election campaign paid journalists for secret reports on his Democratic rivals for almost two years before the 1972 election, Murray M. Chotiner said yesterday.

Chotiner, a longtime political associate of Mr. Nixon and a former White House aide, said he had hired an unnamed reporter "in early 1971" to begin monitoring Mr. Nixon's potential challengers.

When that man "got another assignment" in journalism in the fall of 1972, he was replaced by Lucianne Cummings Goldberg, the \$1,000-a-week "spy" on Gen. George McGovern's campaign, whose identity was revealed Sunday.

Chotiner, who said in a telephone interview there was "nothing underhanded or illegal" about the arrangement, said he would be glad to turn over the reports he received from his two informants to the Senate Watergate investigating committee.

But he said he would "rather not" identify his original agent. "It doesn't make a bit of difference to me, but he's a newspaperman now, and I think it's up to him," Chotiner said.

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He added that when the man worked for him, from early 1971 until Labor Day of 1972, "he was not covering for a particular newspaper, so there was no conflict of interest or dual role."

Mrs. Goldberg, a former Washington public relations woman, represented herself to McGovern campaign aides as a free-lance journalist planning a book on the campaign. She confirmed over the weekend that, in fact, her job was to phone daily reports from the McGovern plane to Chotiner's secretary.

Chotiner said that he paid Mrs. Goldberg and her anonymous predecessor \$1,000 a week, plus all expenses, for the work, but said he was "definitely not looking for dirty stuff" on the President's opposition.

"We couldn't care less what those people were doing in their off hours," he said. "We wanted to know what the candidate was saying, how big the crowds were, what their reaction was—anything and everything any newspaper would publish if it had the space."

Chotiner said he paid the informants from his own funds and was reimbursed by the Committee for the Re-election of the President. He said the first informant had worked on an "on and off basis, hopping from candidate to candidate" during the Democratic primaries, and said he did not know what the total cost of the two-year surveillance had been.

The Finance Committee to Re-elect the President reported \$22,357 in payments to Chotiner between April 7 and November 29, 1972.

Chotiner, a lawyer who had managed several of Mr. Nixon's early campaigns in California, was officially described as the part-time "director of ballot security" for the 1972 race.

Reported payments to him include several \$1,000 checks for "travel expenses" and "survey expenses" and one \$5,000 check for "reimbursement of travel and consultants."

Chotiner said Mrs. Goldberg and her unnamed predecessor were the only persons he employed to report on opposition candidates. He denied a published report that he also had agents covering Vice President Agnew and Democratic vice-presidential candidate Sargent Shriver.

The press secretaries of those two campaigns Victor Gold and Burt Hoffman, said they had no indication that Chotiner agents were among the press parties traveling with them.

Mrs. Goldberg said she did not know the name of her predecessor but "assumed somebody else had been doing it," because the procedure for calling in her reports under the code name of "Chapman's Friend" seemed well established.