

'State of Siege'

CIA Bomb School



Jack Anderson

BOMB and booby-trap experts from the Central Intelligence Agency have been quietly training foreign police to make explosive devices at an isolated federal school in Texas. The tutelage is so dubious that the Pentagon has refused to have anything to do with it.

The cloak-and-dagger professors are on loan from the CIA to the Agency for International Development, which runs the school at the Border Patrol Academy in Los Fresnos, Tex.

The existence of the school was first depicted in the movie "State of Siege" in which foreign police were shown being trained to use bombs and booby traps against political opponents. But because the film was propagandistic, few took seriously the reality of the "terror school."

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DUBIOUS but curious, Senator James Abourezk (Dem-S.D.) began a quiet investigation. His confidential findings raise disquieting questions about America's police aid to military juntas.

In one memo wrung from AID by Abourezk, assistant administrator Matthew Harvey concedes that the Defense Department refused to teach the bomb course when it was set up in 1969. Therefore, "The Central Intelligence Agency agreed to provide guest lecturers for this portion of the training program."

At the secret school, he says, demon-

strations are given of "the construction, use and counter-measures against home-made bombs and explosive devices used by criminal terrorists." The foreign police also get graphic lectures on booby traps, "incendiaries" and other lethal devices. To defuse and dispose of bombs, explains Harvey, a police officer first has to learn all about them.

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THE DOCUMENTS obtained by Abourezk show that most of the 165 policemen trained at the school come from military-backed regimes such as those in Brazil, Guatemala, Thailand, Uruguay, Panama and El Salvador. Only a thin blue line of cops is trained for the democracies.

AID officials explained to us that they have had fewer requests for the "technical investigations course" from democracies. The bomb-building course, they add, is only part of the curriculum at the Texas hideaway. The visiting police are also taught bomb squad organization, record keeping and a course called "press releases and press relations."

At the CIA, a spokesman said the decision to help with the anti-bomb courses was associated with terrorist attacks on American personnel and facilities in foreign lands. The courses are now being reviewed.