

Drug Suspect Spied For CIA, It Admits

Reuter

The Central Intelligence Agency admitted yesterday that a suspected member of a multimillion-dollar opium ring had spied for the agency in Thailand.

But the CIA denied in a letter that Puttaporn Khramkhruan, 30, a Burmese, had been ordered to do anything illegal.

Drug charges against Khramkhruan and a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand, Bruce Hoefft, were dropped mysteriously last year by federal prosecutors.

Four others have pleaded guilty to smuggling charges and the government is seeking two fugitives in the case, involving \$2.5 million worth of opium seized in Chicago in 1973.

Acting CIA Director Carl Duckett told Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.) in a letter that Khramkhruan was hired in 1972 to report on drug activities.

But he said the CIA refused to provide witnesses or records lest its drug intelligence operations in Thailand be uncovered. Percy had asked if charges against the two were dropped because the agency failed to cooperate with the prosecutors.

Khramkhruan was arrested in 1973 while studying at Syracuse University in New York State under a program sponsored by the Agency for International Development.

He was reported to have returned to Chiang Mai, Thailand, last October after charges were dropped.

U.S. Customs officials broke the drug case in early 1973 when they seized 59 pounds of raw opium in film canisters, and found one package with Khramkhruan's Chiang Mai address on it.

CIA documents supplied to Percy indicated that Khram-

khruan had admitted to federal officials that he was engaged in shipping narcotics. He also said he furnished the wrapping paper and string for this shipment.

The CIA said in the letter that Khramkhruan had identified other people in the case.