

'Secret Program'

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A Report CIA Had Drug Bureau Spies

Move Was 'Authorized By Mitchell'

Washington

Former attorney general John N. Mitchell and Richard Helms, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, authorized a secret program to infiltrate the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs with agents, a program that the Rockefeller Commission later found illegal, authoritative sources reported yesterday.

One of the main reasons for the infiltration reportedly was to stamp out corruption among narcotics agents.

The infiltration report came as William E. Colby, the current CIA director, denied as "outrageous nonsense" a report indicating that a high-level member of the Nixon White House staff had given information to the CIA.

And at a White House press conference, Press Secretary Ron Nessen said there are CIA employees working at the White House now and President Ford knows it.

Nessen told newsmen he knows at least one CIA operative is on the staff of the National Security Council and said "There may be a handful of others in related capacities."

According to the sources familiar with the Bureau of Narcotics, the infiltration program was instituted at the request of John Ingersoll, then director of the

narcotics bureau, and partly paid for out of "unvouchered" funds available to the attorney general.

Three attorneys general—Mitchell, Richard G. Kleindienst and Elliot L. Richardson — knew about the program, but never questioned its legality, these sources said.

James R. Schlesinger, former head of the CIA, may

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not have been briefed on the operation during his short tenure at the agency, the sources said. Colby halted

the operation in 1973, when the Drug Enforcement Administration absorbed the narcotics bureau in a major reorganization.

The program is under renewed scrutiny by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and is also being investigated by the Senate

permanent subcommittee on investigations.

The program has come under sharp criticism on two grounds. The Rockefeller commission found that it violated the CIA's 1947 charter, which prohibits the agency from exercising police powers within the United States. And drug officials believe that in its primary goal of stamping out corruption among federal narcotics agents, the program abrogated the agents' rights to due process of law and privacy.

John R. Bartels Jr., who recently resigned as head of the Drug Enforcement Administration, told the Jackson subcommittee yesterday that he did not continue the program under DEA because "the philosophy of using this type of covert

program seemed to me to be potentially damaging to the morale of agents."

The idea for the undercover men was conceived by Ingersoll in 1970 as a result of his growing concern about how to identify and halt internal corruption in the narcotics bureau.

He received approval for the program from Mitchell and—on the basis of it being a request from the attorney general — Helms pledged agency cooperation. No consideration was given to the question of whether the program was legal, two sources familiar with it said.

Two CIA agents, posing as private businessmen, began recruiting candidates for a secret operation in law enforcement.

Candidates were not told at first that they would be working undercover within the drug bureau. The men were trained in two-week courses and at the end of this period they were asked if they wanted to work for the narcotics bureau.

Thirteen of the 19 candidates eventually went to work there. The secret operatives applied, were examined and trained as federal narcotics agents with the knowledge of only two men, Ingersoll and Patrick Fuller, then chief of internal inspection. Ingersoll is abroad and Fuller declined to comment.

The operatives were spread out over the various drug bureau regions, and eventually two of them went abroad. In one case, officials of the bureau heard a "rumor" that agents in a field office were drinking heavily and using government cars to drive around with their girl friends.

One of the operatives was "outrageously" transferred into

the suspect office and assigned to cultivate the erring agents.

It was his job to find out if there was sufficient truth to the rumor to begin an internal inspection case. The agent reported only to Fuller, using a code name and other protections.

What has concerned several intelligence sources is the reason the CIA would cooperate in such a program and whether, in fact, some of these operatives were placed to give CIA secret internal power in the narcotics agency.

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