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Banks Aide's Claim

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Informer in AIM Ranks

By John Kifner
New York Times

Chicago

The American Indian Movement's chief security officer during the trial of the leaders of the Wounded Knee takeover said yesterday that he was a paid informer of the FBI.

The government, in a sworn affidavit at the trial, had appeared to contend that it had no informer in the defense ranks.

The informer, Douglass Durham, was the chief aide and confidante of Dennis Banks, one of the two defendants and a co-leader of the American Indian Movement. In addition to being the organization's national security director, he became, in effect, its chief bureaucrat.

"I exercised so much control that you couldn't see Dennis or Russell (Means, the other defendant and co-leader) without going through me, you couldn't contact any other chapter without going through me, and if you wanted money you had to see me," Durham said.

During the trial, Durham was the only person, other than defendants and lawyers, with regular access to the room in which defense strategy was planned. He said that his proximity to the AIM leadership had caused his cash payments from the FBI to be raised from \$900 a month to \$1100.

He said he was given a special telephone number during the trial, which was held in St. Paul, to call a three-man FBI team headed by Ray Williams.

Reached at the Minneapolis office of the FBI, Special

Agent Ray Williams said, "We are unable to comment on that."

Following the 71-day occupation of the village of Wounded Knee on the Oglala Sioux reservation of Pine Ridge in South Dakota by more than 200 Indian militants in the late winter and early spring of 1973, Means and Banks were indicted on federal charges of conspiracy, larceny and assault on government officers.

The charges were dismissed after an eight-and-a-half-month trial last September 17 by U.S. District Judge Frederick Nichol when a juror became sick and the government declined to proceed with a jury of 11. A government appeal on the case was argued Tuesday in St. Louis.

In dismissing the charges, Judge Nichol assailed the court. He was particularly critical of the FBI, whose agents, he said, had given testimony that was not true, and had withheld documents or furnished altered documents to defense attorneys.

In an interview Tuesday night the 37-year-old Durham described what he said were his activities as an FBI informer.

His cover was broken on Friday, he said, when, after some members of the group became suspicious, he was confronted by AIM leaders with law enforcement documents that proved his role as an informer.

He said he was relieved because he had come to respect Banks and to believe that AIM is a "legal, social organization that wasn't doing anything wrong."

Durham reportedly apologized to AIM leaders for his activities and was supposedly considering making a public statement critical of FBI infiltration practices.

Tanker Sinks in Mediterranean

London

The 15,999-ton tanker July Star broke in two in the Mediterranean off the coast of Algiers, Lloyd's reported here yesterday.

A spokesman said there was no sign of the crew. The stern part of the Singapore-registered tanker was still afloat, but the bow had sunk.

Reuters