

IRS Chief Calls Spying 'Mistake'

Washington

The head of the Internal Revenue Service conceded yesterday it was "a mistake" for the IRS to snoop into the sex lives of suspected tax cheaters and to investigate extremist political groups.

Commissioner Donald C. Alexander told a congressional hearing that the mistakes have been remedied and now should be forgotten.

While unable to promise that none of the 80,000 IRS employees will ever make similar mistakes again, Alexander nonetheless pledged "continued and continual vigilance" to ensure that tax laws are administered fairly.

He appeared before a House Ways and Means subcommittee, one of several Congressional panels investigating charges that the IRS' defunct Special Service Staff and its "Operation Leprechaun" in the Miami area broke laws and violated civil rights through overzealous spying.

"Operation Leprechaun . . . was a mistake," Alex-

ander said. "The Special Service Staff, in my judgment, was a mistake."

Both projects predated Alexander's appointment as IRS commissioner in May, 1973. They have since been ended.

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