

F.B.I. Agent Denies Receiving Information on Attica Defense

By TOM GOLDSTEIN

Special to The New York Times

BUFFALO, April 22—A Federal Bureau of Investigation agent denied under oath today that he had received any information about the strategy of the Attica legal defense team from a woman who had testified that she had furnished such information to him.

The agent, Gary Lash, confirmed that the woman, Mary Jo Cook, had worked for the F.B.I. from June, 1973, to October, 1974, when she infiltrated the Buffalo chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization.

Under questioning from Justice Joseph Mattina of the State Supreme Court, the 34-year-old agent said that while he had never requested Miss Cook to spy on the Attica defense camp, "she spoke about some activities centering around the Attica uprising."

Mr. Lash said the only information about Attica that he had received "concerned planned demonstrations that could ultimately lead to public disturbances."

He had testified for less than 10 minutes when Justice Mattina adjourned the court for the day to examine the reports that Miss Cook turned over to Mr. Lash. The reports filled a large leather briefcase.

Mr. Lash's testimony came on the second day of a hearing to determine if Miss Cook's undercover activities prejudiced the case of Bernard Stroble, a former Attica inmate

who is on trial here for the killing of two other inmates during the 1971 prison revolt at Attica.

During a day and a half on the witness stand, Miss Cook told of infiltrating the defense camp and transmitting information to Mr. Lash. Miss Cook testified this morning that she had received information about Mr. Stroble's defense last summer. During a 10-minute conference in Justice Mattina's chambers, she described this information, but no details were given in open court.

For the defense to demonstrate that Mr. Stroble's case has been prejudiced, it must show that Miss Cook gave information about the defendant to the F.B.I. and that the agency in turn passed that information along to the state prosecution.

At today's hearing, Mr. Lash said that some information from Miss Cook "could have been turned over to state authorities." The recipient, he said, would have been Jack Steinmetz, who works for the Bureau of Criminal Investigation of the state police.

In an interview, Francis Cryan, the special Attica prosecutor handling the Stroble case, said that Mr. Steinmetz had never worked for the prosecution. Mr. Cryan has filed an affidavit with the court stating that he received "no information from anybody" about Attica defense activities.