

Panel Requests Names Of CIA News Covers

By Walter Pincus

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate intelligence committee has asked the Central Intelligence Agency for the names of American news organizations that provided cover for clandestine agents abroad, according to Senate sources.

The committee staff also has studied examples of past CIA covert operations and has requested the names of American reporters who worked either full-time or part-time in some of them.

Also under committee study are sources of funds for journalist traveling fellowships and possible CIA relations with national journalism organizations, or individuals employed by such groups.

Senate aides refuse to say whether CIA has given the committee any names of news organizations or individual journalists. Similar requests from the House intelligence committee were turned down by the agency, according to a House committee staff member.

The prospect that names of cooperating news organizations and CIA-paid reporters may emerge — plus repeated statements by CIA Director William E. Colby that the agency plans to continue employing part-time reporters (called stringers) — has created concern among journalists.

Complicating the picture, both for news organizations and the congressional committees, is the lack of information on exactly what use of the press the CIA has made.

According to House and Senate committee sources, the CIA appears to have had relationships with three types of reporters:

— Stringers, who work abroad part-time for American and foreign news organizations, have been used to gather information as CIA informants. Colby has said the CIA still uses some 30 stringers, but he refuses to reveal which news organizations they work for.

— Full-time staff members of general circulation American news organizations who also worked for CIA. In 1973, when Colby first disclosed this type of relationship to The Washington Star in a background interview, he announced the practice was being halted. He said recently that the last five of these had given up one or the other profession. Of the five, Colby said, three reporters had not informed their American employers of their agency relationship. The others worked for the CIA with the approval of their company management.

— CIA agents overseas who use journalistic employment as a cover for their clandestine activities but do not perform any journalistic work.

The House intelligence committee, in its unpublished report, noted that: "The CIA's cover and commercial staff files show that in 1975, 11 CIA employees used media cover with 15 news field companies — television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Five of these are of major general news impact, nine of no major general news influence and one a proprietary."

A CIA "proprietary" is a company secretly owned and operated by the agency.

The House committee never got the names of those organizations and thus does not know how many are American, and how many foreign.

CIA Director Colby told reporters Tuesday that no CIA personnel are operating abroad under journalistic cover for major American news organizations.

The Senate intelligence committee is looking at news organizations based on information that in the past the CIA has benefited from cover provided by American organizations.

A top news executive, who asked that his name be withheld, said recently that he knew of some organizations that had "let their names be used" by the CIA because they were owned by "super-patriots."

Executives of major U.S. newspapers, radio-television networks, wire services and magazines contacted all

denied knowledge of any present cooperation by their organizations with the CIA, though several cautioned that there may have been relationships in the past.

Officials at NBC and CBS said that in the early 1960s they permitted the CIA to view and buy film shown on the air which their cameraman had shot overseas. Spokesmen for both networks said that service was available to anyone.

Editors of The Washington Post, the Washington Star, Baltimore Sun, New York Times, Chicago Sun-Times and Los Angeles Times said they never cooperated with the CIA in providing cover for agents overseas.

The same reply came from presidents of NBC, CBS and ABC news organizations, executives of the nation's two major wire services, the Associated Press and United Press International, as well as three weekly news-magazines, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report.

Most of those contacted agreed with the statement of Christian Science Monitor editor John Hughes: "I'm flatly opposed" to CIA-press relationships, "for the obvious reason that it completely undermines the value of the press. . . ."

NBC President Richard C. Wald, who worked overseas for the New York Herald Tribune in the 1950s, said he "understands why serious and principled journalists might have felt at that time that they could serve their country while practicing their profession."

"In hindsight," Wald added, "I think it was improper and anyone who cooperated into the 1960s and 1970s ought to have his head examined."

In the past, CIA has recruited journalists for both formal and informal relationships.

In 1960, I was offered a full-time overseas job with the CIA. At the time I was Washington correspondent for three North Carolina newspapers. I turned the job down but that year did take two trips overseas to international youth conferences. The CIA arranged and paid expenses for both trips.

In 1967, I wrote of this CIA association in The Washington Post.

Other journalists and publications have had various kinds of financial relationships with the CIA in the past.

Several former CIA employees have become well-known full-time journalists after leaving the agency.

Philip Geyelin, since 1967 editorial page editor of The Washington Post, took a leave of absence in 1951 from his reporting job on The Wall Street Journal to work for the CIA. After 11 months in the agency, Geyelin returned to the Journal. Since that time he has had no relationship with the CIA or its officials "except to talk to them in the normal give and take of journalism," he said recently.

Columnist Tom Braden was with the CIA from 1950 to 1954 and helped organize links between the agency and several domestic organizations including the National Student Association. Since 1954, Braden has worked in the news business, first running a California newspaper and since 1968 writing a nationally syndicated column.

The publisher of The New Republic, Robert J. Myers, worked for the CIA in Asia for almost 20 years before resigning in 1966.

Two former Newsweek magazine Washington reporters, George Packard and Bruce van Voorst, worked for the CIA before joining the magazine. Packard is now

running for the Republican Senate nomination in Pennsylvania; van Voorst recently joined the staff of Sen. Dick Clark (D-Iowa).

In 1967 it was disclosed that the American Newspaper Guild had accepted nearly \$1 million from foundations that handled CIA funds. The money financed a union international program, but Guild officers denied knowing the agency was behind the funding.

The House committee staff has proposed that U.S. intelligence organizations not use American general circulation journals or electronic media or their employees or stringers "for cover or information gathering."

Committee members, however, doubt that such a provision could be written into law but say it could become a regulation.

CIA operating regulations already prohibit CIA use of certain specified groups such as the recipients of Fulbright grants (who spend a year abroad as students or teachers) and members of the Peace Corps.

Colby has said, however, that he did not want to add journalists to the limitations already in effect.

While major American news organizations deny they have any covert financial or cooperative arrangements with CIA, most carry on their regular news-gathering functions using CIA officials and publications as sources — sometimes without attribution.

This non-paid relationship has also come under critical review by the House and Senate intelligence committees.

"Tell me which is more corrupting?", a Senate staff member asked recently. "Paying a stringer overseas for tid-bits or some cozy relationship between a Washington columnist and a CIA official over lunch at Sans Souci?"

CIA officials are often interviewed for stories by Washington reporters, almost always without attribution. The agency has its own public relations man to whom questions are directed.

A CIA publication, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service Reports, which presents transcripts of overseas radio broadcasts, can be purchased by news organizations.

Reporters going overseas often ask for and receive briefings from CIA area specialists. And CIA officials ask for an opportunity to debrief reporters and correspondents who have traveled in areas that interest the agency.

Richard Salant, president of CBS News, said recently that in the early 1960s when his network's correspondents overseas came back to the United States for their annual year-end program, they would "drop down to the State Department for a conversation" that turned into a debriefing. Salant stopped the practice.

The House committee, as part of its inquiry, interviewed aides to former CIA Director Richard M. Helms on how Helms, a former newsman himself, cultivated people in the news business. They said Helms, according to a House aide, had "chummy" relationships with publishers, network executives and reporters.

He "called on their patriotism" to cover certain stories or send reporters to various areas of the world and occasionally got stories killed.

The Senate committee also plans to explore the CIA's nonfinancial relationships with the news media.