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Exposure of IRS Inquiry Is Denounced by Lawman

Associated Press

The former Miami chief of the government's organized crime strike force yesterday denounced exposure of the controversial Operation Leprechaun as a "lynching" that may have been directed by criminals to weaken the government's fight against corruption.

Douglas McMillan told a House Ways and Means subcommittee that the publicity has most likely prejudiced juries against government cases and has damaged morale in the law enforcement community.

Operation Leprechaun involved a network of undercover informants who developed information on the

sex, drinking and social habits of persons under investigation, primarily for possible criminal tax violations.

Internal Revenue Service Commissioner Donald C. Alexander has said the operation was under the direction of the strike force, a section of the Justice Department. McMillan, however, told the subcommittee that it was developed and paid for by the Internal Revenue Service.

William S. Lynch, the strike force director in the Justice Department, testified that as far as he knew, the operation was not a Justice Department project.

McMillan defended it as "a

legitimate effort to try to obtain tax information related to corruption."

Asked by subcommittee chairman Charles A. Vanik (D-Ohio) what effect publicity about the operation has had, McMillan said, "It comes about as close to a lynching of a law enforcement agency as anything I've seen."

McMillan refused to say where the publicity originated, but when asked if organized crime figures may have played a role, he said: "They may have had a hand in it. There are strong indications it was orchestrated."

He also said, "the publicity is certain to prejudice jury panels against the IRS."