

C.I.A. to Stop Enlisting Agents From the Press and the Church

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 11—The Central Intelligence Agency announced today that it would cease the practice of recruiting agents from among reporters for American news organizations or American clergymen and missionaries.

The action was taken, senior intelligence officials said, in response to growing criticism of the C.I.A.'s use of news media personnel and the buying of information from American newsmen. There have also been substantial complaints from religious groups over the reports that the C.I.A. once used missionaries for intelligence gathering.

It was the first public action of George Bush, the new Director of Central Intelligence

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and the first time the agency had publicly barred itself from a particular intelligence gathering method.

In 1967, President Johnson barred the C.I.A. from secretly funding private American voluntary organizations. The agency was prohibited from recruiting agents from members of the Peace Corps by an executive order.

In 1973, William E. Colby, then the Director of Central Intelligence, halted the secret use by the agency of five full-time journalists with major American publications and, as Mr. Colby said this year, they were phased out by 1974.

But Mr. Bush's order goes further. "Effective immediately," a statement issued by the director's office said, the "C.I.A. will not enter into any paid or contractual relationship with

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any full-time or part-time news correspondent accredited by any U.S. news service newspaper, periodical, radio or television network or station."

A senior intelligence agency official said that "less than 20 persons will be affected by the order." He said the order would also end the practice of sending a C.I.A. employee abroad under the "cover" of being an accredited representative of an American news organization.

The order, another official said, did not bar the agency from recruiting employees of foreign news organizations.

In taking today's action, Mr. Bush appeared to be directly opposed to the position of his predecessor. Mr. Colby told newsmen shortly before he retired that he believed "part time" or freelance employees of American news organizations were fair game for recruitment by the C.I.A.

The agency order noted that it would also bar recruitment within the clergy, but that, in fact there was no current "secret or paid contractual relationship with any American clergyman or missionary."

It said, however, that the agency would accept information voluntarily offered by members of the news media or the clergy.

"It is the agency policy not to divulge the names of cooperating Americans. In this regard C.I.A. will not make public, now or in the future, the names of any cooperating journalists or churchmen," the statement said.

Mr. Bush's statement said that the agency did not believe that its use of people in news and religion was improper, but that it recognized the freedoms of religion and the press in the Constitution and that it would ban the recruitment "in order to avoid any appearance of improper use by the agency."

The first strong indication that the C.I.A. had infiltrated the news media came in 1973 when Mr. Colby leaked a news story about the agency's use of "stringers" and the five staff reporters. These details were confirmed last month in a report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence.

The House report created an uproar among members of the news media, the major news organizations and press and writing societies. Sigma Delta Chi, the society of professional journalists, and the American Society of Journalists and Authors, which represents many freelance or parttime writers,

made formal complaints to President Ford.

C.I.A. STATEMENT

Over the years, the C.I.A. has had relationships with individuals in many walks of American life. These relationships, many of a voluntary and unpaid nature, have reflected the desire of Americans to help their country. Such relationships have been conducted by the agency with the clear intent of furthering its foreign intelligence mission and have not been aimed at influencing or improperly acting on any American institution.

Genuine concern has recently been expressed about C.I.A. relations with newsmen and churchmen. The agency does not believe there has been any impropriety on its part in the limited use made of persons connected in some way with American media, church and missionary organizations. Nonetheless, C.I.A. recognizes the special status afforded these institutions under our Constitution and in order to avoid any appearance of improper use by the agency, the D.C.I. [Director of Central Intelligence] has decided on a revised policy to govern agency relations with these groups:

Effective immediately, C.I.A. will not enter into any paid or contractual relationship with any full-time or part-time news correspondent accredited by any U.S. news service, newspaper, periodical, radio or television network or station.

As soon as feasible, the agency will bring existing relationships with individuals in these groups into conformity with this new policy.

C.I.A. has no secret paid or contractual relationship with any American clergyman or missionary. This practice will continue as a matter of policy.

C.I.A. recognizes that members of these groups may wish to provide information to the C.I.A. on matters of foreign intelligence of interest to the U.S. Government. The C.I.A. will continue to welcome information volunteered by such individuals.

It is agency policy not to divulge the names of cooperating Americans. In this regard C.I.A. will not make public, now or in the future, the names of any cooperating journalists or churchmen.