

CIA's Cover in Laos Getting Restless

Washington

The head of the U.S. foreign aid program confirmed yesterday that CIA agents use the civilian aid mission in Laos as a cover for anti-Communist operations, much to his displeasure.

But he asserted that Laos "is the only place in the world" where CIA operatives masquerade as field workers of the Agency for International Development (AID).

AID administrator John A. Hannah, asked if the CIA uses the mission in Laos as a cover, said: "Well, I just have to admit that this is true. This was a decision that was made back in 1962 and by administrations from now until then, and it is the only place in the world that we are."

INTEREST

He said, "We have had people that have been associated with the CIA and doing things in Laos that were believed to be in the na-



JOHN HANNAH
Aid program distorted

tional interest but not routine AID operations.

"Our preference is to get rid of this kind of operation."

Previously, the AID agency has declined to comment on published reports that CIA agents pose as AID rural development workers but actu-

ally recruit and train anti-Communist guerrillas, detect enemy movements and act as ground controllers for air strikes.

The 1962 Geneva Convention declared Laos a neutral country.

Hannah's remarks were made on a radio news program.

DISTORTION

Hannah said he hopes the connection between the two agencies could be eliminated in a proposed revamping of AID. The separation was one of the recommendations of a recent task force that studied AID.

Hannah conceded that the AID role in Laos, plus its war-related activities in Vietnam, "might" have an adverse effect on the AID programs to other nations. "It certainly has not helped... it distorts the role of AID," he said. But he defended the original decisions to involve AID as being correct when they were made in 1962.

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