

Newsmen Supply Data to CIA

The Central Intelligence Agency has been paying more than three dozen agents operating under journalistic covers abroad for part-time or full-time services.

This was determined by CIA Director William E. Colby as the result of a survey of undercover agents spurred by recent congressional inquiries into possible domestic operations of the agency.

Colby has reportedly decided to remove from the CIA payroll a small number of full-time news correspondents with whom the agency had contracted for services, according to authoritative sources.

But it is understood that he plans to retain the services of the majority of the journalist agents, who are not associated with major publications but function under various reportorial covers.

The CIA director was reported to be out of town yesterday on official business and agency spokesmen would not comment officially on the report, published in the Washington Star-News. It was independently confirmed, however, by knowledgeable officials.

Rep. Lucien Nedzi (D-Mich.), chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Intelligence, said yesterday he would make inquiries into the

practice of paying journalists for intelligence services.

"I can't say I'm really surprised," Nedzi said of the disclosure. "I suppose the real problem was whether the press was an arrangement for gathering of intelligence I find it difficult to see much wrong with it."

So far the only two journalists names that have emerged from the CIA's file belong to a smaller group of perhaps a dozen correspondents with whom the agency has maintained informal, unpaid, working relationships. One is former Europe-based columnist Seymour K. Freidin, who was implicated as a supplier of information to the Nixon campaign in 1972. The other is Star-News correspondent Jeremiah O'Leary, as reported in the Star-News story.

O'Leary was mentioned in a category of newsmen who occasionally exchange information with CIA officials in the routine performance of journalistic duties without any monetary considerations.

Interviews with CIA station chiefs or lesser officials in overseas posts are not uncommon practices for correspondents of most major publications in the performance of their news-gathering functions. Normally, however, it is not considered part of the journalistic function to provide information to government agents.

Several former CIA operatives expressed surprise at the number of newsmen Colby discovered on the agency's current payroll. "It's quite a bit more than I would have expected," said one CIA veteran who now monitors agency activities on Capitol Hill.

The majority of this group, some two dozen, were determined to be operating under the cover of freelance journalists or "stringers" (correspondents not on the regular staffs of publications) working in foreign posts.

In 1967 the agency was wracked by a massive series of disclosures that it was underwriting activities of book publishers, magazines, student and cultural organizations and trade unions, including the American Newspaper Guild.

In the aftermath of those revelations the CIA was understood to have withdrawn from covert financing of such organizations as well as from a network of foundation conduits through which the money was channeled.

More recently agency offi-

cial have been questioned by congressional oversight committees—in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal—about CIA involvement in domestic activities. Several bills have been proposed designed to curtail domestic operations of the CIA.

There have, however, been no recent revelations of CIA penetration of domestic institutions comparable to the scale of those uncovered in the late 1960s.