

CIA Chief Begins Big Cutback of Spy Jobs

Washington

Central Intelligence Agency Director Stanfield Turner has begun a major purge of the agency's clandestine service — the operations section.

He has notified CIA employees that 198 members of the clandestine service were given notice on November 1 that their jobs would be terminated on March 31 next year. He has also notified employees that on June 1 of next year jobs of an additional 700 clandestine operators will be cut effective on Dec. 31, 1979.

These terminations will cut deeply into the top ranks of the clandestine division and will include an undisclosed number of station chiefs around the world. Many of the dismissed employees will be officials who are alumni of the old Office of Strategic Services, which was formed in World War II under General William Donovan and was the predecessor of the CIA.

The clandestine service is run by the agency's deputy director for operations, William W. Wells. Its principal function is the collection of intelligence information, and consists of 4000 CIA officers and 4000 support personnel.

The cutbacks, announced in letters to the 198 individuals affected, reportedly are being made for reasons of "economy."

But there is also a belief within the agency that technology is a factor. In recent years, the CIA has relied increasingly on technical devices for the collection of information, including satellites and electronic intercepts.

The role of the "human" collectors of information — popularly known as "spies" — has diminished in recent years as new technological capabilities have been developed.

It is these "spies" who would be the target of the Turner personnel cuts — "human" collectors made obsolete by technology.

The clandestine employees selected for termination were reportedly chosen on the basis of a point system that rates their efficiency and value. They were to be chosen, employees were told, from the lowest five per cent of each grade. But one source said many of the people dismissed by Turner came from the top five per cent of the agency's employees.

"They included a lot of very, very senior people," this source said.

Morale has suffered at CIA headquarters in nearby Virginia. Although the first 198 to be dismissed have been notified, the next 700 have not.

Also, some disgruntled employees wonder whether economy and technology are the only factors in Turner's decision. They think the former admiral may intend to bring in more people of his own.

The operations section was enlarged substantially during the Vietnam War. A recent in-house study concluded that it is over-staffed, and top-heavy with senior-grade officers.

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