

CIA firing its No. 1 spies in 8 nations

WASHINGTON (UPI) — CIA chiefs in at least eight capitals have received their pink slips as part of the purge that may eliminate up to 1,000 members of the agency's clandestine branch by next year, sources said yesterday.

They said the CIA's roving expert on Israeli affairs also will be sacked in an efficiency drive that has aroused bitter resentment inside the agency against Adm. Stansfield Turner, CIA director.

Sources in and out of the agency said the station chiefs — seasoned spymasters who run operations in the field — already slated to be dropped are those in West Germany, Spain, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Canada, Japan and Australia.

The field posts they are leaving are considered the top rung on a professional spy's ladder — often the last plum assignment before retirement or reassignment to headquarters in senior executive posts.

But the sources said only one of the eight is known to have received reassignment to the agency's Langley, Va., headquarters to serve out his normal career term. The rest are said to have been "invited" to take early retirement.

The eight are among 210 members of the CIA's directorate of operations — the ultra-secret branch that runs highest level operations — who received notice of imminent severance last month.

The sources said nearly all of them will be dismissed or retired by March 31. Then, they said, another 500 to 800 clandestine service employees will be slated for removal during the next fiscal year.

Although the size of the CIA's work force is secret, it is estimated that the clandestine branch now has 4,000 to 5,000 employees — half in the field and half in support missions.

By that standard, Turner's purge would slash staff by 20 or 25 percent.

Intelligence professionals generally agree that the operations directorate has been grossly over-staffed since the end of the Vietnam War.

But some veterans say Turner has been "brutal" and "insensitive" in the way he is handling the wholesale sackings, compressing the staff reduction drive from the

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five years contemplated to just two.

And the critics note there is no severance pay for fired CIA employees.

Those sacked before regular retirement age get only a last paycheck, a refund of accrued pension annuities and dismissal into a world where many employers will not hire former spies.

It is no secret that many career CIA officers — members of a close-knit fraternity — resent Turner as an "outsider" and a military man who kept his rank and brought trusted Navy aides along with him.

Some critics claim the admiral is pushing his "purge" so he can make a reputation for heroic efficiency reforms, then bow out and buck for Chief of Naval Operations.

All this seems to have spawned a somewhat spiteful anti-Navy sentiment among agency employees.

Just before the Army-Navy football game in late November, for example, sources said "Beat Navy" signs sprouted on the walls at headquarters. (Army won, 17-14.)

Beyond that, however, there appears to be a serious morale problem at the CIA — an agency that has undergone four years of battering by congressional commit-

tees, investigative reporters, tell-it-all books by former agents and official reforms designed to curb well-publicized abuses of power.

Some intelligence officials have begun to take the once-unthinkable step of complaining to reporters about Turner. The agency in turn has begun to complain of "unfair" or "unbalanced" articles on the subject.

When a Newsweek reporter asked Turner recently about the criticism that he is axing employees in an inhuman fashion, the director snapped, "You've really heard them crying, haven't you?"

He scoffed at the notion that many of those due for dismissal had risked their lives in the line of duty, saying, "I bet you there isn't five of them that had personal risk."

By the next week, Turner had cooled off and publicly expressed "regret" for this "unfortunate remark."

A second guitar pool

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Country music singer Webb Pierce says he'll build a downtown, \$1 million replica here of his guitar-shaped swimming pool after officials in his suburban hometown banned tour buses from stopping to see the real thing.