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Veteran Tells of Spying on Youth Group

WASHINGTON, Jan. 4 (AP)—A former military undercover agent says he spied for nearly six months on a Colorado youth group and its leader because a lieutenant colonel feared they would turn soldiers against the Vietnam war.

The former agent, Oliver A. Pierce, told in an interview of his duties while assigned to Fort Carson, Colo. His statements were the latest in a series of disclosures by former agents concerning the Army's domestic intelligence-gathering activities.

Mr. Pierce, now a civilian living near Boston, said the main object of his surveillance in Colorado Springs was Jerry Kvasnicka.

"The lieutenant colonel who was the G-2 [intelligence officer] at Fort Carson said he thought Jerry Kvasnicka was more dangerous to G.I.'s at the fort than some of the more militant people because he would get G.I.'s into his youth group and then would indoctrinate them with antiwar beliefs," Mr. Pierce said.

Friend Recalls Pierce

Mr. Pierce said he got to know Mr. Kvasnicka and others in the group—the Young Adult Project—as part of his undercover assignment in the last six months of 1969.

Mr. Kvasnicka was not available for comment.

Mr. Kvasnicka's friends, John Thomas, now a law student at Georgetown University in Washington, remembers Mr. Pierce.

"I first met him at a Presbyterian church meeting," Mr. Thomas said. "I knew he was a G.I. at Fort Carson. He said he was a clerk shuffling papers."

Steve Salamon, who was on

the Young Adult Project board of directors, also recalls Mr. Pierce.

"He used to come to our board meetings. I knew him as a really interesting person. We did sometimes wonder about him because somehow he didn't really fit."

The Young Adult Project was established to work with young people in a variety of areas. These included religious activities, and a number of churches participated. The group provided housing for transient youths, worked with poor people in Colorado Springs and provided facilities and aid for young antiwar activists.

Mr. Pierce said he reported regularly to his Army boss on the activities of the group and Mr. Kvasnicka.

He said he told his superior "that this shouldn't be done, that there was no justification, but he wanted me to continue there, if only as a listening post."

Defense is Colorado Springs' biggest industry. The city of 124,000 is ringed with military installations, including the Air Force Academy, two air bases, the North American Air Defense Command and Fort Carson.

Mr. Salamon and Mr. Thomas describe Colorado Springs as a tough place to try to stir up antiwar sentiment. Peace demonstrations rarely draw more than 100 or 200 people.

Local Autonomy

But the town's dissenters apparently were closely watched. Mr. Pierce said the Army had two competing military intelligence units at Colorado Springs. His unit operated out of Fort Carson, the other out of downtown Colorado Springs, he said.

The Army's method of de-

termining who needs watching, Mr. Pierce said, is very decentralized. "It depends on the attitude of the commanding officer or, in this case, the G-2," he said.

Other former agents confirmed this view.

"Each local commander had autonomy. What we collected was a matter of his judgment," recalled one ex-agent who had been stationed in Minneapolis.

Another former agent who worked in the Washington area said there often was a rigid military determination to adhere to the letter of an order.

"We might be asked for the names of the 10 most active radical groups in an area. If there were only four active groups, we'd have to come up with the names of six others," said this ex-agent, who would not be identified.

"When a request came for information, we would just amass a file and send it along and let somebody else decide what it was for," said another former agent, who also declined use of his name. "When we were told to check out draft resistance groups, we didn't make any distinction whether they engaged in legal or extralegal activity."