

IRS Says It Suspends

Washington

The Internal Revenue Service has suspended all its information-gathering activities until it can determine that only tax-related data are being collected on taxpayers, the agency said yesterday.

The IRS moved amid congressional concern over the agency's past political intelligence efforts. It also acted as new reports were published that the IRS had gathered "strictly personal" data on some celebrities and politicians.

An IRS spokesman said the suspension order was issued last Wednesday by Commissioner Donald C. Alexander, and that it will remain in effect indefinitely.

The Los Angeles Times reported Sunday that thousands of U.S. citizens who had protested the Vietnam war were investigated by the IRS about the same time their names were supplied to the Central Intelligence Agency. Lists of these alleged "radicals" were submitted to both agencies by the Justice Department's In-

ternal Security Division, according to IRS documents obtained by a Senate subcommittee.

Meanwhile, the Philadelphia Bulletin said an IRS office known as the Intelligence Gathering and Research Unit had collected "strictly personal information" on thousands of persons. The unit was ordered to disband last week and destroy its files, the newspaper said.

The Bulletin said its sources reported, "The data gathered by IGR officials of-

ten involved local politicians and celebrities, including such details as their drinking and sexual habits, their friends and presumed political leanings, and their families."

Responding to inquiries, IRS spokesman Leon Levine said the agency established an "Information Gathering and Retrieval System" in May, 1973. Known as IGRS, the program was aimed at gathering financial information on taxpayers that might lead to possible tax cases, he said.

Data Gathering

No effort was made to keep this program secret, Levine said, adding that its establishment was noted in public IRS regulations.

IRS officials said the IGRS program was separate from the Special Services Staff (SSS), the unit formed in July, 1969, to collect data on war protesters and alleged subversive organizations. The SSS unit was abolished in August, 1973.

Levine said the IRS last month "undertook a study to insure that its information

systems and programs contain only directly tax-related information."

"As the study plan developed, it was decided that information-gathering activities should be suspended pending completion of the study," Levine said.

"The suspension will remain in effect until procedures are developed to insure that investigative files contain only materials which meet a generally accepted definition of 'directly tax-related.'"

Levine said this review

"will be directed toward giving maximum privacy to taxpayers with regard to their own tax affairs."

Los Angeles Times