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Inquiry Is Reopened on Cuban

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MIAMI, Aug. 14—The Federal Bureau of Investigation reopened today its inquiry into the background of a Cuban-American who was appointed last week director of the Cuban refugee program.

The F.B.I. acted after receiving information that the appointee, Ricardo Nuñez, is a defendant in a dozen civil lawsuits, the existence of which was not indicated in the bureau's original clearance.

The appointment of Mr. Nuñez to head the 15-year-old Federal agency that has an annual budget of \$90-million, has raised many protests in the Cuban community here and elsewhere.

The 42-year-old wealthy Republican, who is described here as "a protégé of a protégé" of Charles G. Rebozo, a close friend of former President Richard M. Nixon, was named to the \$39,000 job by the outgoing Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Caspar W. Weinberger.

The Cuban refugee program has always had professionals in social work heading it, even though the job is appointive. It is part of H.E.W.

"This is a 100 per cent political appointment made to collect money for the 1976 Presidential campaign," said Rafael Villaverde, who heads a social agency in Miami and who is a Republican.

"Mr. Nuñez has no experience in social work whatsoever. He responds to a small group of Mexican-Americans in the White House," Mr. Villaverde said.

Granco is a defunct Bahamas-based investment fund. An international banker said today that in the late nineteen-sixties, Granco schemes in many Latin American countries used to be jailed for infringement of local currency regulations. At that time Mr. Nuñez was a top Granco executive in Nassau.

Suit for Legal Fees

The operations of N.B.S., a developer and general contractor owned wholly by Mr. Nuñez and his family, are being investigated by the F.B.I.

According to court records here, N.B.S. is being sued by about 30 persons for alleged nonpayment for building materials and services, which are said to total about \$300,000. In addition, several Miami attorneys are suing N.B.S. for about \$10,000 in unpaid legal fees.

The assets of N.B.S. are said to be negligible by attorneys for several plaintiffs in cases involving the company. But they say that Mr. Nuñez, who is in Miami for the Bahamas

after resigning as a translator and script writer for the Voice of America, is believed to be worth several million dollars.

William S. Ballenger, chief of special projects for H.E.W., said that Mr. Nuñez's appointment had been "cleared and approved" by the White House.

He added that an original F.B.I. check had shown the Cuban-American to be "clean as a hound's tooth." There was no immediate explanation as to why the investigation did not reveal the pending lawsuits in Dade and Broward Counties. At least one judgment, involving nonpayment for building services, went against Mr. Nuñez.

The office of Fernando DeBeca, a special assistant to President Ford for Hispanic Affairs, said today that it had nothing to do with the appointment. But in an interview with The New York Times last April, Mr. DeBeca said he had "recommended" a Cuban for the post.

Mr. Ballenger, conceding that Mr. Nuñez had no experience in social work, said that his business activities "would be useful" for the job.

The opposition to Mr. Nuñez's appointment was particularly vocal among Cubans who are Republicans.

"This is unbelievable," said Dr. Fernando Penabaz, a prominent Cuban Republican leader since the early nineteen-sixties. "Mr. Nuñez was unknown in G.O.P. politics here until he got on the coattails of Manuel Casanova [a Cuban banker] and joined the Mexican clique at the White House, all of whom used to work hand in glove with Bebe Rebozo."

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