

U.S. REFUGEE AIDE FACES NEW DELAY

Approval of Ex-C.I.A. Man's Appointment Is Held Up by 2d F.B.I. Investigation

By **GEORGE VOLSKY**
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MIAMI, Oct. 19—The confirmation of a Cuban-American appointed last August as director of the Cuban Refugee Program faces a new delay following lengthy background investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other agencies.

A spokesman for F. David Mathews, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, who is responsible for the Cuban program, said Friday that an F.B.I. report on the appointee—Ricardo Nunez—would be sent to the Civil Service Commission this week. **17 OCT**

"It's out of our hands," the spokesman said, adding that a decision might not be made until December. Other Federal officials said they could not recall a "super-grade" appointment for which confirmation by the commission had taken so long.

Mr. Nunez, a wealthy Miami builder, was a top executive of Gramco, a bankrupt investment fund based in the Bahamas that was owned by Robert L. Vesco, the financier who fled to the Caribbean after he was indicted on Federal charges of fraud and conspiracy.

A C.I.A. Operative

Between 1959 and 1968, when he joined Gramco, Mr. Nunez was an employe of the Voice of America. During most of that time, he has said, he was also an undercover operative of the Central Intelligence Agency.

His new \$36,000 job, although subject to the confirmation by the Civil Service Commission, is a political appointment. It also requires a top security clearance.

The refugee program he has been named to head spends about \$90-million a year. Its former director—like his predecessors, an expert social worker—died in March, and Caspar W. Weinberger, then the H.E.W. Secretary, named Mr. Nunez to the post five months later.

Before the appointment was made known, some experts advocated that the position be abolished for the sake of economy. They argued that since virtually no new Cuban refugees were coming to the United States, the program should be phased out and its

functions absorbed by other agencies.

Strong Criticism

The appointment of Mr. Nunez provoked strong criticism, particularly among Cubans who are Republicans and Americans who have had business dealings with him here.

In Washington, Lillian Giberger, a Cuban Adviser to the Republican National Committee, called Mr. Nunez, himself a Republican, "totally unqualified." She said that she had written to resident Ford urging that Mr. Nunez be asked to resign to "spare the Administration an embarrassment."

In Miami, Rafael Villaverde, a Republican who heads a social agency for the aged, termed the process through which Mr. Nunez was appointed "our new Atergate."

Supporters of Mr. Nunez have insisted, however, that his wide-ranging business and civic activities have qualified him for the job.

In late August, after The New York Times learned that Mr. Nunez was a defendant in a dozen of civil lawsuits here, the F.B.I. reopened its inquiry into his background.

30 Court Cases

According to court records in Dade and Broward Counties, about 30 companies and individuals and several law firms are suing Mr. Nunez and N. B. S. Development Company, his land and contracting concern, alleging nonpayment of more than \$300,000 in bills. In two other cases, the builder and his company have been ordered to pay a number of plaintiffs.

While not legally bankrupt, N. B. S. has no known assets.

Mr. Nunez, who lives in Coral Gables, in a lavish home reported to be worth \$500,000, was a modest wage earner in 1968, when he left Miami to live in Nassau. Four years later, following the bankruptcy of Gramco, he returned here a multimillionaire, according to former associates.

One associate said that part of Mr. Nunez's job at Gramco had been to coordinate sales in Latin America. He added:

"We all knew that it was illegal in every Latin country to sell Gramco bonds. At one time, our entire team of 10 salesmen in Peru was arrested, and it cost us a huge bribe to get them out of jail. After that our Latin operation went completely underground, with fictitious names, coded messages and all that C.I.A. stuff."

When Gramco collapsed, thousands of Latin investors were reported to have lost more than \$50-million. Some of them are said to have expressed to American diplomats their dismay over Mr. Nunez's appointment.

As a result, according to one high Federal official, the State Department notified the White House early in September that his confirmation might have an adverse effect on United States image in Latin America.

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