

NYTimes

C.I.A. Will Curb Training It Provides Police Forces

NYTimes

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MAR 6 1973

The new director of Central Intelligence has informed Congress that the agency has decided to curb the training it has been providing local police departments in the United States.

The director, James R. Schlesinger, announced the new policy in a letter to Representative Chet Holifield, Democrat of California, who is chairman of the House Government Operations Committee.

"In keeping with the sensitivity of this matter I have directed that such [training] activities be undertaken in the future only in the most compelling circumstances and with my personal approval," Mr. Schlesinger wrote.

The Central Intelligence Agency acknowledged last month that it had provided training to policemen from about a dozen city and county police forces about techniques to detect explosives and wiretaps, conduct surveillance of individuals and maintain intelligence files.

The acknowledgment of the domestic police training activities came after Representative Edward Koch, Democrat of New York, wrote the C.I.A. last Dec. 28 questioning whether such training did not violate the 1947 legislation creating the intelligence group. This law states, "The agency shall have no police, subpoena, law enforcement powers or internal security functions."

In disclosing the C.I.A.'s statement that it had trained domestic police departments, Mr. Koch called upon Mr. Holifield's committee and the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights to investigate whether

these activities violated the law.

Mr. Schlesinger's brief letter did not attempt to define "the most compelling circumstances" that would lead him to authorize the agency to provide a local police agency with special training.

But Mr. Holifield, in a statement in yesterday's Congressional Record, said that they might involve "foreign criminals or international drug traffickers."

Mr. Holifield, though arguing that the C.I.A. should not be absolutely barred from conducting such training, said he did not agree with the C.I.A.'s contention that the training was authorized under the Omnibus Crime Control Act of 1968.

"The sensitive nature of the agency's work, and the mandate of its enabling legislation to refrain from engaging in domestic law enforcement activities, would seem to compel a reconsideration of the recently publicized activities in question," the California Democrat wrote Mr. Schlesinger.

Mr. Holifield also questioned the C.I.A.'s statement to Mr. Koch that the training was always given at the request of the local agencies. "There may be some arguments as to whether the initiative in every single case was local, since the agency may have offered some suggestions of its own or may have had some requests routed through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration," he said.

Mr. Koch's initial request to the C.I.A. was prompted by an account in The New York Times about 14 New York policemen who had been given training in the handling and processing of intelligence information.