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AIDES DISCIPLINED BY C.I.A. ARE IRKED

Several Said to Contend They Are Scapegoats on Manual

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Nov. 14 — Several mid-level officials of the Central Intelligence Agency disciplined over a manual for Nicaraguan rebels have objected to the punishments, contending they were being made "scapegoats" to protect senior officials, Reagan Administration and Congressional sources said today.

The informants said several of the six C.I.A. employees who were punished had refused to accept the discipline by balking at signing letters that were being placed in their personnel files.

The sources said those objecting to the discipline maintained they had had no role in approving the original manual, which counsels the C.I.A.-backed rebels on "selective use of violence" to "neutralize" Sandinista officials. The term "neutralize" has been interpreted by many in the United States intelligence world and by Nicaraguan rebel leaders to mean assassinate.

Discipline Approved by Reagan

President Reagan on Saturday approved a recommendation by the C.I.A. inspector general meting out discipline to a handful of mid-level agency officials, but sparing senior officials from punishment. Mr. Reagan also said the manual's contents did not violate a longstanding presidential order barring United States involvement in assassinations. He has said the reference to "neutralizing" officials meant removing them from office.

Some Congressional Democrats have criticized the findings and said oversight hearings, expected after Thanksgiving, would examine the role of the intelligence agency's director, William J. Casey, and other top officials.

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Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont, a ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said, "If all they are doing is slapping on the wrist a few lower-level people, you don't have to be very cynical to realize that somebody is being protected."

Mr. Leahy said the committee must "thoroughly review" the inspector general's report to pinpoint problems in the C.I.A.'s command-and-control structure and to "see if someone was made a scapegoat."

Representative Norman Y. Mineta, Democrat of California, a senior member of the House Intelligence Committee, said the White House statement on the C.I.A. report "confirms my earlier suspicion that the report would be a whitewash." He said it "apparently dumps the blame on middle-level people."

"What about the senior-level people who either knew about the manual or should have known about it?" Mr. Mineta asked.

Six Reported Punished

Although the White House has refused to provide details about the discipline, Administration and Congressional officials said this week that six C.I.A. employees were punished, with three given letters of reprimand, two suspended without pay and the author of the manual, identified by the pseudonym John Kirkpatrick, allowed to resign from his agency contract.

One Administration official said that those punished included the agency's station chief in Honduras, where most of the United States-backed rebels are based, and officials involved in propaganda activities related to the covert action in Nicaragua.

The official said the disciplinary actions had raised concerns inside the C.I.A. that a precedent was being set that when problems arise "responsibility will be given to the people in the trenches who are implementing legally given orders."

'Official Review' Denied

The official said the mid-level people believed they were "being made scapegoats to protect" senior officials, including Mr. Casey, who has personally supervised the covert action against Nicaragua since President Reagan authorized it in December 1981.

The official said that despite Mr. Reagan's assertion during the presidential campaign debate on Oct. 21 that the manual was reviewed by C.I.A. personnel in Central America and in Washington, there never had been an "official review process." He said that those being disciplined had seen only bound, printed copies of the book and that only one of them had even partially reviewed it.

The official asserted that punishment had fallen disproportionately on agency personnel associated with the Latin America Division, with the International Affairs Division, which is responsible for paramilitary activities worldwide, largely having been spared from discipline.

The official said that Mr. Kirkpatrick had been hired by the International Affairs Division as an expert on psychological warfare and that it was that section that had sent him to Central America, apparently without informing him about rules governing C.I.A. activities.

The manual was "really a command-and-control problem," the official said.

'A Great Deal of Trouble'

While the C.I.A. continues to refuse comment about the investigation into the manual, another Administration official, who spoke only on condition he not be identified, confirmed that the disciplining had upset some of the C.I.A. personnel who were punished.

The manual "is a matter that has caused a great deal of trouble both internally and externally," he said.

The existence of the 90-page manual, entitled "Psychological Operations in Guerrilla War," was reported a month ago. The first version, distributed to rebels a year ago, contained sections on "neutralizing" unpopular Nicaraguan officials, hiring professional criminals to carry out "selective jobs," arranging the death of a rebel supporter to create a "martyr" and coercing Nicaraguans into carrying out rebel assignments.

United States Government sources said the one paragraph referring to professional criminals was deleted before a later printing of the manual early this year. One official said the deletion occurred because a Spanish-language translator noticed the paragraph and pointed it out to a supervisor, who had it removed.

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