

STAT

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 5NEWSDAY
15 January 1977

CIA Denies Link to Cuban Swine Fever

By Carole Agus

The Central Intelligence Agency has denied a report that, with at least its tacit consent, African swine fever was deliberately introduced into Cuba in 1971.

Responding yesterday to a formal inquiry by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the agency denied any involvement in the swine fever outbreak in Cuba.

The Senate inquiry resulted from a *Newsday* investigation that disclosed CIA involvement in the swine fever outbreak. The investigation included admissions by members of the U.S. intelligence community that they helped transport a sealed container of swine fever virus from a U.S. Army base and CIA training ground in Panama to Cuba with the aid of paid anti-Castro terrorists. The disease, which does not affect humans, broke out in epidemic proportions in Cuba, where pork is a staple, forcing the government to slaughter 500,000 pigs.

Spencer Davis, a spokesman for the committee headed by Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), released a statement on the matter yesterday, adding that without further information, the CIA denial terminates the inquiry. Rick Sia, a spokesman for Inouye, said that the statement reflects Inouye's position. When asked about apparent factual discrepancies in the statement, he said he would ask Inouye for a response. Sia, however, did not call back.

According to the statement read by Davis: "The agency told the select committee that it knows nothing whatsoever of an alleged plot to infect Cuban livestock by the introduction of swine fever." Davis said "According to information made available to the committee, a massive outbreak of African swine fever was detected in Cuba in 1971. The disease had come into Cuba by means of dried, uncured meat imported from Europe, according to this information. To prevent possible spread of the disease to the U.S., the Department of Agriculture conducted a massive swine inoculation program in the Southeastern states."

But according to Ahmed Dardiri, laboratory chief of diagnostic research at the Plum Island Animal Disease Laboratory, and a virologist who has specialized in African swine fever virus, "There is no vaccine for African swine fever yet. We do not yet have any vaccine for the disease." The inoculations, according to the CIA, were administered by the Department of Agriculture, the same government department that operates Plum Island.

Dardiri was asked whether any vaccination program against African swine fever virus could have been administered: "None whatsoever," he said, adding there was never "any vaccination against swine fever in the United States . . . not at any time. This is a devastating disease," he said, "and the work [on it] really is restricted to Plum Island center." He said he has never heard of the virus being transmitted through dried meat.

Dardiri said that if the disease broke out in the United States "as soon as it was diagnosed, there would be immediate control of the disease through eradication—kill [the pigs] exactly as it happened in Cuba."

Rep. Thomas Downey (D-West Islip), a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said last night, "The CIA's apparent use of swine fever agents against Cuba is both inexcusable and intolerable. I have asked CIA-director-designate [Theodore] Sorenson to look into the situation . . ."

The CIA has refused to comment on the charges to reporters.