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# CIA Recruiting Mercenaries For Laos, McCloskey Says

By PAUL HOPE  
Star Staff Writer

Rep. Paul N. McCloskey Jr. charged today that the Central Intelligence Agency is recruiting American mercenaries to fight in Laos.

McCloskey, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, also accused the Nixon administration of practicing "concealment and deception" and claimed that "truth in government" is a major issue in his campaign.

The California congressman indicated, however, that if he does "poorly" in the nation's first primary in New Hampshire March 7, he will drop out of the race.

He said it would be "absurd" to ask people to give him financial support if he does not make an acceptable showing there.

### Doubts About Nixon

McCloskey indicated he would be hard-put to support President Nixon as the Republican nominee. He said there is little evidence to indicate that Nixon in-

tends to withdraw all U.S. troops from Vietnam or to discontinue all American bombing in Southeast Asia.

He made the charge against the CIA while discussing Nixon's policy with a group of reporters.

"We caught the CIA in Oakland recruiting mercenaries to fight in Laos," he said.

Pressed to explain that, he said he had received a letter from a "constituent" — an unemployed aerospace engineer who was offered \$1,000 a week to fight in Laos.

When his office produced the letter, it turned out to be one to Rep. Jerome R. Waldie, D-Calif., with whom McCloskey recently made a visit to South-

### Second-Hand Report

The letter was not from the engineer whom the CIA reportedly had tried to recruit but from another Californian who was relaying the incident to Waldie.

The letter writer, Donald H. Fibush of Walnut Creek, identi-

fied the man as Clarence C. Holben of Lafayette, Calif.

The letter, dated July 11, said in part:

"Do you know that 'Air America,' an arm of CIA, is hiring mercenaries to fight in Laos at \$1,000 per week for each mercenary?"

"I just learned about this a couple of weeks ago. A friend of mine is an engineer and one of the many long-term employees of the rad lab at Livermore who were laid off July 1.

"In looking for employment he answered an ad of an employment agency, Overseas Services, 1939 Harrison St., Oakland, and they offered him the employment as a mercenary in Laos paying '\$1,000 per week plus the box to bring him back.'

"... Today I telephoned him for verification and told him I would like to inform you. Even though he is somewhat a conservative Republican, he has been a strong dove for four or five years...

"I hope that you and/or Mc-

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Closkey, at your instigation, will verify this information and use it to the fullest extent."

### Investigation Sought

McCloskey said he has "asked a field representative to go over" and investigate the matter but that he hasn't done it yet.

"This is the first time I've ever heard of hiring mercenaries by ad," McCloskey said.

"It draws attention to the fact that Congress says there shall be no American ground combat troops in Laos. It raises the question of whether the CIA can recruit an army (and) at what point does an army of irregulars become an American army... At what stage does the CIA get authorized to fight a private war."