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U.S. said to have smuggled Nazi war criminals into country

Washington (AP)—State Department officials smuggled hundreds of Nazi war criminals into the United States and offered them citizenship and jobs in exchange for Soviet intelligence information, Representative Barney Frank (D, Mass.) said yesterday.

Mr. Frank, a member of the House Immigration subcommittee, said he was told of the clandestine operation by John Loftus, a former prosecutor with the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigation, the unit charged with investigating Nazis living in the United States.

Mr. Loftus, a Boston lawyer, appeared on the CBS program "60 Minutes" yesterday and detailed the operation of the State Department's Office of Policy Coordination, which he said was responsible for bringing Nazi collaborators into the United States.

"More than 300 Byelorussian Nazis are living in America today" and "some are still working for the government," Mr. Loftus charged.

He said the FBI, the Army and the State Department cooperated in enlisting Nazi help to spy on the Soviets.

"They knew that the entire Nazi government of Byelorussia—the president, the vice presidents, cabinet ministers, governors and mayors, police chiefs—were all living in America," Mr. Loftus said. "The FBI, Army Counter Intelligence, Army Foreign Intelligence, the Department of State—they knew and they recruited them because they were Nazis."

A Justice Department spokesman, Dean St. Dennis, said yesterday that "the department is aware of the allegations and is looking into them," but would not elaborate. The State Department declined to comment and an Army spokesman, Lt. Col. Bill Highlander, said he had "no knowledge of it at all." An FBI spokesman gave a similar response.

Offering Nazis sanctuary in the United States would have contravened the orders of Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, but Mr. Loftus said the program operated secretly.

"We had one unit of the government out trying to prosecute the Nazis and other units of the government trying to secret the information.

We later established that the files pertaining to the Nazi immigration had been withheld from Congress, from the courts, from the CIA and from the local agents of the Immigration Service," he said in the interview.

After the war, the State Department set up a Nazi recruitment program run by the late Frank Wisner, the post-war chief of operations for the Central Intelligence Agency, according to Mr. Loftus. However, he said classified information "indicated that a number of these programs were approved at the highest levels."

Mr. Loftus said Allan J. Ryan, Jr., who headed the Justice Department unit, sent a top secret report in October, 1980, to then-Attorney General Benjamin H. Civiletti alerting him to the operation. Mr. Loftus also delivered classified information on the subject to Mr. Frank. Neither Mr. Ryan nor Mr. Civiletti could be reached immediately for comment.

"I was skeptical when John first told me the story," Mr. Frank said in a telephone interview from Boston. "But now I'm convinced they are overwhelmingly true," he added.

Mr. Frank called the Nazi recruitment "the most appalling mixture of moral insensitivity and incompetence I have seen." He called on Congress to investigate the matter.

Mr. Loftus and Mr. Frank said various intelligence agencies competed with each other to recruit the Nazis for espionage work.

The Byelorussians "convinced OPC and the military intelligence to fund their operations, that they could provide the Americans with a secret army behind the Iron Curtain," Mr. Loftus said.

"It was worse than a botch," Mr. Loftus said of the program, which included dropping parachute hit teams into the Soviet Union. "Many of the Byelorussians were later identified as having been double agents."

Mr. Loftus said some of the Byelorussians are working for quasi-governmental agencies such as Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty.

Mr. Loftus said Stanislaw Stankevich commanded the murders of Jews in Byelorussia. He said Stankevich was later recruited by Radio Free Europe and became a United States citizen.

Stankevich died in Queens, N.Y., before Mr. Loftus's office could begin prosecuting him for his alleged war crimes, according to Mr. Loftus.