

TILE UNLT

Ex-CIA chief: Reagan put Noriega back on payroll

By Stephen Kurkjian
Globe Staff
and Mark Hosenball
Special to the Globe

WASHINGTON - Stansfield Turner, director of central intelligence in the Carter administration, said yesterday that he threw Panama's military leader, Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, off the CIA payroll in 1977 because he was an unsavory character but he was later reinstated by the Reagan administration.

Turner, a retired admiral, said that on succeeding George Bush as the CIA director he learned that Noriega was on the payroll and immediately removed him because of anxiety about his character and questions about his loyalty.

United Press International quoted Turner as saying Bush himself reinstated Noriega after President Reagan took office. "Bush ... became vice president and met with Noriega and put him back on the payroll," Turner was quoted as saying.

In an earlier interview with the Globe, Turner declined to say exactly when Noriega was returned to the payroll or how he had gained his information except to say that he had it on "very good authority."

Since the primary elections, Bush has been asked repeatedly about his relationship with Noriega and especially whether the Panamanian strongman was on the CIA payroll during his tenure. Bush has refused to confirm or deny reports about the relationship.

Turner said Bush met with Noriega when he was director of central intelligence in 1976. This meeting was confirmed by sources in Bush's office last night.

Later, when Bush was vice president, he met a second time with Noriega, Turner said. After that second meeting, Turner said, Noriega was put back on the CIA payroll.

A spokesman for Bush denied that Bush had played any role in reinstating Noriega.

"That is patently false," said Steve Hart, Bush's press secretary.

Asked whether Bush, after his election as vice president, played any role in suggesting stronger CIA ties with Noriega, Hart replied: "The allegation that George Bush has anything to do with Noriega in his relations with the CIA is false." Asked whether that amounted to a "no" answer, Hart said he would go by his original statement.

Hart refused to comment on whether Noriega was on the CIA payroll during the Reagan administration.

"That's a CIA matter," he said. "I have to refer you to the CIA."

Hart gave the same response when asked if the Reagan administration in any way strengthened CIA ties with Noriega after taking over.

Bush's campaign headquarters referred most Noriega-related questions to the vice president's White House office. But a campaign strategist, Rich Bond, suggested that the issue was politically motivated.

"It sounds like John Sasso has been talking with Stansfield Turner," said Bond, "but we have no knowledge of this matter whatsoever. . . . We find it totally without merit." Sasso is vice chairman of the Dukakis campaign.

Bobby Ray Inman, who was second in command at the CIA between February 1981 and mid-1982, said Noriega was not on the agency's payroll during his tenure. He said he not know if Noriega was returned to the payroll after he resigned.

Inman, also a retired admiral, expressed doubt that William Casey, Reagan's first director of central intelligence, would have allowed Bush to play any role in deciding to place anyone on the agency's payroll.

The Washington Post _____
 The New York Times _____
 The Washington Times _____
 The Wall Street Journal _____
 The Christian Science Monitor _____
 New York Daily News _____
 USA Today _____
 The Chicago Tribune _____
BOSTON Globe p.1
 Date 1 Oct. 88

"Bill Casey had no appreciation for Vice President Bush," Inman said in a telephone interview. "They came from opposite ends of the party. It is totally false to say that Vice President Bush played any role in this. To my certain knowledge, Adm. Turner's remarks are false or misleading."

Soon after Noriega's indictment in February by two federal grand juries, Panamanian opposition leaders told reporters and congressional committees that Noriega had been paid \$200,000 to supply information to the CIA. Both the CIA and the Reagan administration have refused to comment on the allegation, as has Noriega.

However, during his presidential debate with Gov. Michael S. Dukakis last Sunday, Bush defended the Reagan administration's dealings with Noriega, saying seven administrations dealt with Noriega over the years.

Christine Chitlund of the Globe staff contributed to this report.