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Jack Anderson asserts CIA tried to intimidate him to name sources

By David Crook
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The CIA made a "crude attempt" to intimidate Jack Anderson into revealing confidential sources for a story about alleged drug smuggling by the intelligence agency, the syndicated columnist said yesterday.

Patti Volz, a CIA spokeswoman, said that a Dec. 26 letter to Anderson seeking information about the sources was not "a question of intimidation," but that it was rather an effort to have him substantiate published accusations that the CIA was "involved in something blatantly illegal."

Anderson's exchange with the agency marked the second reported effort by the CIA to challenge critical news reports of agency involvement with the bankrupt Honolulu investment firm of Bishop, Baldwin, Rewald, Dillingham & Wong.

The agency has openly challenged ABC News' reporting of the Bishop, Baldwin story, and in November filed a formal complaint against the network with the Federal Communications Commission.

[The FCC staff yesterday turned down a CIA request that ABC News be punished for "intentional news distortion" and violation of the Fairness Doctrine and the FCC's personal attack rule, the Associated Press reported.

[The CIA had complained about an ABC report that the CIA plotted to kill Ronald Rewald, a Honolulu investment counselor. The complaint asked for a full retraction and for consideration of the issue as the licenses of radio and TV stations owned by ABC come up for renewal.

[ABC News eventually acknowledged it could not confirm the story, but the network rejected the request for a broader retraction of the story.

[James C. McKinney, chief of the FCC's mass media bureau, ruled that

the CIA had no case because newscasts were exempt from the personal attack rule and the CIA failed to show that the broadcast "involved discussion of a controversial issue."

Anderson responded to the CIA's letter with a mocking offer to share his sources with the agency if the agency would agree to share its sources with him.

"I think the letter smacks of intimidation," Anderson said in a telephone interview, "but it's not going to be successful."

Much of ABC's, Anderson's and other reporting about the Honolulu company has centered on the allegations of illegal CIA arms shipments to foreign countries, efforts to destabilize the economies of a number of countries and an alleged agency plot to murder an American citizen.

The request for Anderson's information came in a letter from George V. Lauder, the CIA's director of public affairs. Lauder's letter was a response to an Anderson article published Dec. 26 in the Washington Post and other newspapers.

Lauder requested that Anderson turn over his information to the

CIA's inspector general, the Justice Department and a congressional intelligence oversight committee. Copies of the letter were sent to the Justice Department and congressional officials as well as to Benjamin C. Bradlee, executive editor of the Post.

According to a copy of the letter read to the Los Angeles Times, Lauder wrote to Anderson: "You should have no trouble making the information available. If no such evidence is forthcoming, we will assume that you have none."

"The letter speaks for itself," Volz said yesterday. "This isn't a question of intimidation. If he [Anderson] has evidence of us being involved in something blatantly illegal, then he should report that" to appropriate authorities.

In the column, Anderson quoted Rewald as telling confidantes that he was asked to take part in a CIA-sponsored drug-smuggling operation. Rewald is under federal indictment for allegedly defrauding about 400 people of about \$22 million. Rewald has asserted that his firm was a front for clandestine CIA operations.