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Jamaica incident improves chances of bill to curb naming of agents

By JOHN E. MULLIGAN

Journal-Bulletin Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Louis Wolf is a soft-spoken researcher and writer who edits a small-circulation magazine in a cluttered little office in the National Press Building.

Sen. John H. Chafee would like to see people like Wolf prosecuted for printing a "treasonable" regular feature that, for the time being, is perfectly legal: "Naming Names."

In that section of his bi-monthly Covert Action Information Bulletin, Wolf identifies and briefly describes people he says are American spies. The disclosures, deduced and sometimes culled directly from books and documents available to anybody, are "substantially correct," officials have conceded.

Officials of the Central Intelligence Agency also claim that similar disclosures have imperiled many U.S. agents and led to the murder of one, a Rhode Islander named Richard S. Welch, in 1975.

Largely because of a shooting incident in Jamaica last month that Wolf's antagonists blame on him, Chafee and other backers of the intelligence establishment have revived a bill that, among other things, would make disclosures like Wolf's punishable by three years in jail and fines as high as \$15,000.

ON JULY 2, Wolf told a press conference in Jamaica the names, addresses and other particulars on the men he believes to be CIA agents preparing "a massive destabilization effort" against that nation's government.

Two days later, bullets were fired at the home of Richard N. Kinsman, whom Wolf had described as CIA station chief. Another agent was also reportedly attacked.

A few weeks after that, a newly revived Intelligence Identities Protection Act — which had appeared doomed for this session of Congress — passed the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, despite some misgivings about its possible conflicts with the First Amendment.

"It's very popular right now," Chafee said of his bill, which probably needed something like the Jamaica incident to have a chance of passage this year, he agrees.

Some reform-minded legislators had intended to use the agents' protection bill to press for a new CIA charter, with clear limitations on its duties and powers, to prevent recurrences of illegal domestic spying and other abuses unearthed in the mid-1970s.

Now, according to Chafee, his bill has an excellent chance of passage by itself, along with another CIA-backed vestige of the abandoned charter bill, a cut in the number of Congressional panels that must be told about certain covert operations.

"IT IS QUITE CLEAR by the language," Wolf said of the bill, "that a number of senators, Chafee included, view this with me in mind." But he said there is no evidence that the gunfire in Jamaica stemmed from his statements.

Wolf named Kinsman in the his magazine last year, months before the July press conference. He said he mainly repeated disclosures that were widely available to terrorists or anyone else who might have wanted to attack Kinsman.

He even suggested — without offering any evidence — that someone friendly to the CIA could easily have shot at Kinsman's home, since the agency has clearly profited from the publicity surrounding the incident.

In any event, Wolf, who is 39 and started looking into American intelligence abuses while writing about the Vietnam war, is unrepentant about naming names and the possibility that it does endanger American agents.

"Our premise is that you cannot separate what the CIA is doing from who it is that is doing it for them," he said. "They're spies. I'm not being rhetorical about it, but that's their job. That's their occupation."

And Wolf accepts the charge of Chafee, Intelligence Committee Chairman Birch Bayh and others that his purpose is to make the spy agency's job more

difficult, as long as the job is — as he claims — secret and improper meddling in the affairs of other governments, some friendly ones included.

IN THE CASE of Jamaica, Wolf promises a full report in his next issue on the "destabilization" campaign, he says the CIA is waging against the local government.

"If there were any evidence to support the belief that it is possible to reform the CIA and end the domestic mail-openings and drug experiments, the overseas coup attempts and other abuses that Congressional investigators found out about a few years ago, Wolf said, he would not be so zealous in his efforts to name names.

But as things stand, he believes he and his associates are protected in their writings by the First Amendment freedom to utter and publish dissent from the government line.

Personally and through his assistant on intelligence issues, a former CIA agent named Rob Simmons, Chafee has scoffed at Wolf's contentions.

Simmons, who said he first piqued his boss' interest in this issue, has called Wolf's magazine "garbage" and said that it frequently errs in its exposes of CIA conduct, as well as in some of its listings of supposed agents in "Naming Names."

But he partially conceded Wolf's claim that the identities, homes and associations of CIA agents have sometimes been easy to learn.

A NUMBER OF official government lists of employees once contained codes that distinguished the intelligence agents from State Department employees at American embassies abroad. These publications have been classified or discontinued partly because they made it so simple to identify CIA agents but Wolf said there are still many active agents who, once picked out from the government books, are easy to follow from country to country.

That is one of his methods of deduction that goes into "Naming Names."

"There is a lot of truth in that," conceded Chafee's aide Simmons.

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