

Gay engineer sues CIA over denial of clearance

By Meg Spratt
Herald staff writer

For 10 years, said 50-year-old John Green, a conservative Republican aerospace engineer, he worked on classified CIA projects for TRW Electronics Defense Sector and was proud of it.

On Dec. 16, 1981, however, things changed. After discovering Green was a homosexual, the CIA revoked his security clearance and with it, Green said, his chances for promotion.

After appeals to the agency failed, Green launched what may be a landmark gay rights case, announcing yesterday he has filed a lawsuit against the CIA to regain his clearance.

Green and his attorney, John McDermott, told reporters they want to stop the CIA from denying security to workers in private industry based on what they believe is simply their sexual orientation.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court, contends that CIA officials have violated Green's constitutional rights to privacy, to due process and equal protection, and to freedom of expression.

By revoking Green's security clearance, McDermott said, the CIA sends a message that homosexuals are "unstable, crazy people who can't be trusted with sensitive information."

"All I want is my clearance back," added Green. "We're all Americans. I just happen to be gay."

But the CIA doesn't see it that way. When Green's roommate applied for a security clearance, a CIA investigator interviewed Green and subsequently discovered the two were involved in a homosexual relationship.

Though Green says he always has been honest about his sexual preference and even listed his membership with a local gay ski club on security access forms, the agency accused him of covering up his homosexuality and revoked his clearance almost immediately.

In a letter to Green signed by CIA Director of Security William R. Kotapish, the aerospace engineer was told, "It appears that you hid your participation



John Green

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in such (homosexual) activities from both your employer and the agency.

"Homosexual activity, in our view, could make you susceptible to blackmail or coercion," the letter continued. "Likewise, your exploitable personal conduct casts serious doubt upon your qualifications to be entrusted with the protection of Sensitive Compartmented Information."

Green said, "I thought they knew all about me. Quite frankly, I think their investigation processes are extremely inept."

And, when the CIA did find out, "I was in big trouble," Green said.

Green claims that not only have CIA officials violated his constitutional rights, they also "by interpretation of their own rules are making security risks."

The agency's policies, Green contends, encourage homosexuals to keep their sexual preferences secret, thus making them prime targets for blackmail.

Spokesmen from both TRW and the CIA said they could not comment on the lawsuit while it is in litigation.

Meanwhile, Green continues to work at TRW's Redondo Beach headquarters, but in a job he says is dead-end.

"There's obviously something wrong here," said Green. "If I had stayed in the closet I'd be a department manager right now."

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