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# Secret Pentagon Intelligence Unit Is Disclosed

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WASHINGTON, May 10 — The Defense Department has set up a special unit for intelligence gathering and covert operations to supplement the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency, according to several officials and others familiar with the new unit and its activities.

The sources said that the new Pentagon unit, which they identified as the Army Intelligence Support Activity, was intended to operate around the world, and that two current missions were in El Salvador and in support of the anti-Sandinist guerrillas in Nicaragua.

The existence of the new unit was confirmed by a high-ranking Defense Department official, who declined to provide any details. A department spokesman, James Freeman, declined to answer questions about the matter.

A former intelligence official and Government sources said the unit had been established in 1980, during the planning of the raid to free the American hostages in Iran. According to the Government sources, the Pentagon had been dissatisfied with the intelligence data it was getting from the C.I.A.

## Clandestine Existence for a Year

The sources said that the unit, for nearly a year, conducted clandestine operations without a "Presidential finding," a legal authorization required by Congress, and that the Pentagon had not advised the Senate and House Intelligence committees of the unit's existence, as required by law.

One source said that during this period the C.I.A. and the Defense Intelligence Agency, which is the Pentagon's regular intelligence unit, had been unaware of the secret unit's activities except possibly "in very vague terms."

The unit was said by the sources to be operating now in compliance with the law. They said it included clerical and support personnel along with servicemen and civilians in the field.

According to a Government official, the unit began operating in El Salvador about the time of the elections to the Constituent Assembly in March 1982. He said the primary function of the group in El Salvador was intelligence gathering.

## Military Included in the Unit

The official said the group in El Salvador included servicemen, but he declined to say whether their presence meant that the stated ceiling on United States military personnel in El Salvador was being exceeded as a result.

Under an agreement with Congressional leaders, the Reagan Administration has said that the number of military advisers in El Salvador will not exceed 55.

In connection with the Nicaraguan mission, several sources said, the Pentagon unit is gathering intelligence to support anti-Sandinist forces and does not have anyone stationed inside Nicaragua.

Elsewhere around the world, the sources said, the unit has provided military equipment to foreign forces and deployed servicemen using false identities to collect intelligence.

The sources declined to identify the unit's headquarters, although they indicated that some of its operations were run out of Fort Bragg, N.C., apparently as an extension of the Army's Special Forces there.

The Congressional intelligence committees "stumbled on" the unit's existence, as one source put it, after an article in The Boston Globe in July 1981 said the United States had provided intelligence support to James G. (Bo) Gritz, a former Green Beret officer, on private forays into Laos in search of Americans rumored to be still alive and held captive since the Vietnam War.

Although the intelligence committees were said to have conducted an investigation subsequently, several committee members who were asked about the unit said last week that they still doubted whether the committees had been fully informed of its operations.

One House member, who declined to be identified, said that, during a trip to Central America, he had asked C.I.A. operations chiefs in Honduras, El Sal-

vaдор and Nicaragua whether they were aware of the activities of the special Pentagon unit and that each had said no. The legislator said he did not know whether the C.I.A. officers were telling him the truth or were in fact not aware of what the unit was doing.

## Reported Role in Dozier Affair

The sources said the special Pentagon unit played an unspecified role in the rescue in January 1982 of Brig. Gen. James L. Dozier, who had been kidnapped by the Red Brigades in Italy.

A prime mover in the development of the secret unit, according to the sources, was Gen. Richard G. Stilwell. Now retired, General Stilwell is the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and, in that capacity, plays a leading role in intelligence, counterintelligence and security policies.

The sources said General Stilwell had proposed setting up an entire new intelligence-gathering agency within the Defense Department. Using the code name "Monarch Eagle," the agency would have provided intelligence for the secret unit's field operations.

The sources said the C.I.A. had opposed this enlarged intelligence-gathering operation on the ground that problems would arise if more than one American intelligence service was active in a particular country. The House and Senate Intelligence committees agreed, according to the sources, and the new agency was not set up.