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CIA said to want students to monitor Iranians

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Men identifying themselves as representatives of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) allegedly attempted this fall to recruit students to spy on Iranians attending the University.

The Daily received information about the alleged recruitment effort after locating a University student and army veteran who claims he was approached by the agency. The student agreed to discuss the subject last week if his name remained confidential.

The source said two white, middle-aged men claiming to be CIA agents came to his home in September. Although they presented no identification verifying their association with the intelligence agency, they knew details of the student's career as an army officer.

Those details included his work as a psychological operations officer and his security clearance for top-secret information.

Asking if the student had heard of SAVAK, the Iranian security police force, the agents allegedly said the CIA was helping SAVAK agents in the United States identify and observe Iranians opposed to the rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

The agents further said they wanted to get "something concrete" on Iranian students to facilitate their deportation back to Iran, according to the source.

"They said they wanted to find out who was stirring up trouble, who the 'terrorists' were," the student said. "They referred to these guys as 'terrorists.'"

The agents, the student said, explained that Iranians on U.S. campuses are harming the shah's image abroad. "Their goal was to discredit these Iranian) guys. That was the main thing," the source said.

In a series of interviews the student said the men offered him money and appealed to his patriotism as a U.S. citizen in their attempts to get him to agree to their proposal.

"This one guy gave me this pitch that my responsibilities didn't stop when I got out of the army. They offered to pay my tuition, but I'm already getting that (through the G.I. Bill), so I didn't give a shit," the source said. "Besides, I wouldn't prostitute myself like that."

The student said he refused to observe Iranians and report on their activities. He said he agreed, however, to ask other veterans at the University if they were interested in working for the CIA.

Another veteran who did not want to be identified confirmed to the Daily that she had been informed by the source of the opportunity to work for the CIA. "He came to me and asked if I wanted to make some more money, if I wanted my school paid for," she said.

The veteran, a CLA sophomore, said she wondered at the time, "Who would get messed up in something like that? Who'd need the money that much?"

She said the cautious way in which the student approached the topic lent credibility to his story. "If he was BSing, I don't think he would have done that.

"I believe him. I know him pretty well," she said.

It is not known whether any stu-

dents accepted the offer.

The source said he believes his service record—detailing his army career in Southeast Asia, Germany and several bases in the United States—suggested to the agents that he might be willing to agree to their proposal.

"I think my psychological operations background was what prompted them to contact me," the 31-year-old veteran said. "It's the same sort of thing I was doing in Vietnam and several other places in Southeast Asia and Europe," he said.

But another explanation the student offered for why the CIA contacted him is that he had once volunteered information to the agency.

After serving in Vietnam as an infantry platoon leader, the veteran was trained in psychological operations and returned to Southeast Asia. He later was stationed in West Germany, again working in psychological operations but also serving as a drug and alcohol control officer at a U.S. base near Stuttgart. Military records confirm his assignments.

Ordered to stop the flow of illegal drugs to U.S. military personnel "at any cost," the officer reportedly developed contacts with the West German underground. Members of the underground, including fugitive radicals, finance their operations partly through drug sales, according to the former officer.

During this period, the officer reportedly met "seven or eight" persons who said they were associated with the Baader-Meinhof gang, otherwise known as the Red Army

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Faction. Andreas Baader, founder of the faction, committed suicide in prison in October 1977. Ulrike Meinhof, a former West German journalist and member of the group, hanged herself in prison in May of the previous year.

The officer's contacts in the faction, he said, suggested in 1976 that they were considering hijacking an airliner. They were vague as to the time and place of the attack, according to the source.

The following spring, after the officer had left the army and returned to his home in St. Paul, he decided that he should contact the authorities and tell them about the German terrorists. Looking in the St. Paul telephone directory under "U.S. Government offices," he located a number for the CIA. He dialed the number and requested a meeting.

According to the student, a single agent visited his house, listened to his story and left, promising to get back in touch.

The veteran did not hear from the agent again. For several months, he said, he suspected he was being followed, but he was not contacted by representatives of the intelligence agency. That fall, four terrorists hijacked a Lufthansa jet to Mogadishu, Somalia.

Nearly a year went by before the supposed agents allegedly contacted him about spying on Iranian students. Although the source and the Daily have been unable to determine whether the men were in fact from the CIA, they seemed to have had access to government files, according to the student.

"These guys studied my file," the student said.

The student said his conversation with the men ranged to other groups allegedly being watched by the CIA, including students from Hong Kong and Taiwan and members of the Young Socialist Alliance and Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

The men, the student said, resembled "anyone from 3M—executive types." They said they were concerned about "peace and order on campus," and about possible communist "insurgency" in Iran, according to the student. And, the student said, they seemed already well informed about Iranians at the University.

"As far as the masks go, you can tell them (the Iranians) that they don't need to wear them," the student said. "They know every Iranian student on campus." Iranian demonstrators often wear masks to conceal their identities.

The source said he agreed to discuss the story with the Daily because "they (the CIA) spend millions of dollars on intelligence activities and they don't know what they're doing." He said he is neither for nor against the cause of the Iranian dissidents.

"I'd just like to see them (the CIA) get their shit together," he said.

That U.S. authorities sometimes cooperate with the Iranian SAVAK has been reported frequently in the American press. Columnists Jack Anderson and Les Whitten, for example, have documented a relationship between Mansur Rafizadeh, the head SAVAK agent in the United States, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The New York FBI office trades information with SAVAK agents routinely, and "there is nothing covert about it," according to one FBI official.

And the presence of SAVAK agents in the United States also is well known. A House subcommittee chaired by Rep. Don Fraser (D-Mn.) has heard testimony from state-department officials that "there certainly are representatives (of SAVAK) in the United States."

Alfred Atherton, Jr., assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, told Fraser's subcommittee last year that "Iranian authorities are interested in knowing about potential terrorists who may be among students who would return to Iran."

"There's not much question that SAVAK has been making efforts to keep track of Iranian students," Fraser said during a telephone interview last week. "But I'm slow to accept that the CIA might be involved in recruitment efforts," although "I've made a lot of assumptions in the past that turned out to be wrong.

"Even if the CIA were doing it, they certainly wouldn't confirm it," Fraser said.

But to Iranian dissidents contacted about the story, CIA cooperation with SAVAK was a familiar topic.

Preferring to remain anonymous, the Iranians identified themselves as members of the Iranian Student Association. One said he was the regional director of defense for the student group, which is organized on local, regional and national levels. The regional official said that while his organization had not heard of CIA actions against Iranians at the University, "in other cities it's an old story."

It is a common strategy, he said, to portray Iranian students as "terrorists" and then deport them. SAVAK, he said, works either alone or with local authorities in provoking fights at anti-shah demonstrations. Protesters then are arrested, he said.

"Whether these things are done by SAVAK or the local police, they are controlled by the CIA," the dissident said. The local Iranian Student Association has escaped such harassment so far, he said, "because it's a young chapter. I don't mean to say SAVAK is careless."

Contacted by telephone Monday, the CIA refused to comment on the particulars of its relationship with SAVAK. Dale Peterson, a public relations officer, said he was unable to gather facts that might relate to the story without the name of the Daily's source.

Asked whether the CIA works with SAVAK in conducting surveillance against Iranians in the United States, Peterson said no "agreement" between the agencies gives SAVAK the authority to operate in this country.

Asked if it were possible that the CIA might have tried to recruit American students, Peterson replied, "I can't answer that. You're asking me to get into detail about activities we may or may not be conducting against foreigners in the United States."