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JACK ANDERSON

CIA Renegade Asked U.S. Help For Terror Camp

The taxpayers came close to funding a terrorist-training camp in Virginia five years ago. They were spared the expense only because the ex-CIA agent who planned the stunt wasn't getting along with his wife.

This is just one of the startling revelations that turned up during an exhaustive closed-door investigation of CIA renegade Edwin Wilson by the House Intelligence Committee. Wilson recently was convicted of illegally supplying weapons to agents of Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

Investigators for the House committee interviewed more than 100 witnesses. All of them were assured anonymity and warned not to speak to the press.

The committee's staff director, Thomas Latimer, seemed especially determined to keep my associate Dale Van Atta from finding out what the witnesses were telling the committee. Van Atta has been investigating the Wilson episode for more than two years.

To one witness, Latimer said: "I'll tell you our experience with [Van

Atta], and I have never talked with [him], but people in the press will call up and they will lie to you and they will say, well, I know you are doing such-and-such and I know somebody you can talk to, and they are just fishing"

On one of his recent "fishing" expeditions, Van Atta hooked the committee's secret transcripts, from which the above quotes were taken. The transcripts are replete with allegations against Wilson never before disclosed.

Wilson has been charged with supplying and helping to run a school for terrorists in Libya. According to federal investigators, the "supplies" provided to Qaddafi included explosives concealed in common household items like ashtrays. Such terrorist organizations as Italy's Red Brigade, the Irish Republican Army, Japan's Red Army and radical Palestinian groups are also believed to have enjoyed access to Wilson's "materials."

According to the committee transcript, Wilson almost got the Justice Department's now-defunct Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to put up the seed money for training terrorists at his 3,000-acre, \$5-million farm in Virginia's horse country.

Although the LEAA was set up to provide federal grants for improving law enforcement in this country, one witness told the committee that Wil-

son's idea was "to have people trained here and then shipped to Libya."

Wilson's training camp would cost money, perhaps as much as \$20 million. But he was sure he could get at least part of it from Uncle Sam. One witness told the committee that Wilson "had his own people over there at LEAA."

Wilson met with his chief LEAA contact in mid-June, 1977, according to a committee witness who participated in the session. The witness said Wilson asked for a grant of at least \$850,000, and the LEAA official "assured both of us that he would walk it through; he would make sure that it goes through."

This witness said the negotiations reached a "very advanced stage" and he "never did find out why it fell through."

The scheme collapsed when Wilson and his wife had a falling-out and he decided against locating the training camp at his home in Virginia, knowledgeable sources told my associates Van Atta and Indy Badhwar.

When an active-duty CIA agent was able to recruit Green Berets in Fayetteville, N.C., to fly to Libya to do the training there, Wilson opened his school in Tripoli. His wife stayed home on the farm.

Footnote: Through his attorney, Wilson denied having attempted to set up a terrorist-training camp.