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Researchers Find Signs U.S. Knew of Mengele's Postwar Hideout

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LOS ANGELES, March 14—Researchers here have uncovered evidence indicating that U.S. officials knew of a postwar German hideaway used by accused Nazi war criminal Dr. Josef Mengele but failed to alert authorities.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center here, said a West German government prosecutor acting on the new information has located a cottage in the Bavarian town of Autenried rented by Mengele's wife from 1945 to 1949.

Two U.S. Army intelligence index cards, discovered in a pile of Army documents acquired by the center, list Autenried as Mengele's residence. The cards provide the latest in a chain of clues indicating a link between postwar U.S. officials and the man charged with killing thousands of people at the Auschwitz death camp.

A U.S. Army spokesman refused to comment today, saying that neither Army nor Justice Department investigators had seen the new evidence.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, assistant dean of the center, said the West German prosecutor in Frankfurt heading the search for the fugitive Mengele "went crazy" when told of the Autenried connection. No information previously available to investigators had mentioned the town, about seven miles from Mengele's birthplace at Gunzberg.

Hier said the prosecutor told him by telephone this morning that investigators were combing the town for people who might remember the infamous Nazi physician who allegedly conducted painful and lethal experiments on Jewish children, particularly twins, at Auschwitz.

The center recently has released statements from two former U.S. Army personnel who say they believe that they saw Mengele in U.S. custody or heard reliable reports that he had been arrested by U.S. authorities in the two years after World War II.

Mengele, who would be 73 if he is alive, is thought to be hiding in Paraguay. He was first seen in South America in 1949. Investigators have been unable to discover how

he escaped capture after the war or how he managed to leave Germany undetected.

Based on the discovery in U.S. files of the Autenried references and the confirmation

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of a Mengele connection with the town, "the conclusion that we are heading for is that the Army knew he was there but did not reveal it," Cooper said. Center leaders have suggested that U.S. officials may have pro-

tected Mengele, as they protected a few other former Nazi officers, in exchange for intelligence on Soviet activities in Germany.

In a letter sent Monday to Lt. Gen. William Odom, assistant Army chief of staff for intelligence, Hier asked for an investigation of the source of the information on the two cards. One card is undated, with the word Autenried penned in; the other is dated Dec. 5, 1960, with the place typed in. The undated card also contains what appears to be an address, "Kayausbach," which has been crossed out.

Hier said he initially thought that the information had come from *fragebogen*, the questionnaires that Mengele's relatives and other former Nazi Party members were

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required to fill out after the war. But a check of the forms filed by Mengele's father, Karl, and his brother, Karl Jr., show no such reference.

"Unless there are other *fragebogen*, not currently retrievable, from which this information originally was culled, it is difficult to understand how American intelligence came to know a specific address . . . as the permanent address of Dr. Josef Mengele,"

Hier told Odom. "The information contained on the card could come to play a central role in the investigation of whether the United States played a role in the case"

The Wiesenthal Center obtained the index cards as the result of a U.S. Freedom of Information request that has yielded other leads to Mengele's postwar activities. The center's new information has led the Justice Department to announce a probe, by its special investigations office, of Mengele's whereabouts and any role U.S. officials might have played in spiriting him out of Germany.

Hier said the Frankfurt prosecutor told him that a local farmer said he rented a cottage in Autenried to Irene Mengele, the fugitive's wife, but that he never saw her husband. The prosecutor said he suspects that the man may not have told all he knows because of his previous connections with the Mengele family, so investigators are questioning several other residents.

Special correspondent Katharine Macdonald contributed to this report.