

Nazi Hunter Says C.I.A. Has Files On Man Accused of War Crimes

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

A former lawyer with the Justice Department's Nazi-hunting unit has told the Central Intelligence Agency where to find its own documents on a Ukrainian fascist leader whom it had reportedly recruited and taken to the United States after World War II.

The agency, which had said last month it could not find any records on the man, Mykola Lebed of Yonkers, confirmed that it had received the leads and said it was pursuing them as part of a new policy to release long-secret files on its involvement with Nazi war criminals.

In an exchange of letters reported last week, the agency's deputy director, Adm. W. O. Studeman, told the New York City Comptroller, Elizabeth Holtzman, that searches had not turned up any records on Mr. Lebed. In 1985, a report by Congress's General Accounting Office described Mr. Lebed as a Nazi collaborator, war criminal and terrorist who was sentenced to death in Poland in 1934 for plotting an assassination and whom the agency later recruited for anti-Communist operations.

Spurred by Admiral Studeman's response, the former Government lawyer, John Loftus, told the C.I.A. last week that he had seen records on Mr. Lebed in 1979 and that he later obtained some from Army intelligence vaults under the Freedom of Information Act.

'Deliberately Misfiled'

He said that the main Lebed dossier had once been stored in the private files of a former agency director, Walter Bedell Smith, and that other Nazi dossiers had been "deliberately misfiled" years ago under State Department code names. If the Lebed files did not turn up, Mr. Loftus said, it could mean that they were improperly destroyed.

The 82-year-old Mr. Lebed, reached on Monday in Yonkers, declined to discuss his activities beyond saying that stories over the years about him were fabrications of the K.G.B., the longtime Soviet intelligence arm. In a brief conversation last week, he insisted that he had fought against the Nazis.

In an interview on his discussion with the C.I.A., Mr. Loftus, who wrote about Mr. Lebed in his 1991 book on Nazis and intelligence operations, "Unholy Alliance" (St. Martin's Press), said, "I gave them their own file citations for Mykola Lebed, including all the C.I.A. dossiers for Lebed's C.I.A.-funded front groups." He said that Admiral Studeman's staff "seemed honestly surprised."

Mark Mansfield, a C.I.A. spokesman, said that Mr. Loftus had called and "we thanked him for the information." He added, "We will certainly follow up on the leads he provided."

'We Will Locate Them'

Mr. Mansfield said that the fruitless searches to date had been in response to Freedom of Information requests over the years and not any systematic combing of the records. He said such a search would now be undertaken for the first time. "If there are records on this individual, we will locate them," he said.

The issue was set off by a letter in March from Ms. Holtzman to the new C.I.A. director, Robert M. Gates. Ms. Holtzman, an unsuccessful Democratic Senate candidate this year and a former New York Representative who sponsored a 1978 bill to bar Nazi war criminals from the country, asked for the release of the agency's files on Nazi war criminals, including Mr. Lebed.

Mr. Loftus's research, she said, showed that the agency had funneled millions of dollars to a group of Ukrainian fascists founded under Mr. Lebed in Manhattan after the war.

Mr. Loftus said Mr. Lebed had been brought into the country under a provision allowing the agency to bring in 100 aliens not admissible under regular standards. Even the Justice Department could not move against Mr. Lebed, said Mr. Loftus, who served until 1981 in the Office of Special Investigations, the Justice Department unit that seeks to expel suspected war criminals who entered the United States illegally after the war.

The Washington Post _____
The New York Times B-10
The Los Angeles Times _____
The Wall Street Journal _____
The Washington Times _____
USA Today _____
Associated Press _____
UPI _____
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