

CIA-Drug Allegations Revive Black Fears

Investigators Unable To Prove Or Refute CIA Drug-Link Story

BY JOHN DIAMOND

Associated Press Writer
WASHINGTON (AP)—The CIA admits it deals with some

unsavory people—possibly even drug dealers—as it collects secrets.

But investigators so far have been unable to prove—or refute—the explosive allegation that the agency was linked in the mid-1980s to the spread of crack cocaine in America's poor Black neighborhoods.

A three-part series called "Dark Alliance," published in August by the *San Jose (Calif.) Mercury News*, said a Bay Area drug ring sold tons of cocaine to Los Angeles street gangs and funneled millions in drug profits to a CIA-run guer-

rilla army.

The series sparked widespread anger in the Black community toward the CIA. In a lengthy article Oct. 4, however, *The Washington Post* challenged several of the findings

by the *Mercury News*.

The *Mercury News* stood by its report, saying the basic allegation that people associated with the CIA trafficked in cocaine had not been challenged.

The series traced the crack cocaine explosion to two Nicaraguan cocaine dealers, Danilo Blandon and Norwin Meneses, who were civilian

leaders of an anti-communist commando group formed and run by the CIA during the

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1980s.

Since then, CIA Director John Deutch has rejected the allegations in the series, while promising an independent investigation of the agency's actions. Deutch also vigorously defends the agency's right, and obligation, to deal with shady figures to gain intelligence.

"We are going to have to ask our case officers to be in some very dangerous places with some very unsavory characters," Deutch recently told lawmakers. In the hypothetical case of a known terrorist or narcotics trafficker willing to provide sensitive intelligence, Deutch said, "there is no intent on our part to constrain or stop or slow recruiting of that asset."

As investigations by the CIA, Justice Department and Congress proceed, the *Mercury News* series has taken on a life of its own, circulating on fax and copy machines and on talk radio, particularly in Black neighborhoods beset by crack abuse. Black leaders have held protests and demanded investigations.

"When you have a situation where you have people who can see the results of the drug right in front of them every day, and the people are generally distrustful of the government, when you put that in combination with this article, you have a formula for a tremendous amount of concern," said Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., a Black congressman whose district includes poor minority sections of Baltimore.