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Policemen Rally Round C.I.A. Flag

The C.I.A. did not issue a press release, but last week the word got out: police officers from 18 cities are being recruited to help fight terrorism abroad.

A spokesman for the Central Intelligence Agency said officials of 18 major police departments had been invited to a July seminar at the agency's headquarters in McLean, Va., and asked to provide experienced undercover investigators for three-year tours of duty.

Police Chief Daryl F. Gates of Los Angeles reportedly rejected the request, commenting later through a spokesman: "We need all the police talent we have right here." But New York City's Police Commissioner, Benjamin Ward, agreed to help, calling it "laudatory that we can do something in the interests of national defense." Spokesmen for police departments in Philadelphia, Houston, Chicago, Boston and San Francisco declined to comment.

The C.I.A. spokesman declined to disclose such details as how many other police departments had agreed to cooperate or how many investigators were being sought.

A spokesman for the New York City police said applicants accepted by the C.I.A. would have to retire, resign or seek leaves of absence, but several hundred expressed interest. New York City's response appeared to represent a break with long-standing policy, but Mr. Ward offered this explanation: "Nobody asked before. If they had, we would have done it."

Martha A. Miles
and Caroline Rand Herron

