

# Getting rid of 'garbage'

By Carol Pogash

The Intelligence Unit of the San Francisco Police Department keeps files on 50,000 persons, down from a high of 100,000 a year and a half ago.

Most of the people on file are San Franciscans and many of them have no arrest record.

The police are cleaning out intelligence files as well as pruning general criminal records. This will eliminate 500,000 names from the files.

"There's a lot of garbage in our files. They should be purged," said Lt. Paul Lawler, commanding officer of the Intelligence Unit, who is in the process of a purge.

Records, he said, date back to the 1930s and include actors and actresses who were questioned during the McCarthy era, members of the Wobblies, civil rights demonstrators, anti-war activists, car thieves, protesters from San Francisco State, drug dealers, white collar criminals, known and suspected members of organized crime as well as the department's entire "red file."

During the last year and a half Lawler's officers have been examining the department's files, discarding those they believe don't belong.

"It's expected and it's incumbent upon us to take a new posture. We are not looking under beds as was done in the Forties and Fifties.

"Just because someone has a view that does not necessarily agree with the government we don't consider him a dissident or a militant," Lawler said.

## Police intelligence unit to drop files on 50,000

Lawler's purging process requires that each "card and each resume" be gone over. The files on movie stars, Wobblies, S.F. State student activists and persons who died years ago are being thrown into the paper shredder.

By the time he is finished, Lawler expects the Intelligence cabinets to contain fewer than 25,000 names.

The Freedom of Information Act requires police to give a copy of intelligence records to those requesting their own files. To receive information, it is necessary to complete a form at the Police Department's Bureau of Identification on the fourth floor of the Hall of Justice.

The Intelligence Unit spends more than a quarter of a million dollars each year on salaries for its staff of 15. An additional \$3,500 is used to pay for informants and surveillance posts (such as apartments).

The information collected by the department is not generally used for what Lawler calls body snatching, that is, arrests.

"Intelligence in the police department is much like intelligence in the military. It's used to try and tell the chief what's going to happen before it happens..." Lawler explained.

To do the job Lawler looks for men who have "persistence, common sense, tenacity, analytical qualities, pa-

tiency, aggressiveness and imagination."

He reorients them from making arrests to gathering information.

His officers receive part of their intelligence education in special schools with titles like collectors school, analysts school, equipment surveillance school and informant school. The training is provided by the state with money from the federal government.

The only check on the Intelligence Unit comes from Police Chief Donald Scott, to whom the unit is directly responsible.

The information the department collects is used by a number of outside agencies including the F.B.I., police departments in other cities, the State Department of Justice, Naval and Army intelligence offices and the sheriff's department.

The police department's rules define the 19-year-old Intelligence Unit's job as that of "production and dissemination of information concerning espionage, labor disputes, riots, sabotage, secret societies, subversive activities, treason offenses, vice and drug traffic."

It calls on the unit to "gather information and maintain files on known and suspected activities in the community, subversive groups, and individuals whose activities might threaten the welfare of the community."

Lawler labels the above regulations "antiquated."

In fact, the language is on its way out and new regulations for the unit will be presented tonight at the Police Commission meeting.

Most of the unit's efforts Lawler said, are devoted to fighting organized crime — not the Mafia, which he said is not a major problem here but "ma and papa, local boy, native son oriented."

Recently the unit has been concentrating on white collar crime. The lieutenant refused to be specific.

Several months ago the emphasis was on drug traffic.

And there continues to be an interest in the terrorist activities of the Weather Underground and the Black Liberation Army.

Lawler believes that with assistance from other law enforcement agencies the police will be waiting for bombers if and when they plant their explosives a year from now.

Much of the information the police gather comes from outside sources.

"You would be surprised at the number of people who are getting fed up with the bombers and who are now giving information to the police department," Lawler said.

Many private citizens also assist the department as paid and unpaid informants.

"If we could make all of the public intelligence officers I think this country would be a lot better off," the chief intelligence officer said.