

CIA Admits Working to Raise Sub

By Timothy S. Robinson
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Central Intelligence Agency has finally acknowledged publicly that it was "involved" in the Glomar Explorer's attempts to raise a sunken Russian submarine from the Pacific Ocean floor.

The terse acknowledgement came in a court document filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals by the Justice Department two weeks ago. The document asked that a suit against the CIA by a private group concerning the Glomar's financing be sent back to a lower court for further hearings.

The filing marks an abrupt change from the previous position taken by the Justice Department in the 18-month-old case that the mere acknowledgement of the CIA's involvement in the project would be harmful to national security. Although the CIA's operation of the project has been reported in numerous publications, the agency has been adamant in its refusal to say publicly whether those reports were true.

The case brought by the nonprofit

Military Audit Project, which monitors spending in the defense and intelligence establishments, has involved an unprecedented amount of secret court proceedings as the CIA attempted to prove the need for secrecy to U.S. District Court Judge Gerhard A. Gesell. The suit seeks the financial details of the Glomar project.

For example, Gesell was forced to issue a secret opinion in the case last October that even the attorneys involved still have not been able to read. The opinion was issued in that secret fashion upon direct orders of the U.S. Court of Appeals, which instructed Gesell to accept secret affidavits from high-level government officials concerning the case.

Public affidavits filed at the time by former President Ford's top national security adviser, Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, said disclosures of the CIA involvement or other details about the project might prompt other nations offended by the project to retaliate against the United States.

Scowcroft said that retaliation might take the form of "strong measures" that might "endanger U.S. military and diplomatic personnel and businessmen overseas."

The federal government had previously acknowledged only that the ship was part of a 1969 classified U.S. government project "to accomplish certain secret tasks in furtherance of national security objectives."