

Panels Urged to Monitor Covert Actions Abroad

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WASHINGTON, April 26—The United States has undertaken thousands of covert actions abroad since 1947, including 900 major or sensitive projects in the last 15 years alone, with only partial success and in some instances, severe damage to the nation's foreign policy, according to a report today by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence activities.

The 11-member committee considered at one point recommending a ban against all covert actions, the report said, but later concluded that the United States must have some covert capability. Only Senator Frank Church, the Idaho Democrat who headed the panel, ended up calling for a ban.

"The committee has concluded, however, that the United States should maintain the capability to react through covert action when no other means will suffice to meet extraordinary circumstances involving grave threats to U.S. national security," the report said.

"Nevertheless, covert action should be considered as an exception to the normal process of Government action abroad, rather than a parallel but invisible system in which covert operations are routine."

Budget Details Urged

The report mentioned by name no covert operations that had not been previously publicly known. It urged that "the intelligence oversight committees of Congress should require that the annual budget submission for covert action programs be specified and detailed as to the activity recommended."

The recommendation left the door open, however, for "unforeseen" covert action projects to be financed from the intelligence agency's "contingency reserve fund" and accounted for later.

The report defined covert actions as those sub-rosa efforts—from buying candidates in an election to waging a secret war in Laos—that the United States tried to carry out without being identified with as a nation.

The committee said that there was no legal authorization for covert action in the 1947 National Security Act or subsequent laws pertaining to intelligence, but that internal executive orders had increased the powers to conduct covert oper-

ations abroad.

The committee investigated covert actions from the creation of the modern intelligence system in 1947 through the present. Part of its findings and descriptions, the report said, would be circulated only to senators and not made public, at the request of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Covert Actions Traced

The report traced covert actions from a State Department-C.I.A. hybrid in the late 1940's called the Office of Policy Coordination through the formation of a clandestine services section at the C.I.A. in 1952, then called the Deputy Directorate for Plans.

The early covert actions run by the Office of Policy Coordination mainly involved giving financial support and encouragement to labor unions, political parties and other groups in Western Europe in the late 1940's as they tried to resist a Communist takeover, the report said.

It was during the Korean War, the report said, that paramilitary covert operations came to the fore. After the Korean War, according to the report, a directive of The National Security Council broadened operations to the entire globe. Previously such actions were confined to areas contiguous to the Soviet Union or China.

This resulted in widespread secret operations in Latin America, Africa and the Far East, the report said. Though the committee studied several actions, it publicly discussed only a 10-year effort to stop Salvador Allende Gossens, a Marxist, from becoming President in Chile, efforts to undermine General Sukarno in In-

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donesia and various political assassination plots, including operation Mongoose, which sought to kill Fidel Castro, Prime Minister of Cuba.

The committee leveled its strongest criticism at the paramilitary covert actions. "The committee's findings on paramilitary activities suggest that these operations are an anomaly, if not an aberration, of covert action," the report said.

The committee said that this was because they were almost impossible to conceal and thus very quickly became overt operations.

"Of the five paramilitary activities studied by the committee, only one appears to have achieved its objectives," the report said. The report did not list those studied, but the committee is known to have examined the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba, operations in Laos, South Vietnam and Korea, and earlier operations in Greece.

The committee said that Congress had failed, until the passage of the Hughes-Ryan amendment, which required the President to report covert activities to Congress, to conduct adequate oversight of covert actions and it also faulted the mechanism for approving such projects by the executive branch.

It urged that covert actions be approved only in the most dire circumstances, after full consideration by the National Security Council and after each person in the chain of command had put his views in writing and signed them. This system, in general terms, was called for by President Ford's executive order earlier this year, but the committee wanted the order buttressed by law.