

Warren Commission ex-aide chosen director of CIA probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Administration sources reported Saturday that a former counsel to the Warren Commission is President's Ford's choice to be executive director of his commission to investigate the Central Intelligence Agency.

As the commission geared up to open its investigation Monday, the sources said Ford had selected David Belin, a 46-year-old Iowa lawyer who was counsel to the 1964 inquiry into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Meanwhile, an FBI spokesman said Saturday night that FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley is concerned that official probing into alleged illegal domestic surveillance by the CIA may go too far and jeopardize the spy agency.

The spokesman said Kelley has "expressed some apprehension that perhaps the inquiry and disclosure about the Central Intelligence Agency would go too far and do harm."

Kelley believes that the commission appointed by Ford "should find out what their (the CIA's) mission is and whether they are fulfilling it, but not go into how they do what they do," the FBI official said.

In another development, the Los Angeles Times reported that CIA Director William E. Colby has told the Justice Department he does not believe sufficient grounds exist for criminal prosecution of CIA officials or personnel involved in the alleged domestic operations.

The newspaper quoted Colby as telling Justice that initial press accounts had "exaggerated the extent of the transgressions" by linking individual wrongdoings inside the United States to extensive CIA files that reportedly contain the names of some 10,000 American citizens.

Sources said Belin would head a staff of investigators, lawyers and others aiding the commission in its probe. The commission is headed by Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller.

Asked about Belin, White House Press Secretary Ron Nessen said he had no announcement to make.

Along with Colby, the CIA commission is expected to call as witnesses Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger and former CIA Director Richard Helms, now



David Belin

ambassador to Iran. Schlesinger also served briefly as CIA director in 1973 before being named to the defense post.

"The staff has got to start Monday with procedural matters like what to do about subpoena powers and per diem," one administration source said. The commission presently does not have the power to issue subpoenas.

The commission is expected to set up offices in the new Executive Office Building at Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street, not far from the White House. The location reportedly was recommended by White House Chief of Staff Donald Rumsfeld.

The administration sources said Belin, senior partner since 1966 in the Des Moines, Iowa, law firm of Herrick, Langdon, Belin and Harris, was suggested by the President's staff recruiters, but that Rockefeller had interviewed him and agreed to the appointment.

Belin has written a book called "You Are the Jury," which defends the results of the Warren Commission.

One source was asked whether the recommendation of Belin by Ford's recruiters, not Rockefeller's, and the lack of any announcement by the White House signaled any disagreement between Ford and Rockefeller about who would head the commission staff.

"There's no friction on it. The vice president agreed. The President is not going to stuff it down the vice president's throat," the source said.

Belin, who was chairman of Lawyers for Nixon-Agnew in the 1968 presidential campaign, reportedly will head a staff of about 15, including seven investigators, a legal counsel, a congressional liaison representative, a staff administrator and a press spokesman.

Meanwhile, The London Times has published an article by a Londoner who identifies himself as a former CIA agent and suggests that the agency spies on as many as 100 million Americans.

In a related investigation, Sen. John C. Stennis, D-Miss., said the Armed Services Committee would begin its probe of the CIA on Thursday with testimony from CIA Director Colby.

Stennis said Colby would be followed by former director Helms. The hearing would be open "to the extent possible," the senator said. But he added that "much information" would be considered in closed sessions.

Another CIA investigation is being conducted by a House special subcommittee on intelligence, headed by Lucien N. Nedzi, D-Mich.