

'BLUE RIBBON' PANEL

Ford Orders CIA

Investigation

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President Ford yesterday ordered a 'blue-ribbon' commission to determine whether the CIA exceeded its statutory authority by conducting counter-intelligence operations involving American citizens inside the United States.

White House press secretary Ronald Nessen said the commission will be required to present its final report to the President three months from its establishment yesterday. Ford, Nessen said, has talked to some people about the posts of chairman and executive director but the membership of the panel will be decided and announced soon, probably this week.

Nessen said the commission probably would consist of five or seven members.

THE SPOKESMAN declined to say whom the President had in mind for

serving on the investigating commission. Ford, in a statement accompanying the executive order establishing the panel, said it would be a distinguished group of citizens. No one appointed to the commission will be a government employee or a member of Congress, Nessen said.

Ford revealed in his statement that the Justice Department is looking into aspects of the CIA matter that are within its jurisdiction. Asked who had ordered the Justice Department to investigate the CIA's domestic activities, Nessen referred, questioners to the Justice Department.

The only response from the Justice Department was a statement from acting Atty. Gen. Laurence Silberman relayed to reporters by switchboard operators: "The Justice Department will discharge its responsibilities."

According to the telephone operators on duty yesterday, the department's spokesmen were unavailable.

and there would be no added comment.

Ford's announcement of the commission to evaluate activities of the CIA conducted within the United States came after a two-hour meeting yesterday with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger about a report on the matters, CIA Director William Colby.

Ford also met for 20 minutes with former CIA Director Richard Helms, now U.S. ambassador to Iran, in the White House Oval Office. Nessen did not disclose what they discussed.

HELMS ARRIVED in Washington late Friday for home leave and is expected to remain in Washington to be available for questioning by the White House commission and by various committees of Congress which are planning hearings on the recent disclosures of allegedly illegal CIA activities.

See CIA, A-3

Continued From A-1

The 1947 charter establishing the CIA expressly prohibits the agency from conducting surveillance or other police activities in the United States, particularly concerning U.S. citizens.

However, it has been reported that the CIA carried on massive surveillance activities over the last 20 years and has accumulated files on 10,000 American citizens.

According to the report, most of these files were put together during the time Helms was CIA director, from 1966 to February 1973. Asked what had prompted the President to create the

commission, Nessen said it would be fair to say that from the President's reading of the Colby report and his discussions with Kissinger, Colby and Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger — also a former CIA director — enough questions have been raised to warrant establishment of the panel.

Ford's statement said, "In the world in which we live, beset by continuing threats to our national security, it is vital that we maintain an effective intelligence and counter-intelligence capability. This capability is fundamental in providing the safeguards

that protect our national interests and help avert armed conflict.

"The CIA has had a notable record of many successes in this field but by the nature of its operations such successes and achievements cannot be divulged publicly.

"It is essential in this republic that we meet our security requirements and at the same time avoid impairing our democratic institutions and fundamental freedoms. Intelligence activities must be conducted consistently with both objectives."

IN ADDITION to asking the panel to determine whether the CIA has exceeded its statutory authority, Ford said he is asking the commission to determine whether existing safeguards are adequate to preclude agency activities that might go beyond its authority and to make appropriate recommendations. He said the commission will immediately have the access to the Colby report.

Ford said he was aware that various congressional committees are planning hearings similar to those that will be conducted by the commission. He said it was his strong hope that the congressional committees consider the findings and recommendations of the commission.

In his statement Ford also appeared to raise the suggestion of whether the best congressional approach to avoid proliferation of hearings would be to have the matter undertaken by existing oversight committees or through a joint House-Senate committee. But he said he was confi-

dent that the cooperative efforts of the executive branch and the Congress would be beneficial to the national security and the traditions and institutions of the nation.

Nessen said the commission will not have subpoena power and that such power probably would not be needed in this case. Nessen pointed out that the President cannot grant subpoena power, which must be granted by legislative action. If the CIA investigating commission discovers that it needs power of subpoena, Nessen said, the President would have to request it from Congress.

FORD ADDED, "I am writing to those department and agency heads who are responsible for the overall intelligence activities of the United States for the purpose of emphasizing that they are at all times to conduct their activities within the scope of their respective statutory authority."

Under the terms of the executive order, the commission would make recommendations to the President and the director of the CIA by April 4 when it has determined the facts about CIA activities within the United States and whether existing safeguards are adequate to prevent violations.

The order requires each department or agency to furnish information and assistance to the commission to the extent permitted by law. Furthermore, the panel will furnish to the attorney general any evidence which may relate to offenses against the laws of the United States.