

Probers of CIA may get glimpse into the shadowy '40 Committee'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Investigators of the CIA may get a glimpse into one of the most shadowy areas of American intelligence operations.

It is the so-called 40 Committee, the super-secret group headed by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger that sets most CIA policy and supervises its work.

Kissinger is described by State Department associates as anxious to keep the 40 Committee out of the inquiries by congressional committees and the President's commission that will look into the spy agency.

The secretary reportedly argues that the investigations should be limited to charges that the CIA illegally spied on Americans in the United States.

He doesn't want a search of the way he and the other four members of the committee operate.

Sources on the congressional panels involved, as well as the special commission headed by Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller, indicate a willingness to comply, if they can.

One House member said "You've got to realize most of us think the CIA is important if we're going to survive in what is in reality a mean world ...

"There are simply some things we're better off not knowing about," he concluded.

Even if the investigations are kept behind closed doors there are bound to be leaks "because there are just too many members (of Congress) who will want to be called heroes against the 'dirty spies,'" another House member said.

Despite these sentiments the 40

Committee will be scrutinized during at least one House hearing.

Rep. Lucien Nedzi, D-Mich., heads the Armed Services subcommittee that is the House's main CIA oversight panel.

"I anticipate we will get into it if there is a need," Nedzi said of the 40 Committee. "I expect there will be a need."

The concern is over one of the most secret organizations in the history of the country, a secrecy still impressive in spite of earlier disclosures.

In fact, until mentioned in last summer's debate over CIA interference in Chile the name "40 Committee" was virtually unknown.

Underlining this exceptional secrecy is the fact that the 40 Committee has existed by that and other names for at least 20 years.

It was established sometime before 1954 as an informal group of State and Defense department officials.

Today the members are Kissinger, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph Sisco, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. George Brown, Under Secretary of Defense William P. Clements and CIA Director William Colby.

But even today nowhere is the name "40 Committee" written and no official will explain publicly how that title came about. Privately they acknowledge it

represents National Security directive 40, which formalized the group's existence.

Kissinger won't speak for the record about the committee. In background sessions he has said the committee does not recommend CIA programs but only passes on proposals from the agency.

Other State Department sources say the 40 group's role isn't always just backchecking. One source said that Kissinger runs the major CIA programs.

Another source, a former Kissinger aide, said Kissinger usually just calls the other committee members or sees them individually, either in his office or at other meetings, and they hardly ever meet formally.

An example given by another State official concerned formation of the Rockefeller commission. Kissinger personally recommended that President Ford establish the panel. He told a newsman he didn't know if any other administration official made similar suggestions.