

Deutch Cites Concerns on CIA Failings

Human Rights Issues In Guatemala Noted

6/22/95

By R. Jeffrey Smith
Washington Post Staff Writer

CIA Director John M. Deutch said yesterday he is concerned about allegations that the spy agency's operatives were involved in committing human rights abuses in Guatemala and took part in covert activities there that violated government policies.

Offering a tantalizing preview of some of the central issues to be examined in a forthcoming CIA internal report on its operations in Guatemala, Deutch said he is also specially concerned about the agency's alleged failure to keep Congress informed about some significant developments in the Central American country.

Deutch told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence at a hearing called by lawmakers to review his first month on the job that he is determined to prevent a recurrence of any missteps and has already taken action to ensure that CIA officers stationed in Latin America are more fully aware of their responsibility to promote democracy and human rights.

Deutch was responding to a request by the senators that he detail any actions taken in response to revelations that the CIA had close ties to a Guatemalan military intelligence unit implicated in human rights abuses and paid thousands of dollars to an informant in the military there who was allegedly involved in several murders.

Without specifically confirming the allegations, Deutch said the agency has begun a detailed review of how it deals with informants "who raise issues involving human rights."

He said the CIA would eventually disseminate new guidelines "that offer clear guidance on this subject beyond previous directives" to its officers in the field.

Deutch also promised that the agency would soon produce "written regulations and instructions, illustrated by examples," concerning how and when its officers and management must report to Congress. "There is no question in my mind that notification problems, as evidenced by the Guatemala case, demand such attention," Deutch said.

He has previously stated that the agency's internal review—which he said would be completed by mid-Ju-

ly—is likely to find "some justification" for congressional charges that the agency misled Capitol Hill in describing what it knew about the death of Michael DeVine, a U.S. innkeeper living in Guatemala.

Asked how rapidly these new policies would take hold, Deutch expressed pessimism that he could swiftly alter what he called the CIA's institutional "culture or mind-set," which had allowed such errors to occur. He said his aim was to force changes "in education, training and procedures" that would improve the agency's performance over a period of years, "not weeks and months."

"Strengthening the personnel system in the intelligence community, and the CIA in particular, is perhaps the single most important action that can be taken to strengthen U.S. intelligence capability in the long run," Deutch said.

He said a task force run by Nora Slatkin, the CIA's executive director, is reexamining such questions as: what skills the agency's officers should have; what its personnel needs are; how it can eliminate promotion barriers for women and minorities; and how it can ensure managers and officers are held accountable for their actions.

Deutch declined at the hearing to answer any questions about world events, including developments in North Korea, Russia, Bosnia and Cuba, explaining that he preferred to offer his opinions in a session that was closed to the public. He also declined to answer the committee's questions about whether and how his job responsibilities should be altered to improve the intelligence community's efficiency.

Deutch said, "I have been struck by the relative lack of executive authority" that he, as director of central intelligence, has over the budgets and leadership of related agencies, such as the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

While he said the CIA's work is coordinated well with the Defense Department, he complained that that was not so "with respect to other agencies." But he declined to say whether he wanted to gain some authority over those agencies, explaining that he wanted to "consider [the issue] very carefully."