



Wrote own stories

Former CIA Director William Colby removes a newspaper from his briefcase opened to a story about a reporter who worked for the CIA, as he prepares to appear before a House Intelligence Committee Tuesday. Colby testified that intelligence agents doubling as journalists were not told by the CIA how to write their news reports. (AP Laserphoto)

CIA-media ties okay — Colby

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former CIA Director William E. Colby said Tuesday it would be "foolish" to ban all intelligence dealings with journalists although he favors new rules limiting the agency's use of American reporters.

In testimony before the House Intelligence Committee, Colby also urged that U.S. agencies having frequent dealings with other nations be ordered to add intelligence officers to their ranks.

Colby said he supports newly adopted restrictions on the use of American journalists abroad to help the CIA get information.

But, he testified, "I strongly recommend that we not establish a blanket prohibition against any relationship whatsoever between American journalists and intelligence services."

Colby said he fully supports rules that in general prohibit the agency from initiating relationships with reporters but do not prevent reporters from volunteering information. The regulations were imposed recently by Adm. Stansfield Turner, the current CIA director.

"I would particularly hope that we would not be so foolish as to forbid any relationship between American intelligence services and the journalists of foreign and even hostile powers," he added.

Colby said that when he was CIA director from 1973 to 1976, he supervised "CIA employes on intelligence missions abroad who served as real or pretended journalists."

He did not name any of the individuals, and said they were not told

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by the CIA how to write their news reports.

However, the New York Times said this week that when Colby was asked in an interview last year whether the agency ever told journalists on its payroll what to write, he replied: "Oh, sure, all the time."

Colby was confronted Tuesday by about 15 picketing men and women wearing red, white and blue eyeglasses and identifying themselves as "Yippies." In the hearing room, they carried signs saying such things as "There is blood on that witness." They shouted similar slogans at his news conference.

Colby said the CIA's use of foreign journalists is helpful to counteract their use by other nations and to spread unfavorable accounts about what is going on in a country — such as the existence of dissident groups — that would otherwise not be disseminated.

But he said that as director he did not like the idea of subsidizing foreign newspapers and found it "cheaper and more effective to establish a relationship with someone who contributes" to a paper.

He said he rejected many requests for subsidies. He did not say whether any were ever granted, but did say that he considered it a "difficult and expensive" intelligence method.

He also told the committee that it should help "reverse the tide of prohibition" with respect to the use of

employees of other government agencies as undercover CIA agents.

"The Peace Corps, the Fulbright scholars, the U.S. Information Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development and now journalists are off limits," Colby said, "and additional groups clamor to be included in this charmed circle."

"This committee should insist that the agencies of the United States government incorporate in their ranks small numbers of intelligence officers under proper administrative arrangements."

Colby also said that Congress should enact criminal penalties for former government employees who disclose information that they had sworn to keep secret.

He said the penalties should apply only to the employee and not to newsmen to whom he talks.

Colby said the government should be required to prove that the information really was a secret, and should not be free to bring such charges in order to prevent an employee or former employee from disclosing waste or corruption.

The issue of CIA employees disclosing information surfaced recently with the publication of a book by Frank Snepp, a former CIA senior intelligence analyst in Saigon who detailed U.S. government actions in the final days before the fall of South Vietnam to the communists.