

Hill Praises Panel, Urges CIA Reforms

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Congressional leader praised the work of the Rockefeller commission yesterday but said its report was only the launching point for efforts to curb illegal conduct by the Central Intelligence Agency.

President Ford meanwhile called on the CIA and the Departments of Defense, State, Treasury, and Justice to prepare formal comments for the White House on the commission's 299-page report and findings of "plainly unlawful" CIA domestic activities.

And former California Gov. Ronald Reagan, one of the eight commission members, said Congress should stay away from investigating assassination charges and accept the report as "everything that would meet the public need to know." He said congressional investigators would only leak their information making it "more difficult for the CIA to protect the security of this country."

But Sen. Frank Church (D-

Idaho), chairman of the select committee that has been investigating the CIA since January, called the report "the tip of the iceberg" of improper CIA conduct and said his committee would probe more deeply.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield said the commission had published "a good report but not a complete report." He said Congress should fill out the record, especially in the area of assassinations.

The White House said Justice Department attorneys began poring over a dozen file drawers of material in the Executive Office Building within hours of the report's public release Tuesday evening in search of possible evidence warranting criminal prosecution.

The commission, headed by Vice President Rockefeller, said the CIA had a good over-

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all record but had committed illegal and extreme acts beyond its charter, including burglaries, warrantless eavesdropping, the compilation of thousands of files on American citizens, infiltration of their organizations, and bizarre experiments with drugs, which led to the suicide of a man who unknowingly took LSD.

The commission proposed reforms including creation of a new joint congressional oversight committee, legislation and executive orders clarifying the CIA's powers and duties, and a new law punishing agents and former agents for compromising classified information.

Church labeled as "clearly insufficient" the commission's recommendation that Presidents should not again press the CIA to engage in wrongful and illegal acts. "What we need is a law with criminal penalties," he said. "Simply an admonition of that kind is plainly not adequate."

The chairman also said he would "want to study" the commission's proposal to make disclosure of classified information a crime. Church and Sen. John V. Tunney (D-Calif.) called for careful scrutiny of commission proposals on defining the CIA's role in domestic matters.

Tunney, chairman of the Senate Constitutional Rights Subcommittee, said he was "particularly concerned that in adopting reforms, we do not sanction unwanted domestic surveillance activities which the committee recommendations would appear to call for."

The commission said the CIA should be authorized to provide "guidance and technical assistance" to help other intelligence agencies protect themselves against leaks and, if properly coordinated with the FBI, to investigate spy suspects and conduct surveillance on persons believed a threat to the CIA. In addition, the CIA director could determine on his own that infiltration of American dissident groups was justified to protect the CIA.

Church made clear that his "tip of the iceberg" phrase did not indicate that he expected to find many more instances of CIA violations of the rights of American citizens. He said he referred to the unpublished summary of the commission's incomplete assassination probe and to other matters his

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committee will consider that the Rockefeller panel did not.

After completing the work on assassinations, Church said, the committee will explore other CIA foreign operations and the work of other intelligence agencies and law enforcement bodies.

Church and other senators indicated that they were receptive to the commission's proposal for a new House-Senate joint committee on intelligence to assume the supervisory role currently delegated to the Armed Services committees of each chamber. Previous efforts by Mansfield and others to revamp the congressional oversight system were defeated.

Sen. John G. Tower (R-Tex.), ranking minority member of the Senate select committee, said former CIA Director Richard M. Helms, a target of commission criticism, will be questioned on "a wide variety" of matters with emphasis on "covert actions" during Helms' tenure from 1966 to 1973.

Helms, now ambassador to Iran, still enjoys the confidence of President Ford, press secretary Ron Nessen said yesterday in response to questions.

The current CIA chief, William E. Colby, is scheduled to testify today before the House Select Committee on Intelligence.

Nessen, asked for Mr. Ford's specific plans to guard against repetition of CIA abuses, said the President had demonstrated his concern for individual privacy when he headed an interagency panel on government data banks created by President Nixon.

The Associated Press quoted an informed White House source as saying the President will act on the Rockefeller report within two months and hopes to have all CIA problems wrapped up by Sept. 1.

Meanwhile, a group of retired and resigned intelligence officers said the Rockefeller commission's CIA report was "fair and objective."

"It disposes of some allegations and considerable speculation concerning CIA and its activities," said David A. Phillips, head of the newly formed Association of Retired Intelligence Officers.

Phillips was chief of CIA Latin American operations. He took early retirement in May to work with other former intelligence officers to try to restore the CIA's image and "dispel myths and sensationalism."