

# Clarification Sought on Assassinations

## Committee, White House Rescind 'Unclear' Correspondence on Ban

By David B. Ottaway  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Bush administration have agreed to eliminate "unclear and ambiguous language" regarding the 13-year-old ban on U.S. involvement in assassination of foreign leaders, but still have yet to reach a new common understanding on the ban's exact meaning.

Committee Chairman Sen. David L. Boren (D-Okla.) said in a statement yesterday that the "unclear and ambiguous" language had been "mutually and explicitly rescinded" by both sides and that "as far as I know, there are no differences of opinion between the committee and the White House on the matter of previous correspondence."

Boren also said he has invited President Bush to submit the White House's own new interpretation of the 1976 ban, adding "it should be made clear that no such common interpretation has yet been reached."

"We have merely cleared up ambiguities in past correspondence," he said.

White House pressure to rescind the language mounted after the abortive Panama coup early this month. The president seized upon the criticism that arose over U.S. inaction during the events there to begin pressing for more presidential leeway to intervene in such crises.



SEN. DAVID L. BOREN  
... asks White House interpretation

Bush did this despite the absence of any evidence the CIA had been constrained in its behavior during the coup, and the president used tactics to pressure the Senate committee that infuriated Boren.

On Oct. 17, Bush read excerpts from a highly classified committee letter to a group of Republican senators and suggested that the guidelines, agreed to during the Reagan administration, were so stringent that the United States would have to notify Panama leader Gen. Man-

uel Antonio Noriega of a pending coup if his life were in danger.

After this became known last weekend, Boren charged that Bush's action came close to "a violation of law" and "violates the trust" between the White House and Congress.

The executive order in question was issued by President Ford in February 1976 and states that "no employee of the United States government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, political assassination." The same ruling was reaffirmed by President Reagan in 1981 and broadened to include even indirect participation by barring any U.S. intelligence agency from requesting "any person" to undertake activities forbidden by the order.

Yesterday, Boren insisted in his statement that the so-called "ambiguities" surrounding past interpretations of the assassination ban "had no effect on the U.S. reaction to the recent Panamanian coup attempt and were not relevant in that situation."

But he said he believed it was in the national interest for the future that the committee and White House work together to develop "a common and clear understanding of the executive order."

"Of course, the executive order itself remains in force and has not been changed by the president," he added.

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# The Assassination Report

THE SENATE INTELLIGENCE committee's assassination report, signed by all of its active members, is first of all a remarkable demonstration of confidence in a free society's capacity to confront its own iniquities, to take them to heart, and to adjust national policy as a result. We accept the committee's judgment that the assassination plots studied here were "aberrations" and not true reflections of the national character. To believe otherwise is to assault the basic process of consensus and correction by which a democratic society must proceed. Moreover, American participation in the plots was unquestionably the work of officials who thought not only that they were acting under proper authority but that they were acting in the nation's best interests. In the revulsion against acts planned in earlier, more charged times, it needs to be emphasized how much the enveloping political context has changed: the very fact of this report is evidence enough of that. It should be noted, too, that President Ford, and the three most recent directors of the Central Intelligence Agency, have all stated that they oppose political assassination as an instrument of American policy.

The report's special distinction is to avoid unjustified conclusions and to accept the difficulty of pinning down deliberations, motivations and events of an essentially elusive character. By general knowledge and leaks, we knew before that the United States had probably tried to kill Lumumba and Castro (dissidents on their own killed Lumumba, the report says; Castro still lives) and that Washington had given some encouragement to the dissidents who killed Trujillo and Diem and who kidnapped General Schneider in Chile in 1970 (without meaning to kill him, though he was killed). The report offers a great deal more information about these cases, though it accepts that final knowledge is deterred by the

secrecy in which these plots were considered, by the passage of time, by the insufficient documentation, by the tendency for "circumlocutions" to be used in place of clear language, and by the doctrine of "plausible denial" which at once masked presidential participation in plot deliberations and tempted subordinates to keep their chiefs less than fully informed. Given the difficulty other investigators will have in matching, let alone topping, this committee's information, we should not expect to learn much more.

The Church committee's recommendation that it be made a crime to assassinate a foreign official sounds like a good idea in principle. Such a law would be a useful supplement to the Executive branch's own professions of self-denial. But the real deterrents against such wrong and intolerable acts probably lie elsewhere. There must be maintained a general political atmosphere which simply does not support acts of war and crime as a substitute for legitimate methods of conducting foreign policy. Then, there must be devised particular procedures to ensure that assassination plots do not slip through the inherently ambiguous executive command-and-control system which prevailed when these plots were laid—a system which makes it impossible to know even now whether any President actually authorized any plot.

The Church Committee promised to make such proposals in the context of its overall judgments on covert operations in its final report next February. In the meantime it was important for a committee of Congress to deal, as best it could, with the speculation and anxiety that had arisen as a result of piecemeal reports. The result is a document so rich in detail and so provocative in terms of the need for reform that we intend to return to it in subsequent editorials.

# Colby Opposes Naming Agents

11-20-75

By Laurence Stern  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Central Intelligence Agency director William E. Colby made an uncharacteristically public attack yesterday on the prospective release by the Senate intelligence committee of the names of 12 intelligence officials involved in assassination schemes aimed at foreign leaders.

He warned, in a hastily called press conference at CIA headquarters, that the naming of the CIA operatives as well as American citizens and foreigners who worked with the agency could subject them to "extra-legal retaliation" by individuals and "unstable or extremist groups."

Colby said, in response to a question, that he was not acting at the request of the White House, which earlier asked the Senate committee not to make public its assassination report.

The director acknowledged that he already had asked the committee, headed by Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), in testimony and by letter not to divulge the names of agency officials and cooperative private citizens. Colby's intention was now to put himself on record publicly against the committee's plans to release the names.

The Senate intelligence panel has already deleted 20 of

the 32 names the CIA asked it to eliminate from its public report.

Church, upon learning of Colby's statement, said the committee had decided to include only the names of those who were "inseparably involved in the decisions that led to the involvement of our government in assassination attempts." He made it clear he was unswayed by the director's comments.

"We feel we have acted judiciously and properly," said Church.

In past years CIA directors were rarely seen in public, let alone at press conferences. The only other formal press conference in the agency's history, according to CIA spokesmen, was Sept. 12 during the height of the agency's confrontation with the House intelligence committee.

Colby, asked why he was resorting to the extraordinary measure of holding a press conference, said he wanted to make clear publicly that he felt it was "wrong" to release the names.

He said that he and other top-ranking officials of the agency were already subjected to crank calls and

See COLBY, A4, Col. 7

## 1-cent increase in the city Disclosing of Names Is Opposed by Colby

COLBY, From A1  
threats. Recently a pipe bomb exploded in the home of the field agent in charge of the Denver office of the CIA's Domestic Collection Division.

Colby said his concern extended to middle-level and senior officials of the agency whose names figure in the report. They are people, he said, who carried out orders that general public attitudes "thought appropriate at the time."

"Exposing our people to hostile retaliation is not in the tradition of our country," said Colby.

Testimony given to the Senate committee, he went on, was provided with the expectation that neither it nor the identity of the CIA witnesses would be made public.

Colby said he had cooperated fully with the Senate committee although he, like the President, stood opposed to any public discussion of details of past assassination activities by the CIA.

Colby noted that the committee had agreed, under the pressure of an appellate court battle to delete the name of one CIA official who had challenged the committee's decision to name him. That official, he said, was not among the 12 remaining intelligence officers whose cases still concern him.

Informed sources said that this official was Sidney Gottlieb, retired head of the CIA's technical services division.

**Jack Anderson**

## CIA Eyed Creation of Killer Elite

For years, the Central Intelligence Agency's darkest secret was its undercover association with Mafia hit men who were recruited for international murder missions. We finally broke the story that the CIA had used gangsters in six attempts on the life of Cuban President Fidel Castro.

Now we've learned that the CIA wanted to create its own branch of "Murder Inc." — a killer squad that would assassinate undesirable foreign leaders for \$1 million each.

It has taken us years to dig out the ugly facts. We were able to report on March 3, 1967, that the CIA had "hatched a plot to knock off Castro." On Jan. 18, 1971, we began a series of three columns describing the six assassination attempts and naming the Mafia killers and their CIA contacts. Not until five years later did the Senate Intelligence Committee finally confirm our story.

The CIA recruited the hit men through Robert Maheu, a former CIA undercover operator who had taken charge of Howard Hughes' Las Vegas empire and had developed mob contacts in Nevada.

Around the time that Maheu was setting up the Mafia plot against Castro, we've just learned, the CIA also approached a former narcotics official with intimate knowledge of the Mafia. He was Charles Siragusa, a former wartime intelligence officer who had become one of the Big Three in the Federal Narcotics Bureau and had handled the bureau's liaison with the CIA.

The bureau had cultivated informants inside the Mafia and had compiled files on the crime syndicate. Siragusa was a logical person, therefore, for the CIA to sound out about forming a Mafia hit squad to kill for the United States.

The retired Siragusa, breaking a silence of more than 15 years, told us about a strange conversation with a CIA official in Washington around 1960. After a few minutes of chit-chat, the CIA man made this startling suggestion: that Siragusa, drawing on his knowledge and contacts in the underworld, recruit a crew of Mafia torpedoes for standby assassination duty.

They would be paid \$1 million in fees and expenses for each kill. The CIA would assign the missions and underwrite the payoffs from its secret funds.

At this point, the visitor stopped, waiting for Siragusa's reaction. "At first I thought he was joking," he said.

When he realized the proposal was serious, he rejected it. "In wartime, it's one thing," he told the CIA emissary, "but in peacetime, it's something different." He heard nothing more of the matter.

Siragusa speculated that the CIA selected him to set up the murder squad because of his handling of two other special CIA requests.

On the first occasion, three Spanish-speaking CIA operatives had been arrested while pulling a Watergate-style break-in at the Chinese Communist news agency in Havana. Cuban police thought they had caught three small-

fry burglars and locked them up on an island off Cuba.

The CIA was desperate to get them back before their cover was blown. One knew the names of numerous CIA contacts in Cuba; in any event, the CIA makes every possible effort to rescue agents in peril.

The CIA turned to Siragusa, suggesting he enlist Mafia types for a rescue raid. This proved impractical; instead, Siragusa began dealings with a Chicago lawyer supposedly close to Castro's brother, Raul. The CIA authorized Siragusa to spend up to \$1 million to effect the rescue of the imprisoned agents by whatever means necessary.

The Chicagoan received \$10,000 from CIA funds but his efforts failed, Siragusa said. Eventually the three won their freedom through the legal efforts of a Havana attorney, retained by the CIA without Castro's knowledge.

Siragusa also said he was involved in the establishment of a CIA "safehouse" in Greenwich Village in the 1960s. But unknown to him, the apartment was turned into a sex trap for foreign diplomats and informants.

Footnote: We are satisfied after long talks with top CIA officials that the CIA has given up its love nests, murder plots and most other dirty tricks. We have learned that Siragusa was recently interviewed about the murder squad by the Senate Intelligence Committee. Our calls to the committee for comment were unreturned.

# Left Alone by Plotters,

By John M. Goshko  
Washington Post Staff Writer

CIA Director William H. Webster said yesterday that last month's abortive attempt to oust Panamanian military ruler Manuel Antonio Noriega failed because its leaders, thinking they could have "an old-fashioned coup where people don't have to be hurt," left Noriega alone in a bedroom where he telephoned his mistress and other supporters to rescue him.

"You could say . . . maybe that's what went wrong," he said. "They planned to do it themselves. They wanted a Panamanian solution. It was kind of an idealistic approach to their problems where people don't have to get hurt, where you go in and take over the headquarters. They did not want anything to happen to Noriega. They wanted him to be able to retire in dignity."

In an interview with editors and reporters at The Washington Post yesterday, Webster said there had been no "intelligence failure that would have affected

[President Bush] or denied him something that he needed to know" before the Oct. 3 coup attempt by dissident officers of the Panama Defense Forces.

The plotters gave the United States 24 hours notice of their intentions, he said, although there initially was some doubt among U.S. policy-makers about whether the coup leader, Maj. Moises Giroldi, could be trusted. Giroldi, who was killed after loyalists rescued Noriega, had been instrumental in foiling a 1988 attempt to depose the Panamanian leader.

"Noriega's very crafty, and [U.S. officials] thought they might be getting set up for some kind of embarrassment, and they wanted to proceed very slowly," Webster recalled. "So there's naturally some anxiety about who are we dealing with."

However, Webster continued, the CIA's people in Panama reported to Washington that they believed Giroldi "was sincere and that he had a less-than-even chance of succeeding because his plan wasn't very well thought out."

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## Noriega Phoned Rescuers, Webster Says

As described by Webster, Giroldi's plan essentially involved seizing Noriega at the defense forces headquarters and forcing him and other senior officers to accept retirement.

Noriega's retirement would have been retroactive to August 1988, the date he had completed 25 years of service in the defense forces.

Webster said the plotters were so determined to give Noriega a safe and honorable exit from power that they rebuffed a U.S. request that he stand trial in this country where a Florida grand jury has indicted him on drug-trafficking charges. According to Webster, U.S. Army authorities who met with two Giroldi emissaries "asked whether they would turn Noriega over, and they said, 'No.'"

Giroldi "wanted to treat them as retired people, and I gather he sent Noriega into the bedroom where there was a nice telephone, and Noriega called his mistress and asked her to place a call or two, and he

placed a few calls himself, and they were very good calls," Webster said in succinct description of how Noriega summoned units loyal to him to put the headquarters under siege and reverse the coup.

"It was a four-hour event," Webster said. He added that by noon, when two of Giroldi's fellow plotters went to the U.S. Army headquarters to inform American officials of the coup's apparent success, "the thing was flipping. . . . They were losing, but the two officers didn't know that. . . . One went back home and got executed. The other one placed a phone call and got the wrong guy on the phone . . . he decided he would not go back under those circumstances. So he escaped."

Webster did not identify the two officers. But his description of the one who escaped apparently was a reference to Capt. Javier Licona, the highest-ranking officer in the coup plot to get away. Licona now is in Miami.

Webster denied that the rebels ever sought air cover or other help from the U.S.

military forces in Panama. "They literally asked for nothing," he said. Licona and other rebels who escaped have said they asked for air cover and were refused.

At another point in the interview, Webster said, "The only thing they asked the American government to do was to exercise its rights [under the Panama Canal treaties] and put a few people in the street where they had a right to be so that they would slow down traffic on reinforcements, and they designated two streets.

"They would not even give a telephone number. After we had the meeting with them, they wouldn't even give us a place of contact. They really wanted it to be a Panamanian solution."

Webster said that, despite its failure, the coup attempt has left Noriega weaker because he "now has great difficulty in identifying who he can trust. . . . He just put something off. He knows he's going to have to confront it, and I think the concern that he has is that the next people will not give him a bedroom and telephone."

*Q. Was Allen Dulles or any other CIA director ever involved in an assassination plot on the life of the late Chou En-lai, premier of the People's Republic of China?—F.R.E., Berkeley, Cal.*

*A. There is some information that the CIA knew of a plot by Chinese Nationalist agents to assassinate Chou En-lai by planting a bomb in an Air India plane in which Chou was scheduled to fly to Indonesia in April 1955. However, Chou did not take that particular plane in which the bomb was detonated. John Discoe Smith, an American, was alleged to have been involved in the plot, but the CIA denied any relationship with Smith. Chou discussed the incident with Henry Kissinger when they met in Peking.*

*PARADE 7/8/78*