

Killings Denied By Colby

But He Admits
CIA 'Discussed'

Assassinations

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By Spencer Rich
Washington Post Staff Writer

CIA Director William E. Colby has admitted there was discussion within the agency of assassinating foreign leaders, but denied anything ever came of it, Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) said yesterday.

It was the first time that any high CIA official has been reported as conceding that agency officials talked over the possibility of action against foreign political figures. There have been widespread unconfirmed reports of such discussions.

Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), chairman of the Senate committee investigating domestic and foreign CIA activities, told a reporter he didn't want to speculate about Symington's remarks, but "we'll look at the evidence and get to the bottom of all these rumors. In the absence of war, no agency of the government can have a license to murder, and the President can't be a 'Godfather.'"

Symington made the disclosure on the ABC interview program "Issues and Answers" (WMAL), amid reports that the Rockefeller commission, set up by President Ford to seek out possible abuses by the CIA within the United States, might enlarge its scope to look into possible CIA overseas assassination plots.

White House sources said the commission staff is already looking into the possibility of CIA links to overseas assassination plots, but whether the full commission will go ahead with the overseas probe

isn't decided yet.

There has been press speculation that the CIA was involved in plots against Fidel Castro of Cuba, Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Patrice Lumumba of the Republic of the Congo (now Zaire) and Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier of Haiti. Castro, of course, is still alive but Trujillo was gunned down by assassins, Lumumba was murdered after being captured by his enemies, and Duvalier died peacefully in bed.

Symington told the TV panel that a few weeks ago he had called Colby and asked him directly whether the CIA had been involved in plans to assassinate foreign leaders. Symington, a member of the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees, is a member of the CIA oversight "watchdog" subcommittee in the Senate.

Symington said that Colby assured him "it had not actually been done," but that there had been "some discussion about it."

Symington declined to amplify, but added in a telephone interview later, "I called Colby and said, 'Have there been any assassinations?' and he said, 'No. There'd been discussion of it.'"

"The CIA never does anything without being instructed by the administration," Symington said when asked what he believes "discussions" meant.

A spokesman for Colby said the CIA director had no comment on Symington's remarks.

Symington said the trouble with the Senate "watchdog" committee is "it didn't watch. For example, it only met once in 1971."

Symington's disclosure seems certain to spur further moves to look into the CIA's overseas activities, perhaps by the Rockefeller Commission and certainly by special Senate and House CIA committee.