

Intelligence Panel Members Said to 'Concern' Bush

Rep. Gingrich Says Foreign Nations Will Fear House Liberals Won't Keep Secrets

By Ann Devroy
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Democratic handling of the makeup and direction of the House intelligence committee set off a partisan eruption at the White House yesterday, with President Bush described as expressing "deep concern" over the committee and Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) saying foreign nations would fear trusting their secrets to "anti-intelligence" Democrats.

Gingrich, the House GOP whip, accused House Speaker Thomas S. Foley (D-Wash.) of naming "the most anti-intelligence-gathering members of the Democratic Party" to the committee. "If foreign agencies come to the conclusion that... their most secret analysis and their most secret sources might be

leaked—it doesn't have to be true, they just have to be afraid of it—then it has a very chilling effect on our capacity to gather data," Gingrich said.

Foley, speaking at the National Press Club, rejected suggestions that his appointees would leak government secrets. "Somebody said once, 'The ship of state leaks from the top,'" Foley said in a remark that drew applause.

"Newt Gingrich or no one else should reflect hostilely on people" they disagree with politically, Foley said. "Suggesting they are somehow inappropriate members does Mr. Gingrich no credit. What he said in public is offensive enough."

Senate intelligence committee Chairman David L. Boren (D-Okla.) also took issue with Gingrich. "I don't think that people, just because

they have one political philosophy or another, are any more likely to leak information," he said. Intelligence committee members, Democrat or Republican, "operate as Americans," Boren said.

Gingrich's comments came after a GOP leadership session with Bush in which the new membership and direction of the House intelligence committee was raised by several participants, according to White House spokesman Roman Popadiuk and several Republican lawmakers. Popadiuk said the president had "some concern" and added, "We hope there will be no stumbling blocks to the kind of [past] cooperation we have had in the future."

According to congressional and White House officials, the White House was "stunned" by the ap-

pointments of two liberals, Reps. Ronald V. Dellums (Calif.) and David E. Bonior (Mich.), and by the tone of the comments of the new chairman, Rep. Dave McCurdy (D-Okla.), in an interview with The Washington Post published yesterday.

McCurdy, in the interview, said the committee had not been tough enough and that he intends to stand up to CIA Director William H. Webster and would stall the CIA's spending authorization if there was no progress on efforts to reorganize the U.S. intelligence community.

The chairman also said he would require government witnesses to routinely take oaths before testifying and would seek far more detailed information than is provided now.

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A senior administration official said yesterday that Bush, as a former CIA director and "as a president in the middle of a war," was "very, very concerned." The appointment of "people who don't agree with the idea of gathering intelligence in the first place" caused "extraordinary concern" at the White House and McCurdy's aggressive stance added to those worries, the official said.

Asked what the White House could do about the matter, the official said, "You can look at the underlying charter of what the committee was established to do and separate that from some of its practices today." Asked if that amounted to a threat that the White House would resist cooperating with the newly constituted committee, the official said, "We'll see."

Gingrich accused the new liberal appointees on the committee of not believing "in having an effective intelligence agency," and McCurdy of trying to pick "a public fight with the director of the Central Intelligence Agency in the middle of a war."

In his remarks at the press club,

Foley said he did not just name liberals to the committee but also lawmakers like Reps. Charles Wilson (D-Tex.), Stephen J. Solarz (D-N.Y.) and McCurdy in order to produce "a balanced committee reflecting all viewpoints in the Democratic Caucus."