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Clifford Hits 'Enshrinement' Of CIA Curbs

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The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence opened public hearings yesterday on a 263-page bill to reorganize and revise the nation's intelligence agencies. For its leadoff witness, it called on an epitome of the Washington establishment, Clark M. Clifford.

Clifford, who as an aide to President Truman was a key draftsman of the original 1947 National Security Act, suggested that Congress abandon the idea of outlawing assassinations and other highly controversial activities, on the grounds that the prohibitions wouldn't mean much anyway.

"Of course, the U.S. will not engage in such activities, but is it necessary, whatever the historical record, to enshrine this principle in legislation?" Clifford asked. "It offends my regard for my country and it doesn't do any good."

The hearing provided a sharp contrast to the atmosphere three years ago when the interim Senate Intelligence Committee headed by Frank Church (D-Idaho) began its investigations into widespread wrongdoing by the Central Intelligence Agency, the FBI and other intelligence agencies in the name of national interest.

Sen. Walter D. Huddleston (D-Ky.), chairman of the subcommittee that drew up the proposed legislation, sought to proclaim the new tone in an opening statement.

"I, for one, believe we have had enough of investigations and revela-

tions," Huddleston declared. "The effect of certain of the revelations has, undoubtedly, been healthy. But the time has come to discontinue our self-flagellation. Continuing on that course would help only marginally in deterring future abuses, but could have serious detrimental effects on our intelligence capabilities and hence, on our national security."

Designed as a new legislative charter for the foreign intelligence activities of U.S. agencies, including the supersecret National Security Agency as well as the CIA and the FBI, the proposed National Intelligence and Reform Act of 1978 would put the American intelligence community under a new director of national intelligence and restrict a wide range of abuses, such as burglaries, mail intercepts and drug experimentation on unsuspecting subjects. It is slightly stronger than a recent executive order issued by President Carter, but critics contend that the bill, C. 2525, is still loaded with "exceptions and loopholes."

Making his first appearance before a congressional committee since last September when he served as counsel to erstwhile budget director Bert Lance, Clifford was invited to lead off the hearings because of what chairman Birch Bayh (D-Ind.) described as his unparalleled expertise as an adviser to presidents, onetime secretary of defense and former chairman of the president's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

He emphasized that the best safeguard against future abuses would be steady and vigorous congressional oversight, instead of the know-nothing stance that most lawmakers used to take, but he agreed that the National Security Act also needs to be replaced.