

CIA Says Press Not Affected by Agent 'Cover' Bill

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CIA Deputy Director Frank Carlucci said yesterday that legitimate journalists would be protected from prosecution under proposed legislation that would make the unmasking of covert intelligence agents a criminal offense with a penalty of up to 10 years in prison and a \$50,000 fine.

Carlucci testified before a Senate Judiciary subcommittee considering a bill, already approved by the Senate Intelligence Committee and two House panels, to protect the identities of CIA and other U.S. intelligence agents working abroad under embassy or other "cover."

Critics, including the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, claim the bills would open up prosecution of any person, including journalists, who expose the identity of an intelligence agent.

"This simply is not the case," Carlucci said.

The Senate version, he said, "describes a very narrow category of persons engaged in a crusade whose commonly recognizable effect is to destroy intelligence activities in general and who further that purpose by doing much more than merely restraining that which is in the public domain."

During the hearing, copies were distributed of a letter to Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), who was not present at the hearings, from the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press "strenuously" opposing the proposed Senate bill.

The letter, written by Reporters Committee Director Jack Landau of Newhouse Newspapers, said the proposed legislation "is a classic 'official secret act'."