

Hill Reform of CIA Review Stymied

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The congressional crusade to change the system of intelligence oversight on Capitol Hill is virtually dead—a casualty of shifting public mood, adroit White House political orchestration and territorial jealousies of congressional barons.

This is the current assessment of the battle despite the past year-and-a-half of skeleton-rattling in the closets of the Central Intelligence Agency, FBI and other compartments of the U.S. national security establishment.

Equally doubtful is the prospect for legislative reform of the intelligence community whose excesses—such as involvement in foreign assassination plots, illegal surveillance of American citizens and domestic political espionage—have been chronicled in volumes of congressional testimony and countless newspaper stories.

So profound has been the rout that one top CIA official remarked with a touch of contrition last week:

"I hate to say this, but I think we've won too much."

The prediction, if not the misgivings, is widely shared by his colleagues throughout the intelligence community. And so with hawkish élan buoyed by a favorable windshift in Con-

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gress, the Ford administration is now pressing for at best a token form of oversight on Capitol Hill—an approach that would heavily circumscribe congressional power to investigate and give the President veto power over public disclosure of the findings.

It is a far cry from the state of affairs six months ago when, stung by the revelations of abuse, Congress ap-

peared on the verge of taking an unprecedentedly strong hand in overseeing the intelligence community.

Leaders of the intelligence reform movement in Congress are now in the process of cutting back their ambitious legislative goals in keeping with their darkened political prospects.

The fate of the reform bill, S. 400, illustrates the old Washington truism that there is more political mileage in exposing governmental abuses than in acting to prevent their recurrence.

Six months ago the agenda of the reformers included such minimum demands as these:

- Creation of a new standing Senate oversight committee which would operate independently of the pliant Armed Services and Appropriations committee chairmen who tolerated the CIA and FBI abuses exposed this past year.

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