

Ford's Intelligence Overseer

By Laurence Stern

Washington Post Staff Writer

Robert D. Murphy belongs to that pantheon of senior Americans whose reputations have been forged in the great foundries of corporate and governmental power.

And so when President Ford tapped him last Tuesday to be chairman of the new Board of Intelligence Overnight he could say yes without a qualm about his competence, qualifications or conflicting interests.

Watching over intelligence, as Murphy said in a telephone interview yesterday, is "very familiar territory" whether the back alley or embassy row type. Murphy, 81, has watched governments rise and fall, with perhaps an occasional nudge from Washington, since the early post-World War I years.

Murphy is playing a cen-

tral role in the reformation rites for the American intelligence community which were initiated by President Ford on national television Tuesday night, as are his fellow appointees—business adviser Leo Cherne and former Army Secretary Stephen Ailes.

In defining their duties as overseers, the President's words were vague. Their purpose, said Mr. Ford, is "to monitor the performance of our intelligence operations." His executive order the following day decreed that the board should regularly review the practices of the CIA to discover activities which raise questions of "legality and propriety."

Presidents before Gerald R. Ford have had private intelligence overseers and advisers. Not so coincidentally, they have included Murphy and Cherne, both of whom

served on the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. Murphy was appointed by President Kennedy and stayed on for 12 years. Cherne was named by President Nixon in 1973.

In the late 1950s as under secretary of state for political affairs he chaired meetings of the 303 Committee, predecessor to the Forty Committee, which approves political espionage projects that have ranged from the planned poisoning of a foreign leader to the launching of media campaigns designed to topple governments.

The CIA's involvement in such foreign operations was a factor in precipitating the intelligence controversy in Washington which, in turn, made necessary the administration's intelligence reorganization effort.

Murphy worked at the U.S. legation in Berne,

Switzerland, in 1919, when the late Allen Dulles was a third secretary there. Murphy later became a friend of Joseph Kennedy, father of the President, and as American consul in Paris was host to several of the Kennedy sons, including John, during their trips abroad.

As a presidential adviser he survived the intelligence calamity of the Bay of Pigs, which led to a purge of the top command of CIA. He continued as an adviser during four of the five assassination attempts against foreign leaders in which the Senate intelligence committee documented substantial degrees of CIA involvement.

He sought during the early 1960s to mend the fracturing relations between the Kennedy administration and the Trujillo regime, ending in Trujillo's assassination.

Murphy was an intelli-

Has Long History in the Field

gence adviser during the 1965 U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, the American-supported military coup in Brazil in 1964 and covert involvement the same year in Chile's presidential election.

It was all, as Murphy said, "familiar territory."

His entry in "Who's Who" testifies to the honors which have been showered upon him during his public and corporate career with Corning Glass International. They include the Croix de Guerre with palm, the Order of Leopold, the Order of Merit and the Order of Isabella.

In Washington he has been a man ever sought and available for honorific appointment who has been looked upon fondly by politicians as disparate in view and style as John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon.

Yet one former U.S. na-

tional security executive who sat on some of those same secret governmental councils as Murphy, speaking under ground rules of anonymity, took a dissenting view of the role and appointment.

"It typifies the conflict-of-interest problem among the so-called intelligence overseers," he said. "Here is someone who is in a position to travel from port-to-port on his intelligence overseer credentials while at the same time transacting private corporate business."

There have been controversial examples in recent years of prominent men from the business and political worlds combining their private and ostensibly public intelligence roles.

One of the most notable was the case of John McCone, California industrialist and former director of the Central Intelligence

Agency. McCone interceded with the CIA at the request of International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. Board Chairman Harold Geneen to promote covert political action programs against Salvador Allende in 1970, when Allende was on the verge of election as president of Chile.

At the time of his approach to former CIA Director Richard M. Helms and Henry A. Kissinger, then presidential assistant for national security affairs, McCone was also a corporate director of ITT.

The Senate Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, which developed the McCone testimony, concluded that in McCone's case there was not law on conflict-of-interest he had broken.

Cherne, also appointed to the oversight board, has been a member of the For-

eign Intelligence Advisory Board since 1973, when Mr. Nixon appointed him—partly in gratitude for Chern's support of the Nixon policies in Vietnam.

Cherne was also vice chairman in 1972 of Democrats for Nixon and has been associated with private organizations supporting hard-line anti-Communist stands in Vietnam, Cuba and other regions.

A business newsletter publisher, Cherne first made his mark in the public eye in 1942 by publishing a book entitled, "Adjusting Your Business to War."

Ailes, a lawyer, was quoted by the Associated Press as expressing surprise when he was tapped earlier this week for the board.

He said he had no background in intelligence and had no idea why he was chosen.