

CIA prober defends the practice of secrecy

By STUART EMMRICH
Alligator Staff Writer

A member of the presidential CIA investigating commission, former U.S. Solicitor Gen. Erwin Griswold defended at UF Wednesday the "inherent secrecy" of the CIA, but added the commission was going to thoroughly investigate any areas of domestic surveillance the agency may have been involved in.

Griswold, at UF's College of Law as a Distinguished Professor, said the commission was instructed by President Gerald Ford "to examine any domestic operations the CIA may have engaged in and to make any recommendations it feels necessary."

THE CIA is forbidden by its 1947 charter to involve itself in domestic spying and Griswold said the commission was going to determine if the charter was violated.

He added the task might be difficult because the CIA is "a complex organization involving a large number of individuals. We can't be expected to walk around the place with a magnifying glass."

He said, however, that the commission would "follow up any lead or problem we hear about. We want to learn as much as we can."

ALTHOUGH Griswold said any domestic spying by the CIA should not be going on, he defended the necessity of the agency existing for foreign operations.

"There must be a CIA," he said, "and it has to operate in secrecy. We live in a world of many nations that have intelligence operations. We cannot go around with blinders on.

"Often the only things we know about a country is what we find out through the CIA. Most of their work is done by reading newspapers and journals," he added.

HE EMPHASIZED, however, that the agency must be "under effective citizen control" but refused to say whether that control should come from the President or Congress.

"That's one of the things the commission is going to look into," he explained.

The commission's investigating powers only refer to domestic operations. Griswold said they will not look into the foreign activities of the CIA.

GRISWOLD SAID the commission would report to the Justice Department, whose duty it will be to carry out any recommendations.

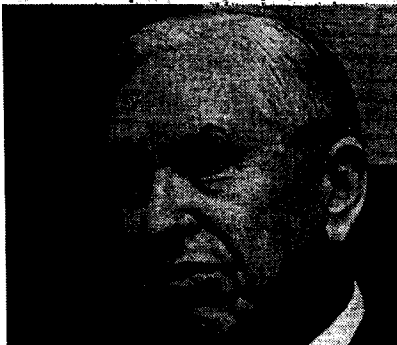
There are no penalties stated for persons who may have violated the CIA charter and Griswold said this is one of the areas the commission might look into.

Griswold said the commission hearings would "necessarily be private" because of the confidential nature of some of the testimony being given.

"THE OPERATION is inherently secret. If you report to too large a group then it won't be kept secret," he said.

Answering charges from some government officials that the investigation of the CIA might hamper the agency's operations, Griswold said, "If they are doing something illegal then it ought to be hampered."

Griswold said he thought the investigation would ultimately benefit the agency and "help the morale of the CIA's employees."



PROFESSOR ERWIN GRISWOLD
... member of Investigating Commission

1/17/75-Local Gainesville morning news reported this morn that Erwin Griswold, visiting prof at U of Fla, had refused to be interviewed by the station. Griswold said it would be "inappropriate" to give interviews with the press here, and explained that he had allowed the student newspaper, the Alligator, to interview him because it was affiliated with the school. However, that interview concerned the CIA panel.

HR

Meeting with Erwin Griswold at Holland Law Center, Gainesville, 10:20-10:30 am, 1/16/75

Went up to his office at 10:10. Door was open, he was out. I waited about 10 minutes, and he came back, and invited me in. I introduced myself and we shook hands. Before I spoke he asked me what year of law school I was in, I said first. I told him I wanted to talk to him about David Belin, and he immediately said that Ford, not the Panel, had appointed Belin. I gave him the letters I had for him, which he opened and read there to himself. He seemed to fully read the covering letter to him, in which I state that I hoped to deliver it personally to him, and then he skimmed the copy of the letter to Belin, spending much more time on the first page, and barely going over the next two, but looking at each, and browsing the 2nd. He looked up at me expressionless and said, "Well, you've delivered the letter to me", as if to conclude our meeting. I said I'd hoped he would want to hear more, that I had extensive knowledge of Belin's work for the WC. He asked me how I got into the whole thing, and I said I'd been doing research for over 7 years, and explained how I got to correspond with Belin. I told him I felt this was a serious matter, that the panel had great public responsibilities, at which point he said, yes, the panel does have great responsibilities. I said that based on the record it was a fact that Belin had uttered falsehoods, published them, covered up information, and couldn't be trusted. I said I wanted to see something done and if the panel wouldn't do anything I still wanted the public to have the information at least so they could judge Belin's qualifications. I said I was inexperienced in getting action from the gov't or press, but that I was trying to get something done because it was such a serious matter. He repeated that Ford had appointed Belin and said that he personally has never met Belin and hadn't even heard of him until last Monday. I asked if Ford's appointment was unconditional, that the panel couldn't do anything, and he said yes. I asked if the panel could object and he said it could. I assured him I had no malice and felt this was something which the public interest demanded, that I had great respect for my country and the law but that I was disillusioned by all the dishonesty and deception I'd seen in gov't and wanted to do something about it. He was silent. After about 15 seconds of silence, I thanked him for his time and left. He didn't say goodbye.

I was struck by his demeanor; he put up a stone wall. He never smiled, never changed his serious expression. He spoke blandly, said few words, and volunteered nothing. His coldness and unfriendliness, lack of any hospitality, etc. was obvious and seemed deliberate to me. All he volunteered were 2 questions: what year student was I and how did I get into this (the assassination). Perhaps it is relevant to mention that, except when he read the letters, he never moved, and he kept contact with my eyes at all times, including in the period of silence.

Howard Roffman
Howard Roffman, written 5:00 pm, 1/16/75, from handwritten notes prepared immediately after leaving Griswold's office.

