

CIA Probers Keep Secrets From Staff

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By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate Committee on Intelligence Operations has decided to keep secrets even from its own investigators.

In a stringent display of security precautions, the committee has adopted a "need-to-know" rule similar to that employed by the Central Intelligence Agency, whose operations are under investigation.

In addition, the committee, headed by Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), has decided to make secret automatically any documents or records that its staff receives, even if unclassified to begin with.

This practice would prohibit the committee staff from making public even the news stories they clip unless authorized to do so by a majority vote of the 10-member committee.

"The reason for this is the committee wants to retain control over the information to be released," Church declared in an interview. "It's not for the purpose of preventing publication, but to retain control."

Making public unclassified documents turned over by either the administration or by other sources, Church also maintained, might not give

"the true picture" of the issues involved.

"The committee wants to keep things in context," he said.

Under the separate "need-to-know" rule, Senate committee staff lawyers and investigators assigned to dig into a particular aspect of the CIA's operations — or of any other intelligence agency under investigation — will be kept in the dark about other secret activities of the same agency.

They will be brought up to date about operations outside their limited spheres of investigation only if their superiors decide they need to know about them in carrying out their own inquiries.

Church has repeatedly promised as open and as public an investigation as possible without jeopardizing national security. He has also said on several occasions that the committee insists there be "no strings attached" to any of the documents it gets and is reserving the right to make them public eventually.

The committee's intentions, however, are apparently much more modest. Church acknowl-

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edged that White House aides expressed concern over the "no strings attached" pronouncements at a recent meeting. They were assured that senatorial restraint would be exercised in handling sensitive information.

"I explained to them that the committee reserved the right to decide, but that before any information was made public, we would confer with them and secure from them a statement of their own position," Church said. He said he also explained that the committee does not intend at this point to make "raw documents" public.

"That seemed to satisfy them," he said.

The Senate inquiry, and a parallel but still-to-be started House investigation, were prompted by allegations and disclosures of illegal or improper domestic spying operations by the CIA.

The Senate committee's rules were held back from reporters for more than a month on the grounds that they were still being refined. They were finally adopted April 9, but first became available to the press only about three weeks after that.

Under the rules, all senators on the committee are to have access to all of its records, but even they may examine "sensitive or classified documents" only at secure reading facilities. Of the approximately 50-member staff, only staff director William G. Miller, chief counsel Fritz Schwarz and minority counsel Curtis R. Smothers are auto-

matically entitled to all classified information that may be developed.

Sen. Church said it has also been agreed, at least in principle, that some top secret disclosures may be limited to him and to Sen. John G. Tower (R-Tex.), the ranking minority member, if their colleagues agree. "That has not arisen yet," Church said.