

House Intelligence Unit Names Staff Director

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The House Committee on Intelligence named a staff director yesterday by an 8-to-2 vote after a spirited debate over the committee's determination to curb excessive government surveillance and other covert activities.

The new staff director, chosen after a three-month search that encountered repeated snags, is A. Searle Field, 30, formerly a key aide to Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.) in the Senate's investigation of the Watergate scandal.

Chairman Lucien N. Nedzi (D-Mich.), clearly relieved at the prospect of getting the investigation started, vowed that the committee would conduct a thorough inquiry "without concern about external carping and pressures."

The appointment came after unsuccessful efforts by Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.) first to name former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and then to postpone any selection until a candidate with more government experience could be found.

Reps. Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.) and Don Edwards (D-Calif.) joined Harrington in voting for Clark, but Edwards then switched to the majority side, saying that he recognized "the votes aren't here for Ramsey."

Dellums called Field "very bright and very competent," but said he feared the young staff director would be no match for such men as former Central Intelligence Agency Director Richard Helms and others within the CIA and the FBI.

"This hopefully will not be a charade, but it will be if we don't realize we're dealing with people who are trained to dis-inform, to lie, to falsify," Dellums said. "When you place him [Fields] against the Helms of the world, the FBI directors of the world... the potential for slaughter is obvious."

The top graduate in his 1972 law school class at Georgetown University, Field

was sponsored by Rep. Robert N. Giaino (D-Conn.), the committee's second-ranking Democrat, and nominated by Rep. James V. Stanton (D-Ohio), who said he saw no need to downgrade the appointment in advance.

"Those who contemplate failure constantly achieve it," Stanton protested. "I am not one who falls in that school."

He said he did not think that Clark, who became an outspoken antiwar advocate after leaving the Justice Department, would instill confidence that the inquiry was being conducted in "a bipartisan and effective manner."

Currently representing plaintiffs in civil suits stemming from the 1970 killings at Kent State University, Clark was interviewed by Democratic members of the committee Monday, but he would not have been able to take the House assignment until late June.

In nominating him, Harrington emphasized that he was offering the former Attorney General more as a "symbolic" candidate than a real one, to illustrate his contention that a more qualified director could be found. Harrington also renewed his past criticisms of Nedzi, telling him yesterday that his appointment as chairman was "a symbol of failed oversight."

Nedzi, who was already chairman of the House Armed Services subcommittee in charge of CIA oversight when the new committee was formed, ignored the barb.

Rep. Morgan Murphy (D-Ill.) said he felt the committee was being rushed into a selection because of "pressure from the press," but added that he considered it vital to start pressing for the top-secret documents the committee will need in the investigation.

Voting for Field were Nedzi, Giaino, Stanton, Edwards, Murphy and the committee's three Republicans, Rep. Robert McClory (Ill.), David C.

Treen (La.) and Robert W. Kasten Jr. (Wis.)

Field, who left Weicker's staff last year to resume the vice presidency of a family construction business in Connecticut, said he will begin immediately on putting together a staff of 30 to 40. He said he hoped the inquiry would restore public confidence in legitimate security and intelligence functions and at the same time dispel fears "that our freedoms are being compromised."

Nedzi told reporters that he expects the staff will be split up along agency lines, with one team assigned to the CIA, another to the FBI and so forth. In that way, he said he hoped to avoid the potential pitfalls of the parallel Senate investigation, whose four task forces will be keeping secrets from one another even though several may be investigating various aspects of the same agency.

"There's a possibility that something may fall between the cracks," Nedzi said of the Senate inquiry. He said House CIA investigators will be privy to all the CIA information the committee obtains.

The House chairman also said he feels the committee's most important job will be the recommendations it makes to prevent future abuses. Of what has happened in the past, he said, "I think you can assume the worst."