

Church Probers Find 'Gaps' in CIA Records

5/1/75
By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate committee on intelligence operations has found unexplained "gaps" in Central Intelligence Agency records requested by committee investigators, it was disclosed yesterday.

Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) said the committee has not come up with an explanation for the missing documents concerning secret CIA operations, but plans to pursue the issue with agency officials.

"There is some indication that there are gaps in the record" of CIA activities in the United States and abroad, Church told reporters at a breakfast meeting.

Former CIA Director Richard Helms, it was learned last year, ordered the destruction of various tape recordings of conversations in his office. The destruction was ordered shortly before Helms resigned as CIA director in January, 1973.

The CIA maintained it was a routine destruction of unnecessary records, but Sen. H. Howard Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.), a member of the Senate Watergate committee and the Church committee, contested the claim and said that telephone conversations with former President Nixon and top White House officials were apparently among the recordings that were destroyed.

The destruction occurred a

week after Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (Mont.) wrote Helms to ask that any Watergate-related evidence be retained.

Church said the apparently missing records he had in mind were not covered by the 1973 destruction by Helms, but he would not elaborate.

Looking ahead to public hearings in July on the CIA's domestic operations, Church said he thinks it vital that CIA spywork involving U.S. citizens "come out in all its particularity. This is the most insidious of threats."

He added that the committee intends to investigate CIA foreign operations "in executive session" with only certain details made public.

Asked about rumors and doubts surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963, Church said the committee will confine itself to the degree of cooperation the CIA and the FBI gave the Warren Commission and to the question of whether either withheld important information.

If further investigation seems warranted, Church said, the committee "will say so" in its final report.

The committee also is investigating allegations of CIA involvement in assassination plots against foreign leaders such as Cuban Premier Fidel Castro and heard secret testimony on that issue Thursday from CIA Director William E. Colby.

Meanwhile, Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) has told United Press International that Castro has offered "documentation" to prove that

the CIA was involved in plots to kill him.

McGovern said he did not examine the documentation on his trip to Cuba earlier this month, but he said Castro told him that there had been "about 100" attempts on his life or the lives of other high-ranking Cuban officials.

"He told me that he was prepared to provide documentation that the CIA had been involved in some of those attempts, and then he quickly added: 'Not all of them,' but some of them," UPI quoted McGovern as saying. McGovern said he would recommend that the Rockefeller commission or the Church committee pursue the issue.