

Colby Will Lift CIA Secrecy Pledge To Cooperate With Senate Probe

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The head of the Central Intelligence Agency agreed to cooperate with Senate investigators yesterday by lifting the pledge of secrecy that the CIA requires of all its employees.

CIA Director William E. Colby promised the waiver at a closed meeting on Capitol Hill yesterday morning with Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), chairman of the newly formed Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Operations, and Sen. John G. Tower (R-Tex.), the committee's ranking Republican.

Church told reporters afterwards he was satisfied that Colby plans to provide all the information the committee needs for its investigation of CIA activities, including charges that the agency engaged in illegal domestic spying on American citizens.

The CIA requires everyone it hires to sign an agreement promising not to disclose any information they might obtain concerning "intelligence sources and methods" without the agency's authorization.

Church emphasized that Colby agreed to drop the requirement only for the "purposes of this Senate inquiry." However, a similar waiver probably will be provided to a new House committee that has also been assigned to investigate the government's intelligence agencies.

Later in the day, in a luncheon speech at the National Press Club, Church voiced doubts that the White House inquiry into the CIA's activities, under a commission headed by Vice President Rockefeller, could resolve the

allegations that have been made against the agency.

"The executive branch cannot, with sufficient credibility, investigate itself," Church declared. He said he hoped it would wind up its work soon "and make its records available, as a starting point, for the more comprehensive congressional investigations to come."

Promising a "muted and restrained" inquiry and not "a television extravaganza," Church said he intends at the same time to make public as much information as possible during the course of the investigation.

"Our rule of thumb," the senator said, "will be to hold public hearings whenever we can and closed hearings whenever we must." He indicated that the committee would pursue allegations of illegal or improper activities by the CIA and other agencies in public, while conducting its examination of "legitimate national security" operations largely in executive session.

The committee chairman called the investigation long

overdue, pointing out that neither the CIA nor the FBI, which also will be scrutinized, have ever undergone a thorough congressional inquiry.

Promising strict precautions against news leaks, Church said any committee staffer who discloses unauthorized information "will be fired on the spot."

In response to a question, he acknowledged that there was no way to control what senators on the committee might say, but said they were all mindful of the need for restraint.