

Kissinger CIA Group Didn't Meet

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Nearly 40 covert Central Intelligence Agency operations were approved between 1972 and 1974 without a single meeting of the special White House group that was ostensibly in charge of them, it was disclosed yesterday.

Testifying before the House intelligence committee, a recently retired State Department intelligence expert said the National Security Council's so-called Forty Committee did not have a single formal session between April of 1972 and December of 1974.

The witness, James R. Gardner, who served for nine years as the State Department's liaison officer with the Forty Committee, said the

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committee's chairman, Henry A. Kissinger, apparently preferred to approve or at times reject the secret operations after "telephone votes," without face-to-face meetings at which their merits could be debated and discussed.

"Sometimes he felt he just didn't have the time for it and anyway, he knew what he wanted to be done," Gardner added later to reporters. He likened the Forty Committee under Kissinger to "Lincoln's Cabinet" — with Kissinger's vote being the only one that counts.

Covert operations, which Gardner said used to be far more numerous than their recent 20-per-year average, have ranged all the way from the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion to paying off politicians in Chile and raising a sunken Soviet submarine from the Pacific Ocean floor.

The Forty Committee, which has existed under various names since the mid-

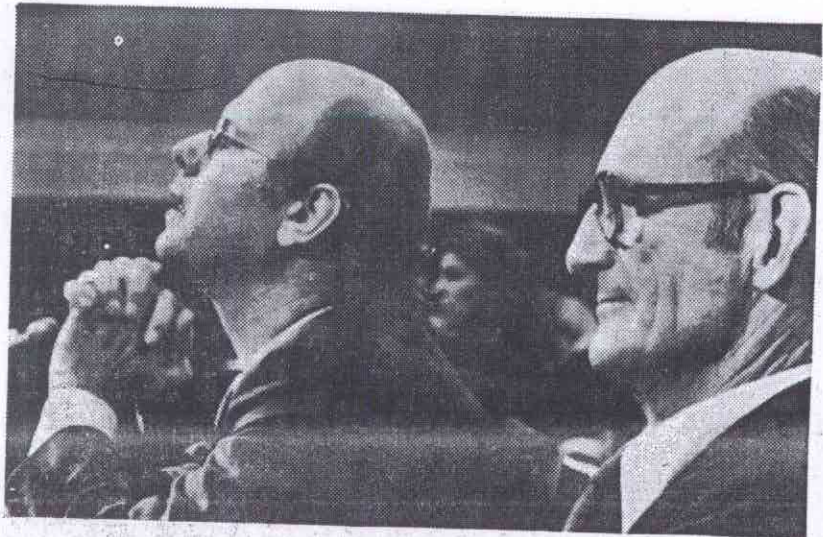
50s, has also been in charge of certain secret intelligence-gathering activities such as U-2 spy flights. Kissinger is chairman by virtue of his post as special assistant to the President for national security affairs, a job he retained after his appointment in 1973 as Secretary of State.

Other members are CIA Director William E. Colby, Deputy Secretary of Defense William P. Clements Jr., Gen. George S. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph J. Sisco.

Gardner, an officer of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research who became liaison officer for secret CIA operations in 1966, said that the approximately 40 covert operations authorized between 1972 and 1974 were all subject to "telephone votes" by Forty Committee members, but that except for Kissinger, committee members were often not given detailed explanations of why the programs had been approved.

The official records of the Forty Committee, Gardner added, also became far less detailed under Kissinger than they had been in 1966. Also, he told the Pike committee, the number of covert operations the CIA undertakes around the world has "fallen steadily," even "radically," since 1966.

Although each department and agency represented on the Forty Committee submits



By James K.W. Atherton—The Washington Post
William Watts, left, and James R. Gardner testifying at Pike committee hearing.

memos detailing its views on each proposed secret operation, Gardner said he had no way of telling how carefully those views have been considered in recent years. By the time he retired, he said, the official minutes of

the Forty Committee were "merely the statement of a decision" and plainly "inadequate."

Kissinger is to testify before the committee today. Both Gardner and William Watts, a former staff secretary for the

National Security Council, told the committee yesterday that they felt Kissinger's many roles have often inhibited serious consideration within the government of views that oppose his own.