

Jury Starts Deliberations in

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Jurors in the Iran-contra trial of former CIA spy chief Clair E. George began deliberations yesterday after receiving final instructions from the court.

U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth told the jurors they would be sequestered at a nearby hotel. Federal marshals will monitor their mail, reading materials, television programs and telephone calls.

"We're at a prayerful stage," chief defense lawyer Richard A. Hibey told well-wishers, most of them retired spies who have been attending the trial since the jury was sworn in four weeks ago.

George, who was the CIA's deputy director for operations from 1984 to 1987, has been charged with two counts of perjury, four counts of lying to congressional commit-

tees and a federal grand jury and three counts of obstructing congressional and grand jury investigations of the Iran-contra scandal.

In a feisty three-day stint on the witness stand, George maintained that he had been "set up" for indictment by "goddamned hypocrites" in Congress who were opposed to the Reagan administration's policy in Nicaragua. George complained that he was being prosecuted for trying to cover up what the lawmakers already knew—namely, that then-White House aide Oliver L. North was secretly helping to arm the contra rebels in Nicaragua.

Lamberth yesterday rejected that as a legitimate excuse for a not guilty verdict.

"It is simply not a defense to any count that the congressional committee or the grand jury may have had independent infor-

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mation from which it knew, suspected or could have known, that the statements or information provided by defendant were incorrect," the judge told the jury.

For foreman, the jurors chose Steven C. Kirk, 38, a fund-raising and management consultant. After several hours of deliberations, they spotted a discrepancy between the indictment and the verdict form Lamberth had given them for the third count and sent a note to the judge.

The count accused George of obstruction because of three orders he had allegedly given a top aide, Alan D. Fiers, in preparing for an Oct. 10, 1986, hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. But the verdict form Lamberth provided listed only two of the instructions.

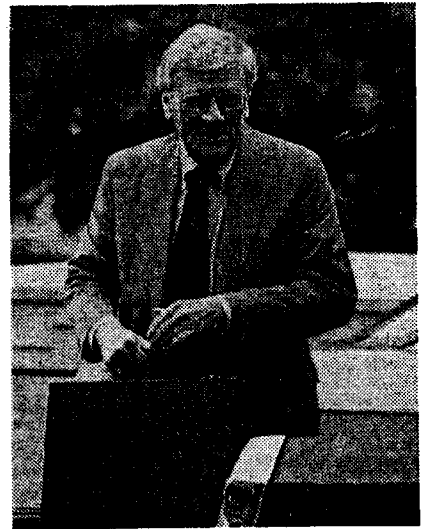
Omitted was space for a verdict on whether George had illegally directed Fiers to de-

lete from a proposed opening statement to the committee an account of how a humanitarian aid program for the contras, authorized by Congress in 1985, had evolved into an ostensibly private operation to provide the rebels with military aid from the Ilopango air base in El Salvador.

Lamberth ordered a hearing in open court to discuss the problem when the jurors sent him a second note about 15 minutes after the first, saying: "We have figured it out. . . . Correct us if we are wrong."

The judge told the jury he had decided George could not be accused of a crime for having left something out of an opening statement to a congressional committee.

Lamberth commended the jurors for an "excellent question" and told them, "You figured it out correctly." The jurors are expected to resume deliberations today.



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Clair E. George arrives at court, where jurors received final instructions in Iran-contra case.