

Jury Decides Some Counts In George Case

Judge Bars Release Of 'Partial Verdict'

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

Jurors at the retrial of former CIA spy chief Clair E. George reached what they called "a partial verdict" yesterday, but were told to keep trying to resolve the entire seven-count indictment.

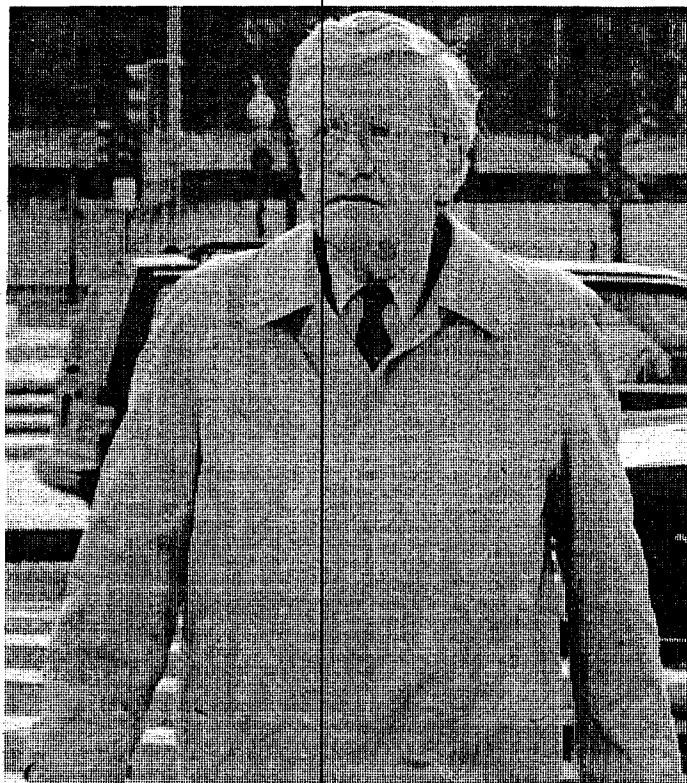
Details of the partial verdict were not disclosed. U.S. District Court Judge Royce C. Lamberth told the jurors to "hold onto" their decision in light of news media interest in the case.

Lamberth said he did not want to have to sequester them at this late stage, a step he suggested he would be compelled to take if the partial verdict were made public.

George, 62, went on trial for the second time Oct. 19 on six counts of lying to Congress and a federal grand jury about his knowledge of the Iran-contra scandal, and one count of obstructing the grand jury's investigation. The first trial, which began in late July, ended in a mistrial Aug. 26 when jurors said they were unable to reach a unanimous verdict on any count after six days of deliberations.

The second jury went home last evening after six days of deliberations interrupted by a long Thanksgiving holiday. Its members have yet to report any deadlock on any of the counts before them.

George's lawyers and prosecutors agreed the partial verdict should be kept secret, but disagreed about how to handle it. Chief prosecutor Craig E. Gillen wanted the judge to take it from the jury



Clair E. George arrives at courthouse. Judge ordered further jury deliberations.

and keep it under seal. But defense attorney Richard Hibey protested, saying that it should be left with the jurors in case they change their minds in the course of further deliberations.

Judge Lamberth told the jurors at a brief session in open court that "it would be better if you simply hold onto your verdict" until reaching a decision on all counts.

Jury foreman Benjamin Vaughan sent out two notes during the day, the first suggesting a debate among jurors over two counts accusing George of lying before two congressional committees about whether he had any "contact" with retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard V. Secord, a key middleman in the Iran-contra affair.

"We would like a dictionary for the definition of the word 'contact,'" Vaughan said in the note.

While the judge was consulting with lawyers for both sides about the first note, Vaughan sent out another, announcing that "we the jury have reached a partial verdict."

Before instructing the jurors to resume deliberations, Lamberth gave them an abbreviated definition of "contact," saying it means "association or relationship" or "direct experience through the senses" or "a condition or an instance of meeting, connecting or communicating."

Secord testified that he met George once—in the White House Situation Room at a January 1986 meeting called to discuss direct U.S. arms sales to Iran. But George told the Senate intelligence committee on Dec. 3, 1986, that he "never laid eyes" on Secord. He testified at his trial that this statement was "a mistake" which he later tried to rectify.