

House Panel Affirms Some Allegations Against CIA

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A House intelligence committee report yesterday affirmed a previous White House conclusion that CIA contacts in Guatemala were involved in serious human rights violations with the agency's knowledge and their involvement was improperly kept from Congress in the early 1990s.

But the committee also rejected allegations by Sen. Robert G. Torricelli (D-N.J.) of CIA complicity in two murders in Guatemala and said Torricelli's public accusations had undermined the agency's ability to recruit some covert agents elsewhere.

Torricelli stood by his allegations in a statement issued yesterday in response to the report by the House Select Committee on Intelligence, slated to be officially released today.

The committee said it found "no reason to dispute" a conclusion last June by the White House Intelligence Oversight Board that "several CIA assets were credibly alleged to have ordered, planned or participated in serious human rights violations such as assassination, extrajudicial execution, torture, or

kidnapping while they were assets—and . . . the CIA was contemporaneously aware of many of these allegations."

The term "asset" refers to a CIA informant.

The report represents a sharp criticism of the CIA from a Republican-controlled committee that has tended to be more sympathetic to CIA arguments that it must deal with unsavory individuals to get good intelligence.

But it supports a decision by then-CIA Director John M. Deutch to require that the benefits of dealing with unsavory informants be weighed by senior CIA officials against the potential political and diplomatic costs arising from such an association.

A majority of the committee said it could find no evidence to support allegations made in 1995 by then-Rep. Torricelli that a paid CIA informant, Guatemalan Col. Julio Roberto Alpirez, was implicated in the 1990 abduction and killing of American innkeeper Michael DeVine, then living in Guatemala, and in the 1992 abduction, torture and killing of Efraim Bamaca Velasquez, a Guatemalan leftist guerrilla.

The majority also said Torricelli had wrongly alleged that two Army intelligence officers assigned to the National Security Agency purged records about the intelligence community's involvement in the killings.

Minority views printed at the end of the committee report agreed with most of the committee's findings critical of the CIA but challenged the rejection of Torricelli's charges. The minority views were signed by four committee Democrats.

The committee unanimously concluded that Torricelli should have made his concerns known in secret to prevent disclosure of classified information. By identifying Alpirez as a paid CIA informant, the report said, Torricelli sent a chilling message to any foreign officials considering aiding the CIA that their identities might be disclosed.

Torricelli spokesman Jim Jordan said subsequent investigations have upheld the "general accuracy" of Torricelli's charges. Recent reports that the CIA had conducted a worldwide "scrub" to eliminate informants involved in crimes against Americans vindicated the senator, Jordan said.