

Senate to set up spy panel

Committee would oversee U.S. espionage

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Washington — Responding to nearly 18 months of revelations of improprieties by United States intelligence agencies, the Senate voted 72 to 22 yesterday to set up a new permanent committee that will oversee all intelligence activities at home and abroad.

The action came immediately after the Senate rejected an effort by leading members of the Armed Services Committee to exclude all military intelligence from the jurisdiction of the new committee. As a result, the Armed Services Committee and the new intelligence committee will share authority over military intelligence.

In addition, the new 15-member committee will have exclusive jurisdiction over the Central Intelligence Agency, which previously reported to the Armed Services, Appropriations and Foreign Relations committees. Moreover, the new committee will have the authority to approve all intelligence budgets on an annual basis.

Within a minute after the final vote was announced, Senator Walter F. Mondale (D., Minn.) appeared in the Senate press gallery to call the action "historic" and to let it be known that he "probably will" apply for membership on the powerful new committee.

The members of the committee will be appointed by the Senate majority and minority leaders, with two members coming from each of the four committees that previously had some intelligence oversight (Foreign Relations, Armed Services, Appropriations and Judiciary) and seven members coming from the rest of the Senate. Once appointed, the 15 committee members will elect

their own chairman.

A spokesman for the CIA said last night the agency would have no comment on the Senate's action. But he pointed out, "We've taken the position up there [on Capitol Hill] that the fewer committees we report to, the better."

Earlier in the day, Senator John C. Stennis (D., Miss.) and Senator John G. Tower (R., Texas) had urged their colleagues to support their amendment to exclude military intelligence from the new committee as a matter of what Mr. Stennis called "common sense."

Senator Tower said he was particularly concerned about the possibility of intelligence leaks from the new committee. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which just completed investigating intelligence activities, "disclosed too

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much," Mr. Tower asserted. "We have damaged our credibility with the intelligence services of foreign nations."

But the chairman of the outgoing committee, Senator Frank Church (D., Idaho), said the amendment by Mr. Stennis and Mr. Tower would "gut the [new] committee," and when the vote came, the amendment failed, 63 to 31.

Senator Charles McC. Mathias, Jr. (R., Md.) and Senator J. Glenn Beall, Jr. (R., Md.) both voted for the establishment of the new committee and against the Stennis-Tower amendment.

The public examination of intelligence activities began in December, 1974, when the New York Times reported that the CIA—which is banned by law from carrying out any internal police or security functions in

the U.S.—had maintained files on thousands of Americans and engaged in domestic spying.

Subsequent investigations by the Rockefeller Commission and on Capitol Hill confirmed these allegations. They also established that the CIA had opened mail and infiltrated domestic political groups in the U.S. and had plotted assassinations of foreign leaders in covert operations overseas.

The action taken by the Senate yesterday alters only the way in which the Senate will oversee intelligence agencies. It does not change or prevent any particular kinds of intelligence practices.

Covert operations, for example, would still be permitted. Yesterday, Senator Barry Goldwater (R., Ariz.) told his fellow senators, "By covert actions properly done, we prevent wars, we don't get into them."

The new committee will share authority with the Armed Services Committee over the Defense Department's Defense Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency. It will also share jurisdiction with the Senate Judiciary Committee over the intelligence functions of the FBI.

The committee will have the power to disclose intelligence information, but it must give the President time to object, and if he does so, the issue will be put up to the whole Senate to decide.

The principal architects of the new committee were the Senate majority leader, Mike Mansfield (D., Mont.); the majority whip, Senator Robert C. Byrd (D., W. Va.), and Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff (D., Conn.) and Senator Howard W. Cannon (D., Nev.), who worked out the details 10 days ago.