

Inouye Urges CIA Prohibition On Using Journalists, Clergy

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Government intelligence agencies would be prohibited from employing journalists and clergymen as covert agents under legislation the Senate Intelligence Committee plans to submit to Congress, the panel's chairman said yesterday.

Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii) said the prohibition would be included in the legislative charter the committee is drafting for the intelligence agencies.

It would be the first statutory authority that sets out the responsibilities and scope of government intelligence agencies.

In a report to the Senate, Inouye also said the committee intends to write into the charter provisions that would help the courts deal with cases involving classified information.

Former CIA Director Richard Helms recently pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge that he failed to testify fully before a Senate committee when asked about covert CIA activities in Chile. The misdemeanor charge resulted from extended negotiations between the Justice Department and Helms' attorney, during which a significant factor was the contention that if Helms were brought to trial on a more serious charge sensitive national security information would be disclosed.

Helms said he withheld information from the committee because disclosing it would have violated the secrecy oath he took when he joined the CIA.

"If Mr. Helms should be subject to public blame, as some contend, then others in higher authority in both the executive branch and the Congress should also share the blame," Inouye said.

"There is no question that a number of abuses of power, mistakes in judgment and failures by the intelligence agencies have harmed the United States," he said.

"In almost every instance, the abuses that have been revealed were a result of direction from above, including presidents and secretaries of state. Further, in almost every instance, some members of both houses of Congress assigned the duty of oversight were knowledgeable about these activities."

The committee was set up last year on recommendation of a special panel that probed alleged intelligence abuses. The new committee was given authority to oversee the operations of intelligence agencies required to notify it of clandestine activities.

Inouye said the intelligence agencies "are now functioning under strict guidelines." He added that the quality of the work is good "and shows every sign of becoming better."

Among the abuses disclosed was the employment of journalists and clergymen as sources of intelligence information.

"I have come to the conclusion that no intelligence agency should be involved with working journalists," Inouye said. "We in America value a free and open press. This deeply held value must be reflected in legislation defining the limits upon the use of journalists by the intelligence community."

Inouye also repeated his intention to step down as chairman of the Senate committee. He said he was doing so because "I think it is vital to ensure that the chairman be objective and impartial."

"I believe one reason for the failure of congressional oversight in the past years was that too close a relationship developed between the intelligence agencies and their overseers."