

C.I.A. PLAN DISCLOSED IN GLOMAR INCIDENT

Agency Thought of Citing Articles on Submarine-Raising Mission to Get Tough Secrecy Laws

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 25—Officials of the Central Intelligence Agency once considered capitalizing on the publication of details of the secret mission of the Glomar Explorer, a submarine-retrieval ship, to show why Congress should toughen secrecy laws, according to agency documents.

This suggestion was included in an internal option paper prepared as the former director of the agency, William E. Colby, was telling publishers and editorial officials of nearly a dozen major news organizations that disclosure of any details would result in grave damage to the national security.

"A disclosure of this sort would serve no useful purpose in the international arena; it would on the other hand provide the director with a case in point for his attempts to assure an adequately strong act of Congress, in order that valid intelligence operations might be protected in the future," the paper said.

"It would recognize that this program, of itself, is no longer useful, as it is only as a covert program that valuable information can be obtained.

Future Benefits Cited

"The nation would therefore be cutting its losses on this one program, with an aim of overall future benefits."

The option was opposed by contractors working with the C.I.A., presumably including Howard R. Hughes's Summa Corporation, the Global Marine Company and Lockheed Inc., the document said. The option was not adopted.

This memorandum, dated Feb. 26, 1975, was one of several hundred documents obtained from the C.I.A. under the Freedom of Information Act in a lawsuit brought by Harriet Ann Phillippi, a former reporter for Rolling Stone magazine who is now with an Atlanta television station. Miss Phillippi is represented by Mark H. Lynch, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union.

The heavily censored documents trace efforts by the C.I.A. to halt publication of articles about the Glomar's effort to recover a Soviet submarine sunk in 16,000 feet of water 70 miles northwest of Hawaii. Although officials have never publicly stated why the United States sought to recover a 15-year-old Soviet submarine, top intelligence officials have said privately that it provided cryptographic secrets, design information and a chance to study Soviet missile equipment that made it a valuable prize.

Despite the C.I.A.'s efforts, articles about the Glomar were published by several news organizations on the night of March 18, 1975.

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Before that, the documents disclosed that the C.I.A.:

¶ Apparently dug into the background of two unnamed West Coast reporters, describing one as having a "drinking problem" and quoting a source who called the reporter a "journalistic prostitute." It speculated that the other reporter would hold the article if given a background briefing.

¶ Suggested to its officials that there was a "fine difference" between reacting to Congressional inquiries and questions from the press. It ruled out giving the press "falsehoods" but said that the agency did not have to tell the press "all the truth."

¶ Obtained conditional agreements not to publish the article from editors or publishers of The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, Newsweek magazine, Time magazine, CBS, Parade magazine and several other news agencies.

A Telephone Conversation

One of the first reporters known to have obtained hints of the Glomar mission was Seymour M. Hersh of The New York Times, who was investigating whether the program, which later was estimated to have cost \$250 million, was wasteful or inefficient.

In 1974, Mr. Hersh was dissuaded by New York Times editors from pressing on with the investigation.

About a year later, after The Los Angeles Times published part of the story and Mr. Hersh informed Mr. Colby that he was resuming his pursuit of it, Mr. Colby told him by telephone: "You have been first class about this thing for a long time. You remember I came down and talked to you about it one time. You have been damned good."

"It is not a question of being good," Mr. Hersh replied. "I am a citizen, too." But he continued to press the agency to make the material public either as a "positive" article favorable to its reputation or in recognition that the information was leaking out.

At the same time, both Mr. Colby and Henry A. Kissinger, then Secretary of State, were pressing editors of The New York Times to withhold publication. The documents also indicate that Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, publisher of The New York Times, was briefed on the matter.