

CIA Accused of Delaying Diplomatic History

Release of Decades-Old Documents Remains on Hold, Panel Claims

Print 8/9/97

Associated Press

A government-appointed panel of historians has accused the CIA of lagging in declassifying decades-old documents to make an official U.S. diplomatic history "the target of ridicule and scorn."

In a report to Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, the panel said several volumes of its comprehensive diplomatic history remain on hold because the CIA has failed to release information no longer deemed secret.

The Advisory Committee on Historical and Diplomatic Documentation, a group appointed by the State Department, said the problem "must be laid at the doorstep of the intelligence community, primarily the Central Intelligence Agency."

The report noted the panel was established in the late 1980s after an "embarrassment" arising from publication of an official history on U.S.

Iranian relations that made no mention of well-known CIA covert activity in Iran during the 1950s.

In unusually blunt language, the panel said the CIA has released partial information on only two of the 11 covert activities it acknowledges from the Cold War, those concerning Guatemala and British Guiana.

"For the editors of the [diplomatic history] series to pretend such actions and/or policies did not happen makes the volumes and the Department of State the target of ridicule and scorn," the panel reported.

The panel's report, written by its chairman, Prof. Warren F. Kimball, was dated June 26 and is to be made public next week on a State Department Internet web site.

Mark Mansfield, spokesman for the CIA, said yesterday that the panel's criticisms may be outdated because, "over the last few years there

has been a revolution in the way intelligence records are researched for declassification."

New procedures are resulting in increasing the release of previously classified material, Mansfield said. But he noted that even documents relating to CIA operations from the 1950s may contain sensitive information that must remain classified.

Albright has not responded to the panel's report, according to the State Department's history office.

The report comes weeks after the CIA acknowledged it had destroyed some records of covert activities undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s for the purpose of clearing out shelf space, not to conceal its activities.

The agency recently touted its release of documents relating to Guatemala in the late 1950s, but the panel said the material represented only "a small portion" of the total record.