

Ex-Agent Claims Turner Lied About Promise to Submit Book to the CIA

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Former Central Intelligence Agency agent Frank Snepp accused Director Stansfield Turner of "an outright lie" yesterday in claiming that Snepp promised in writing to clear his book about the fall of Saigon with the agency.

"The truth is that the CIA wanted me to sign a second pledge of secrecy and my letter to Turner was to inquire why that was necessary if the first one was valid," Snepp said in Chicago.

The CIA says Snepp, a senior intelligence analyst in Saigon at the time of the Communist takeover in 1975, broke his oath of secrecy by writing the book without the agency's clearance, and reneged on a promise to Turner to let it be examined for possible disclosures of classified material.

A CIA spokesman, Dennis Berend, said yesterday that Snepp's promise to Turner was oral, not written, and that it was made in the presence of witnesses.

Turner said on Capitol Hill earlier this week that Snepp had "let me down" by breaking a promise to allow his proposed book to be examined by the agency.

On Wednesday the CIA chief elaborated on this in a signed article in the Washington Post. Turner said Snepp never challenged the validity of the secrecy oath he signed as a condition of CIA employment. And in a meeting with Snepp May 17, Turner said Snepp "explicitly promised me that he would fulfill his written obligation to provide us his manuscript for review. More than that, he reaffirmed this obligation a few days later in writing."

Snepp said that was not true, and that his letter to Turner after the meeting merely inquired as to the necessity for a second secrecy oath. He said he would not have signed any such document because "I was afraid the agency was trying to catch me in a legal entanglement."

Berend said Turner, in The Post article, was not referring to Snepp's "personal promise" as having been put in writing, but that the former agent, in his letter to Turner, had "reaffirmed the obligation of the secrecy oath, and that it was valid."