

CIA history is dominated by

WASHINGTON (AP) — Covert operations have dominated CIA activities throughout most of its 29-year history at the expense of its intended job of intelligence collection and analysis, according to a Senate intelligence committee staff report.

The emphasis on covert operations, encouraged by U.S. presidents, resulted in extreme secrecy which allowed such abuses as assassination plots against foreign leaders and drug tests on unsuspecting human guinea pigs to occur, the report added.

The 107-page report entitled "History of the Central Intelligence Agency" was released Sunday as one of the last in a series of volumes issued by the intelligence committee.

The panel, which officially went out of business at the end of last month, is still preparing a report on the performance of the CIA and FBI in connection with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

When it was created in 1947, the CIA "was intended to produce national intelligence estimates independent of

policy biases and to provide direction over the other intelligence organizations to minimize duplication of efforts," the report said. However, "within two years of its creation, the CIA assumed functions very different from its principal mission, becoming a competing producer of current intelligence and a covert operational instrument in the American cold war offensive," it said.

During the 1950s under Allen Dulles the CIA spent more than half its annual budget on covert operations against what policymakers believed was a

worldwide Soviet threat, according to the report. Dulles, brother of then-Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and a trusted adviser to President Eisenhower, "was absorbed in the day-to-day details of (covert) operations," the report said.

"Dulles' personal influence and the fact of his brother's position lent enormous weight to any proposal that originated within the agency," the report said. In addition, early "successes" such as the overthrow of leftist governments in Iran and Guatemala

covert operations

inspired confidence in the CIA, according to the report.

The clandestine service became a branch apart from the rest of the agency exempt from normal review procedures, according to the report. Scrutiny by Congress "was more perfunctory than rigorous," it added.

Extreme secrecy also affected the quality of intelligence since analysts were denied access to raw data collected by undercover agents in the field, according to the report.

During the 1960s, "paramilitary operations became the dominant CIA clandestine activity" with the agency waging secret wars in Cuba, Laos and Vietnam, it said. Spending on clandestine projects continued to consume more than half the agency budget, it added.

The number of covert operations began to decline near the end of the 1960s, partly as a result of the exposure by Ramparts magazine of CIA funds of student groups and private foundations, the report said. The decline continued into the 1970s as U.S. policy toward Russia changed from confrontation to detente, according to the report.

William Colby, who headed the agency from 1973 to 1975, sought to end the isolation of the clandestine service by forcing it to work with other branches of the CIA. When newspaper stories began to expose questionable CIA activities "the closed system that had defined and controlled U.S. intelligence activities and that had left decisions in the hands of a small group of individuals began to break down," the report said.