

GOP Senators Grill Gates Critics

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Partisan Split Opens at Hearings on CIA Post

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Senate Republicans, evidently stung by the damage done to Robert M. Gates, turned hearings on his nomination to be CIA director into a partisan battleground yesterday with a sharp attack on his critics.

The move brought a testy response from several Democrats on the Senate intelligence committee, reflecting a possible erosion of the near solid, bipartisan support Gates seemed to enjoy after his opening testimony two weeks ago.

Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.), who said he had been planning to vote for Gates, announced he was now inclined to vote against him. After hearing more testimony from former CIA analysts that Gates had distorted intelligence reports and suppressed dissent as a high-ranking CIA official in the 1980s, Hollings made clear that as far as he was concerned, the burden of proof had shifted.

"Unless he [Gates] changes my mind, after hearing him, I wouldn't vote for him, because I don't think it's in the best interests of the Central Intelligence Agency," Hollings said.

Gates is scheduled to return today for questioning in both open and closed sessions. One subject certain to come up is a special CIA report delivered to the committee yesterday on intercepted conversations between officials of the Marxist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and members of Congress and their aides, especially in 1985-86. The committee has been told that Gates may have been one of fewer than a dozen people in government who were aware of the reported conversations.

The key issue underlying debate

at yesterday's hearing was the standards that should be applied in deciding whether a candidate is qualified for high government office. In their questioning, committee Republicans treated the confirmation process as though it were a criminal trial, suggesting that Gates should be confirmed unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt of the allegations against him. They frequently scolded witnesses for offering criticisms of Gates that were not based on first-hand knowledge.

Sen. Warren B. Rudman (R-N.H.), Gates's chief defender on the panel, led the attack, questioning one former CIA analyst's sense of fairness

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and accusing another of making false accusations against Gates at a closed-door hearing last week.

Rudman's first target, Harold P. Ford, a former senior intelligence officer who joined the CIA in 1950 and worked closely with Gates in the 1980s, told the committee Tuesday that he had reluctantly concluded in recent weeks that Gates does not deserve to be confirmed. Calling this a "painful" decision, he said he made it after listening to what he described as Gates's dubious testimony about the Iran-contra scandal, after reading recently declassified documents suggesting Gates had slanted intelligence reporting and ignored dissenting opinions, and after talking with past and present CIA officials he respects.

Rudman asked Ford why he hadn't just gone to Gates, "who you've known for a long time, and say, 'Bob, I am very troubled by things and I want to hear your side of these accusations.'"

"I didn't go to anyone, sir, except my own conscience," Ford replied. "I saw no need to go to Mr. Gates."

Both Rudman and later Sen. John H. Chafee (R-R.I.) also accused Ford of relying on "hearsay charges" rather than his own dealings with Gates during the time they worked together. Chafee pointed out that Ford, by his own account, had no direct knowledge of Gates skewing national intelligence estimates.

"[T]his is not a court of law and the questions of hearsay and evidence are a little different," Ford protested. "I'm an intelligence officer, and for years people have

been coming to me with complaints from the DDI (director of intelligence), people who I respect. I consider those, in my calculus, evidence When people have come to me and told me, and shown me papers and drafts that they have written within the DDI that were killed, that to me is evidence."

Stiffer, at times bruising, interrogation was directed at Gates's most outspoken critic, Melvin A. Goodman, a former senior CIA Soviet analyst who said he was removed from his job as a division chief in 1985 on Gates's orders for being "too soft" about the dangers of the Soviet threat in the Third World.

Rudman criticized Goodman for making charges against Gates in committee staff interviews and in last week's closed session that Goodman did not make in public Tuesday when he accused Gates of distorting Soviet intelligence analyses to please policymakers, especially on matters that then-CIA head William J. Casey cared most about.

"Most disturbing," Rudman said, were Goodman's statements at the closed hearing that William H. Webster, who took over as CIA director in 1987 and retired last summer, was "quite aware" that the CIA was being politicized and had even ordered two of his aides to quietly investigate this but "make sure that Bob Gates didn't know this."

"Mr. Goodman, when you said that, the hackles and the goosebumps raised on me, because if that was true, I had a problem with his nomination," Rudman said. He demanded that Goodman explain how he knew "what was inside Bill Webster's head in that he withheld [word of the investigation] from Gates."

Goodman at first responded that he had gotten a phone call from

Mark Matthews, a young lawyer working for Webster, who told him that he was looking into "issues of politicization" at Webster's behest. Goodman also said he knew that two other analysts had met with Matthews about politicization and the analysts were worried that Gates, then CIA deputy director, would find out about the talk.

"Some caution was taken with regard to the analysts arriving and leaving after that session," Goodman said, noting that Gates's office was next door to Webster's.

After a sharp exchange, Rudman forced Goodman to admit that his statement about Gates being shut out had been "only an impression." Rudman zeroed in, reading from a letter Webster sent last Friday saying he did not "authorize anyone working for me to investigate allegations of politicization" outside the normal inspector general's process.

"No one was ever at any time instructed to keep any information or the fact of any activity from" Gates, Webster said.

Rudman told Goodman "you have been presented with incontrovertible evidence that a statement you made under oath, believing it was true—I'll give you that—was false. And you will not now state to this committee that you were wrong. And I am disappointed, frankly."

Hollings, who followed Rudman, expressed exasperation over the Republican senator's prosecutorial style.

"This isn't a murder case where you just get it just right," Hollings said, adding that he was "more interested in the morale out there [at the CIA] and specifically the job at hand" than in rigorous cross-examination of witnesses.

Hollings said that Webster's aide,

Matthews, told the committee in letter Monday that Matthews did meet with two CIA analysts about problems in the intelligence directorate and that one of them "expressed concern" that Gates might learn of the conversation. Matthews said he promised that "I would keep their names to myself." He said "perhaps this is the genesis of Mr. Goodman's testimony" about something being kept from Gates.

While tempers flared at the hearing, President Bush told reporters, "I'm not worried" about the Gates nomination. "I think he'll have his chance to clear the record up and frankly, I don't know where these people have been all these years with all their anxiety they felt about these [disputed intelligence] estimates."

Referring to his own one-year tenure as CIA director in 1975-76, Bush added that "I also know, having been out there, that you have a wide array of views amongst analysts and somebody has to be responsible for the final product."

The most moving testimony at yesterday's hearing came from Jennifer L. Gaudemans, who worked as a CIA intelligence analyst from 1983 to 1989 when she quit the agency for what she described as the fresh air of the State Department. As a junior analyst in the Soviet division, Gaudemans said at the outset of her testimony that while she could not speak of direct contact with Gates, "I can speak to the times when his name was invoked and the perceptions of those who felt the impact of his influence." She said it was chilling.

"Many, including myself, hold the view that Mr. Gates had certain people removed because of their consistent unwillingness to comply with his analytical line," she said.

Glaudemans said the single most important example of Gates's politicization of intelligence in which she was involved came with testimony Gates delivered on Jan. 21, 1987, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as it was delving into the Iran-contra scandal then just unfolding. She said she prepared the intelligence material for Gates to use at the hearing, including details that refuted a controversial May 1985 national intelligence estimate on Iran which claimed that the Soviets were preparing to make inroads into Iran.

Instead of using the analysis she provided that the Soviets were in poor position to gain influence in Iran, she said Gates "reiterated the judgment of the May '85 memo . . . and I believe left [the Foreign Relations] committee with the wrong understanding of CIA's analysis."

Sen. John Danforth (R-Mo.) took on the task of cross-examining the soft-spoken Glaudemans and, in contrast to Rudman's prosecutorial style, tried gently to get her to admit that her charges of politicization were "deduced and not from anything that Gates personally said or wrote or any communications he had with you."



JENNIFER L. GLAUDEMANS
... says Gates was chilling influence

Glaudemans agreed that part of her perception of Gates came from "an atmosphere" around the office. But she emphasized that the "the most profound thing that had an impact on me was his [1987] testimony where I think he misrepresented what was in the record of finished intelligence. That was something I read of his and had a lot of direct knowledge about."

Staff writer Benjamin Weiser and staff researcher Lucy Shackelford contributed to this report.