

Senate Committee to Air Allegations Of Slanted Intelligence Under Gates

Confirmation Hearings on CIA Nominee Will Extend Into Next Week

9/26/91

By George Lardner Jr.
and Benjamin Weiser
Washington Post Staff Writers

Senate hearings on the nomination of Robert M. Gates to be CIA director will stretch into a third week in order provide a public airing of allegations raised yesterday in a closed-door session that some CIA intelligence analyses were slanted under Gates's supervision.

The Senate intelligence committee had hoped to conclude the confirmation hearings this week. But late yesterday, committee Chairman David L. Boren (D-Okla.) and Vice Chairman Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) announced the hearings would resume Tuesday with a public replay of yesterday's testimony on the alleged politicization of intelligence analyses under Gates. The nominee is then expected to return for questioning in closed and open sessions.

Five analysts who worked under Gates at the CIA testified yesterday, though there were general refusals by senators, their staffs and witnesses to comment afterward about the presentations.

Two of the witnesses—Melvin A. Goodman, a former senior Soviet analyst and chief of the Soviet-Third World Division, and Jennifer Glau-demans, a former Soviet analyst—had been expected to be highly critical of Gates. According to sources who had reviewed their prepared testimony, the witnesses intended to allege that Gates manipulated intelligence, suppressed dissent and allowed operations to unduly influence the analysis.

Several other witnesses—including Lawrence Gershwin, intelligence officer for strategic programs, Douglas MacEachin, arms control adviser to the director, and Hal Ford, a retired analyst—had been expected to support Gates.

Committee spokesman Zach Mes-sitte said that Republicans and Democrats felt what the analysts had to say was important enough to be de-

The first part of yesterday's session was devoted to a discussion of secret U.S. intelligence cooperation with Iraq that occurred in the 1980s when Iraq was at war with Iran. Sen. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.), a committee member, has been particularly interested in pursuing the issue and told reporters during a break in the hearings yesterday that "one of the more troubling questions is whether Mr. Gates was involved in belated and incomplete disclosures to Congress."

But Boren said after the session that the testimony had failed to turn up evidence to support the argument that the intelligence sharing with Iraq had been illegal or that Gates had withheld details from Congress.

The covert assistance to Iraq, which included data from highly sensitive U.S. reconnaissance satellites transmitted over a direct Washington-Baghdad link, was first disclosed in a Washington Post report on Dec. 15, 1986, the day Gates took over as acting CIA director from the ailing William J. Casey. As a result of the article, Gates was quickly confronted with demands from Capitol Hill for an explanation of what was going on and why members of Congress had not been informed.

Gates said in testimony last week that he had considered the arrangement with Iraq a traditional "liaison relationship," suggesting that it did not require a formal presidential finding or notification to Congress. The CIA witnesses who appeared before the committee yesterday—director of covert operations Thomas A. Twetten, general counsel Elizabeth R. Rindskopf, and inspector general Frederick P. Hitz—reportedly took the same position.

While Bradley is pursuing the matter as illustrative of Gates's attitude toward advising Congress, other committee members favorable to the nomination regard the issue as largely technical.

By law, a CIA operation overseas that has as its goal more than the collection of intelligence requires a presidential authorization in the form of a "finding." A finding describes what is to be gained by the operation and generally how it is to be accomplished. Also by law, Congress must be informed of each finding. Lawmakers also want to be kept up to date when the goals or the manner of such an operation change.

The intelligence assistance to Iraq began in 1984, and some of it was reportedly used to help plan mustard gas attacks against Iranian ground troops. In August 1986, The Post reported, the CIA installed a direct link to Baghdad to give the Iraqis better and more timely satellite information.

Congress, sources said, was not told of the assistance until December 1986 when CIA representatives briefed the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence following The Post article. Gates himself, the sources said, briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January 1987.

Bradley, in guarded references during public sessions, has maintained that the arrangement went far beyond a normal intelligence sharing relationship and has suggested there may be important aspects of it that were not disclosed to Congress. Other sources said the assistance to the Iraqis was one of Casey's pet projects and may even have been stretched beyond the National Security Council directives that authorized it.

Bradley said he intends to ask Gates more questions in a later session. Other senators said they had yet to hear anything about the arrangement with Iraq that startled them.

"I've heard nothing this morning damaging to the Gates nomination," Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) told reporters. "I'm presently inclined to vote for Gates to be CIA chief."

Gates has the strong support of the committee's seven Republicans as well as Boren. Some Republicans have been predicting a 13 to 2 vote for Gates, with only Bradley and Sen. Howard M. Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) opposing confirmation. But other Democrats such as Sens. Sam Nunn (Ga.) and Dennis DeConcini (Ariz.) said they have yet to make up their minds.

"I was impressed by his [Gates's] presentation [before the committee] last week," DeConcini told reporters. "But I really am troubled by his knowledge or the lack thereof." He added that the committee's Republicans "have closed ranks, they've made a decision to support him, no matter what."

Staff writer Walter Pincus contributed to this report.

classified and discussed in an open session.

Gates, who moved up through the ranks at CIA as a Soviet analyst, was appointed deputy director for intelligence in 1982. He was promoted to deputy director of the agency in 1986. Since 1989, he has served as deputy national security adviser to President Bush.