

Gates Strikes Back At Critics in CIA

Charges of Politicizing Agency 'Ridiculous'

By Walter Pincus
and George Lardner Jr.
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Robert M. Gates went on the attack yesterday against charges that he systematically slanted intelligence reports in the 1980s, saying his critics had maligned "not just my integrity" but the entire intelligence community.

Nearing the end of a turbulent third week of hearings on his nomination as CIA director, Gates told the Senate intelligence committee that he had been watching and reading the allegations against him with "some pain and anger."

Testifying for most of the day in calm, imperturbable tones that seemed to belie the dismay he said he felt, Gates offered a point-by-point rebuttal of many of complaints voiced earlier in the week by three former CIA analysts. But even as he spoke, sworn statements containing more charges and countercharges poured into the record.

The 48-year-old career intelligence officer acknowledged that he may have stirred widespread resentments as a high-ranking CIA official during the Reagan administration because "I was appointed to change things."

But he said the contention, voiced by his most outspoken critic, that he had engaged in a systematic effort "to politicize and corrupt the analytical process" implied that hundreds of other analysts and managers, including highly regarded professionals such as former deputy directors Bobby Ray Inman and John McMahon, "either acquiesced in it, ignored it, somehow missed it, or joined it."

"And that's ridiculous," Gates said.

In disputing a raft of charges—ranging from his role in a controversial assessment suggesting Soviet involvement in the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II, to a later-discredited intelligence estimate that was used to justify

secret U.S. arms sales to Iran—Gates said he relied on documents the CIA had compiled for him in recent days. Now President Bush's deputy national security adviser, he said he had no independent memory of many of the details.

"It's not because I have selective amnesia," Gates said under questioning by Sen. John Glenn (D-
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■ Excerpts of yesterday's opening statement by Gates. Page A9

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Ohio). "It's that I did a major data dump when I left CIA [in 1989]. There was no reason to keep all that information in my mind. I never expected to go back to CIA. And that was all the past."

Republican members of the committee praised his account as cogent and convincing. But there was still considerable skepticism, and some outright opposition, on the part of several Democrats.

The hearing, which will continue today, ended with an emotional exchange between Gates and Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.) who announced after listening to Gates that he intended to vote against him.

"Bill Casey ran an opinionated intelligence agency and you did just too good a job for Bill Casey," Hollings said. "You're a bright fella . . . but you're part of the problem being put up to solve the problem." Casey was CIA director during most of the Reagan administration.

Hollings went on to say it would take Gates four to five years to overcome the burden of his past, "but we don't have that much time"

to solve the immediate problems facing the U.S. intelligence community.

"You're a very valuable fellow at the White House," Hollings said. "If I were Bush, I'd get you in [as CIA director] and I'd be in clover."

For a moment, Hollings's outburst left Gates speechless. Then he said, "I think the record shows that the CIA was nobody's toady in the 1980s."

Gates said he believed he could overcome "the feelings" against him at the agency and said "there is a lot" of support for him, too.

"I can pull [the agency] through this because of my relationship with the president . . . Inman and McMahon," who testified on his behalf, "should count for something," Gates said. Besides, he pointed out, he was "only Casey's deputy for six months."

Gates's reminder of Bush's strong backing ignited Hollings again.

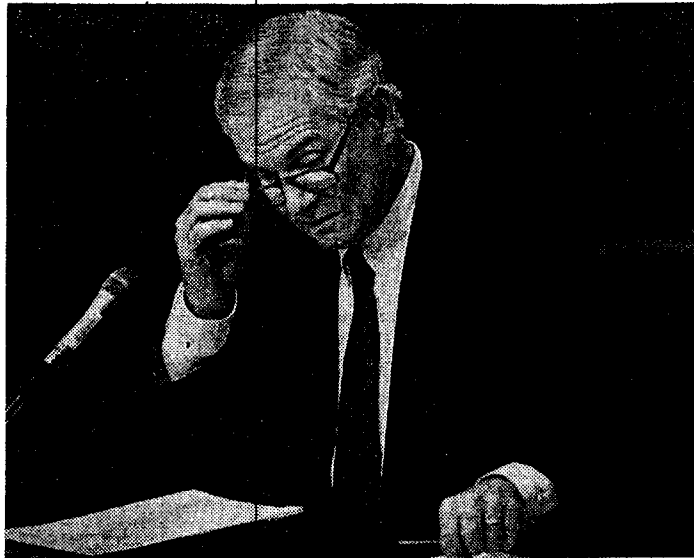
"The director of CIA," he belted, "doesn't belong to Congress or the president . . . That crowd over there, [White House chief of staff John H.] Sununu and the president think they own you."

Obviously stung by Hollings's remarks, Gates protested, "President Bush would fire me if he thought I slanted an [intelligence] estimate. He wants it with the bark off."

Showing emotion for the first time since the hearings began Sept. 16, Gates said, "At the end of August, I became qualified to retire. The fact is I have no problem laying my job on the line."

The White House yesterday continued to express confidence that Gates will be confirmed, although officials there said they had no commitment on the length of the hearings or an eventual vote in the full Senate.

"Be assured, the president supports Bob Gates in every way possible," White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said. "He will do whatever he needs to do in support of this nomination. He thinks he's an outstanding candidate, and he's gone through a very rigorous kind of scrutiny here, and we are confident that he will be found to be an



BY RAY LUSTIG—THE WASHINGTON POST

Robert M. Gates offers point-by-point rebuttal to allegations at Senate hearing.

excellent candidate."

Commenting on Gates's testimony, Fitzwater said, "He certainly defended himself in a very straightforward and blunt way, as I think anybody would be expected to when they have been challenged the way Bob has."

The hearing will resume today with more questioning in public, and then a closed session to discuss intelligence-sharing with Iraq during its war with Iran, allegations of slanted intelligence on Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, and the use of electronic intercepts of conversations between officials of the Marxist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and members of Congress

and their aides during the mid-1980s.

The committee is not scheduled to vote on the nomination until Oct. 18, after the Columbus Day recess. Chairman David L. Boren (D-Okla.) said that before any vote, the panel will first meet to determine "whether there's anything else we need to do, any loose ends to tie up."

Sen. Warren B. Rudman (R-N.H.), the nominee's chief defender, told Gates he had probably been too heavy-handed in dealing with subordinates at the agency, especially in criticisms of the work of junior analysts. But Rudman angrily denounced the three former CIA officers who testified against Gates Tuesday and Wednesday and defended his prosecutorial interrogation of two of them. All three, he charged, "relied on second-hand hearsay."

"It is true that this is not a murder trial," Rudman said. "But what the committee witnessed yesterday was an attempted assassination, an assassination of this man's character . . . McCarthyism, pure and simple."

But Sen. Howard M. Metzen-

baum (D-Ohio) said he was disappointed by the contrast between Gates's detailed statement yesterday and his written responses last June to questions posed by the committee. Instead of doing his homework then, Metzenbaum said, Gates had dismissed more than 30 of the queries by saying he didn't recall and more than 40 by saying he didn't know.

Metzenbaum, like Hollings, said he was struck by the fact that so many people, including longtime friends and colleagues of Gates as well as analysts still at CIA who submitted sworn statements, were willing to testify against him. Metzenbaum said that was remarkable for a confirmation proceeding, especially one that Gates was still likely to win.

Gates agreed this was not normal, but said it was also "not normal" in recent years for a president to nominate a career CIA official with a past papered by thousands of documents.

"It has caused me some real pain that old friends like Hal Ford and Mel Goodman have come forward," Gates said of two former senior CIA

officials who testified against him. He said being named CIA director "is not a popularity contest. I sure as hell wouldn't win one at CIA."

The bulk of the morning session was devoted to an opening statement by Gates about what appears to be the biggest stumbling block to his confirmation: the politicization charges.

Gates listed 20 separate allegations, all of which were raised by Goodman, and some by Ford and former CIA analyst Jennifer Glau-demans, earlier this week.

For instance, Gates said he had been accused of introducing into CIA publications, without supporting evidence, a report that the Soviets used chemical weapons in Afghanistan. He said there was only "one item in the National Intelligence Daily" mentioning that possibility, in the summer of 1985, and "I was out of town at the time . . . I had nothing to do with it."

Gates also was accused of exaggerating the successes of contra rebels in Nicaragua. He pointed out that the estimates in 1985 and 1986 cited "serious contra problems" and forecast "further declines in effectiveness."

Gates also had been accused of sending a 1985 intelligence assessment making "The Case for Soviet Involvement" in the 1981 attempt to kill Pope John Paul II to the White House with a transmittal letter describing it as "the best-balanced and most comprehensive work we have ever done on this subject."

In his testimony yesterday, Gates said that he believed someone else drafted the letter for his signature, and that it contained the caveat that "questions remain—and probably always will . . ."

Gates also had been accused of allowing George Cave, a retired CIA operations officer involved in the Iran arms sales operation, to provide his own reports to the White House and submit his own analysis for inclusion in the highly sensitive "President's Daily Brief."

Goodman charged this amounted to providing CIA "misinformation" and perhaps "disinformation" to the president.

"This was a particularly reckless and pernicious charge," he said. Cave has stated he only briefed the NSC once—on Nov. 25, 1986—at Casey's direction, Gates said. That was the day that Attorney General Edwin Meese III publicly disclosed the diversion of arms sales profits from Iran to the contras.

Gates said Cave also doesn't remember ever writing anything for the President's Daily Brief, and that no such article by Cave can be located in the publication.

An allegation that he was involved in a May 1985 estimate that altered, without evidence, earlier CIA conclusions about Soviet failures to gain influence in Iran also was false, Gates said.

The May 1985 estimate, he said, simply focused on "new, specific evidence of Iranian interests at that time in improving relations with the U.S.S.R."

CIA Soviet analysts had testified that the Soviets actually had lowered their interest in Tehran. The analysts said their views were cut out of the estimate by Graham Fuller, the national intelligence officer in charge of putting the document together. Gates said he had approved Fuller's language in advance, but said he did not know that Fuller had invoked Gates's name at a meeting with analysts to choke off their objections.

Casey and Gates also were accused in earlier testimony of ignoring changes in the Soviet Union and thus failing to recognize that a real revolution was taking place there. In response yesterday, Gates read from an October 1986 memo he wrote while deputy CIA director, asking the director of intelligence to peruse all sorts of new inquiries because Gates was worried "that we are not being creative enough in the way we are analyzing internal Soviet developments."