

Ford calls for return of intelligence data

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Forcing a possible constitutional confrontation, President Ford cut off House Intelligence Committee access to U.S. secrets Friday because of its disclosure of four classified words. He asked the committee to return all secret documents in its possession.

A committee source said the four words show that U.S. intelligence agencies knew that Egyptian communications security was tightened just before the 1973 Middle East war.

Asked if the words "and greater communication security" was the phrase that U.S. intelligence authorities did not want made public, the source

said, "I can't tell you you're wrong. You won't be embarrassed by saying that."

The disputed words are in five sentences the committee released Thursday from U.S. intelligence reports showing that right up to the day the 1973 Arab-Israeli war broke out, U.S. intelligence agencies indicated there would be no war.

In one, the Defense Intelligence Agency said the day the war broke out Oct. 6, 1973, there were no indications that Egypt intended to or was prepared to fight Israel.

The DIA summary said, "Mobilization of some personnel, increased readiness of isolated units, and greater

communication security are all assessed as parts of the (military) exercise routine."

Asked if the confrontation over Congress and the President's control of U.S. secrets was worth it, Central Intelligence Agency Director William E. Colby told newsmen: "I certainly think these four words are worth it."

Colby, who met with reporters at CIA headquarters, said the four words contained in inaccurate U.S. intelligence reports on the 1973 Middle East war disclosed foreign communications intelligence activity. The words were in

See DATA, page A-8

Data

(Continued From Page A-1)

material released by the committee Thursday.

Refusing to identify the four words, Colby said the country involved — apparently Egypt or Syria — could determine how well U.S. intelligence had been able to learn its secrets at the time.

Chairman Otis G. Pike, D.N.Y., said Ford's action at least temporarily closed down the committee's investigation. Colby was asked if he intends to stop that investigation.

"We're going to stop it until we can work out an arrangement where we have some assurance that there won't be any revelations without our discussing it together," he said.

Asked why he would not identify the four words when foreign intelligence obviously would spot them, Colby replied: "Well, I don't want to help them."

Ford's message was delivered to the committee by Asst. Atty. Gen. Rex E. Lee who said the committee had done "irreparable harm" with four words released Thursday from inaccurate U.S. intelligence reports on the 1973 Mideast war.

"The President's responsibility," Lee told the committee, "for the national security and foreign relations of the United States leaves him no alternative but to request the immediate return of all classified information previously

provided this committee."

Further, Lee said, the President has directed that "all agencies respectfully decline to furnish material until the committee satisfactorily alters its position."

Pike responded: "In other words the executive branch is telling this committee of the House it may not continue to operate."

Ford wants the committee to agree not to release secret information, in this case the four words, over the objections of U.S. intelligence officials.

Committee members and intelligence officials reached agreement during a closed session Thursday afternoon on nearly all of the approximately 300 words of intelligence estimates that were publicly disclosed.

By a vote of 6 to 3 the committee decided to release them, including the four words, over intelligence objections that the four-word phrase would reveal intelligence sources and methods.

Asked after the meeting if Ford's actions would close down the committee's operations, Pike said, "It certainly does temporarily."

"There is no way on earth you can investigate the intelligence activities of the United States of America without access to classified information," he said.

Pike said the committee will decide what to do next week.

But he said the administration knows the committee does not have time to do that because of its mandate to finish its work and report back to the full House by next Jan. 31.