

Colby Scolds Hill For Data Leaks

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By Laurence Stern

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Every new covert program reported to Congress in 1975 leaked to the press, William E. Colby said yesterday in his swan song congressional testimony ending a tumultuous 24-month term as Central Intelligence Agency director.

Colby's final statement called for stronger legislative restraints to safeguard an increased flow of national security secrets to Capitol Hill.

He also charged that press and congressional investigations of the past year have consisted primarily "only of public repetition of the private reviews by the intelligence community of its own activities."

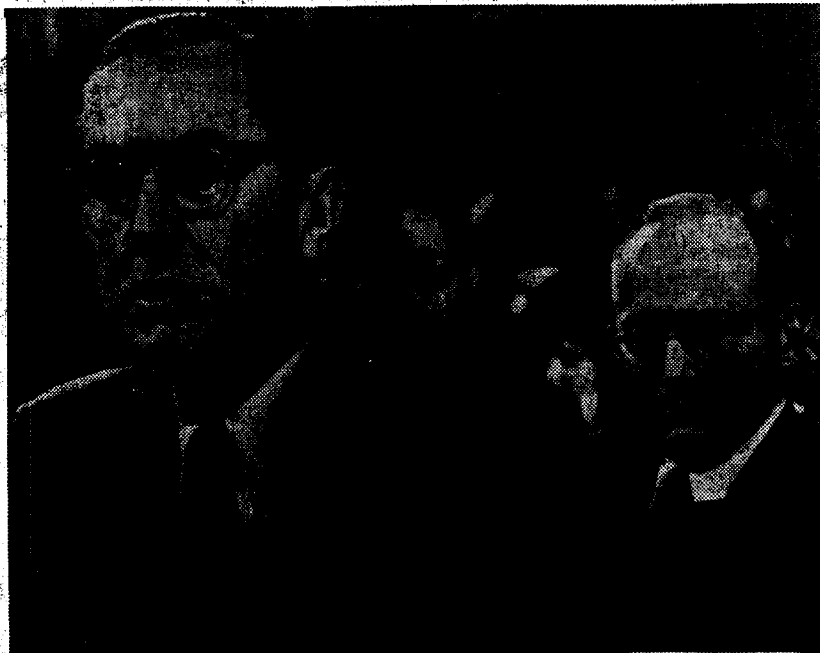
"CIA's collation of a list of some questionable activities in the domestic field was used

as the basis for sensational charges of a massive illegal domestic intelligence system," Colby told the Senate Government Operations Committee.

Colby, who is expected to leave his post upon confirmation next week of George Bush as his successor, scolded committees of Congress for not keeping faith with commitments to the White House to withhold certain operations from public disclosure.

Although Colby described himself as a supporter of more effective congressional oversight of the CIA and other intelligence agencies, the cutting edge of his testimony was devoted to the need for stricter policing of intelligence secrets.

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By James K.W. the Washington Post

Colby testifies before Government Operations Committee as McGeorge Bundy, right, waits.

Hill Leaks Assailed By Colby

OVERSIGHT, From A1

He pointed out that since new disclosure legislation was enacted at the end of 1974 the CIA has briefed eight congressional committees in "a timely manner" on all covert operation proposals.

"It was stressed and understood on all sides that these matters were sensitive, secret operations whose exposure would cause political damage to our foreign policy as well as frustration to the operations concerned.

"The result of the year's experience, in my mind, is clear. Every one of the new projects that were subjected to this process has leaked into the public domain." Covert operations in Angola, Italy and Iraq were leaked to the press.

Colby called for repeal of the disclosure provision and its replacement by a procedure that would ensure greater secrecy.

Original reports of CIA abuses in December, 1974, were based on what is now referred to as "the family jewels" — a compilation of irregularities gathered within the CIA at the direction of former Director James R. Schlesinger.

"In truth," said Colby, "our misdeeds were few and far between, as the final Rockefeller commission report reveals."

He said that "sweeping allegations that assassinations are part of our function" were made on the basis of the CIA's investigation into assassination schemes against foreign leaders.

"We never assassinated anyone," Colby declared. "And our own post-mortems of our performance in various intelligence situations have been selectively exposed to

give a totally erroneous impression of continued failures of American intelligence."

"In fact," he proclaimed, "we have the best intelligence service in the world. But we cannot keep it that way if every one of its corrective efforts is trumpeted to its enemies."

Questioned afterward by Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) on

whether presidents had known of various assassination plans described in the report of the Senate intelligence committee, Colby was less definite.

On the basis of the record, the CIA director asserted, it was possible to make a case that presidents did know that assassination plans were being considered against foreign leaders but were "protected from the details" or, conversely, that they did not know.

He also acknowledged that the Forty Committee, the President's covert action planning body, did not know the specifics of some assassination plans.

The Senate committee's report documented the CIA's role in assassination plans directed at Presidents Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam, Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Premier Fidel Castro in Cuba and Chilean military chief Rene Schneider.

In the case of Castro, numerous attempts were launched under CIA auspices to kill him but were foiled or mistimed. Schneider was killed in a kidnaping by a group other than the CIA-supported one that was trying to carry off the kidnaping, according to the Senate report.

Colby pointed out that he had in 1973 issued directives against such assassination

activity and said he would not object to a specific legislative prohibition against assassinations in peacetime, as suggested by Sen. Abraham Ribicoff (D-Conn.).

The director was accorded a friendly reception by the committee, including an extended tribute by Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.) acclaiming Colby as "a great American and a great human being."

Colby responded by describing the Illinois Republican as "one of our best customers — in the use of agency material."

"As a customer," Percy said, "I must say that the price is right and you haven't overcharged at all."

Colby told the Senate panel, which is drawing up oversight legislation to govern the intelligence community, that he is proposing a new measure imposing criminal sanctions on those in the executive branch who "voluntarily undertake the obligation of secrecy as an aspect of their employment." The proposal, he said, would apply equally to congressional staff members who obtain access to intelligence secrets.

Colby also said that the fewer members of Congress who are briefed on covert operations, the better. He urged the creation of "the minimum number" of committees to oversee covert

operations, to replace the present eight.

In an admonition to Congress, Colby said that the CIA could not continue to conduct secret operations "if congressmen confirm to inquiring newsmen that indeed they were given a secret briefing on a covert operation instead of refusing to comment.

"Neither can we run secret operations if individual congressmen announce that there are three other operations which have not yet been disclosed, thereby stimulating every investigative reporter in Washington....

"And we cannot conduct covert operations if a committee puts out a report which refers to an activity which leaves out the name of the country or individual concerned, but gives enough evidence for any amateur sleuth to identify it beyond a shadow of a doubt in time for its identification to be carried with the news story of the report."

Colby said, in an interview after his testimony, that he felt the political atmosphere in Congress had become friendlier to the intelligence community in recent weeks — in large measure as a result of the assassination of CIA station chief Richard S. Welch in Athens on Dec. 23.