

White House

Defends CIA Probe Panel

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

The White House yesterday rejected criticism of the newly appointed commission to investigate the Central Intelligence Agency and said its members had no connections with the agency that would hamper them in their inquiry.

Press secretary Ron Nessen also said the White House would not try to prevent CIA officials from testifying before congressional committees that plan to study charges that the agency spied on Americans in this country, which would be a violation of the law.

Several committees have indicated a desire to study the allegations. Sen. John J. Sparkman (D-Ala.), who is to be chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, yesterday asked for prompt CIA compliance with a new law restricting covert operations overseas.

Sparkman wrote to CIA Director William E. Colby asking him to identify any covert operations and report on them to the Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs committees.

The 1974 foreign aid act, which Mr. Ford signed last month, cuts off funds for all CIA activities abroad except those "intended solely for obtaining necessary intelligence."

The only exceptions can be operations the President finds important to national security and reports to the committees.

Praising the CIA for the objectivity of reports to the committee in recent years, Sparkman added: "It is, however, essential that public and congressional confidence in the agency, now shaken by recent disclosures, be restored as promptly as possible."

Rep. Lucien Nedzi (D-Mich.), chairman of the House subcommittee on intelligence, said he welcomed the appointment of the presidential commission but doubted it could accomplish much in its 90-day life.

Sen. Richard S. Schweiker (R-Pa.) insisted that Congress

must conduct its own inquiry. He said he doubted whether a presidential panel "dominated by those oriented to government and the military-intelligence establishment can render an independent judgement."

When Nessen was asked about criticism in Congress and elsewhere that the eight-member commission Mr. Ford named Sunday fails to represent a broad cross-section of opinion, he replied that he had seen complaints that the membership was too favorable to the agency and also that it did not know enough about it to carry out an investigation.

"All of the people have been checked," he said. "They would not have been picked if they had any connection with the CIA which would hamper them."

Asked how the President chose the group, Nessen said Mr. Ford basically chose them on his own. "Most of the names came from him," he said, denying reports that former Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) or former Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski had been considered.

In reply to questions, Nessen said that Vice President Rockefeller, the chairman, has "some knowledge of how the CIA operates which would be

See PRESIDENT, A6, Col. 4

PRESIDENT, From A1

helpful." Rockefeller has been a member of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board since 1968.

Nessen said that the President picked the Vice President to head the panel because he is Mr. Ford's "highest and closest adviser in the government."

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) complained that Rockefeller will be in a position to investigate "an agency for which he has been at least partially responsible" because of his membership in the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

Proxmire called the presidential panel "one-sided in that it contains no champion of civil liberties."

Nessen replied that none of the members was against civil liberties and that some members had notable records in the field.

A Library of Congress report on Rockefeller's national security record after he was nominated to be Vice President said he "supported measures to counteract any threat

of internal subversion" and has "demonstrated his concern that internal security measures not violate due process of law."

An informed source said the Criminal Division of the Justice Department has begun an investigation to determine whether there have been violations of law in connection with the alleged CIA activities.

The National Women's Political Caucus, a women's activist group, yesterday sent a letter

to President Ford faulting him for failing to appoint women and minorities to his citizens panel investigating the CIA.

In another action, the President named a panel to advise him on ways to deal with the problem of illegal aliens in the country. The Cabinet-level committee "will develop, coordinate and present to me policy issues that cut across agency lines to provide better programs for dealing with this national problem," Mr. Ford said.