

SUNDAY WXPost JAN 16 1975 JAN 16 1975

Colby Admits CIA

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The Central Intelligence Agency admitted for the first time yesterday that its officers have spied on American journalists and political dissenters, opened the mail of private citizens, planted informers inside domestic protest groups and assembled the agency's own secret files on more than 10,000 Americans.

CIA Director William E. Colby, in a public recital unprecedented in the agency's 27-year history, recounted the various controversial episodes in gen-

eral terms, insisting that they were all limited in scope and all in the past.

A separate, secret memorandum indicates that Colby has privately told senators that the CIA's surveillance in 1971 and 1972 of five citizens suspected of obtaining classified data included at least two journalists and an author—columnist Jack Anderson, Washington Post reporter Michael Getler, and Victor Marchetti, a former CIA official whose recently published book exposed many CIA secrets.

The director denied that the intelligence agency had ever conducted

“massive” and “illegal” intelligence-gathering aimed at American citizens. Nevertheless, his public statement confirmed major elements of the revelations first made last month in an article in *The New York Times*.

Among other revelations, Colby reported that the agency was responsible for three “surreptitious entries” of private property, all aimed at employees or former employees suspected of security breaches. All occurred in the Washington area from 1966 to 1971.

The agency also wiretapped the telephones of American residents on 21 oc-

Spying in U.S.

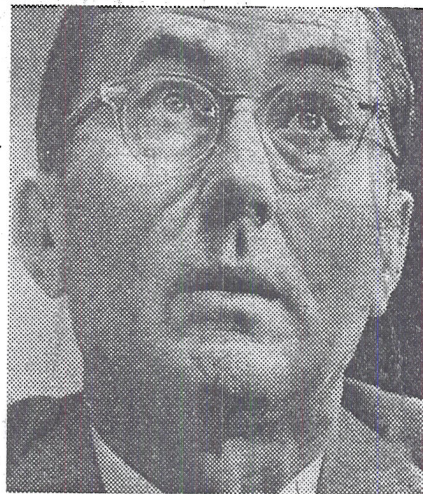
casions between 1951 and 1965, when the practice was stopped, according to Colby. Nineteen of the wiretaps were aimed at CIA-connected people. The other two were aimed at private citizens suspected in 1963 of obtaining sensitive intelligence information, according to the director.

While Colby pointed out that the CIA is responsible under its charter for “protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure,” he tacitly conceded that many of the tactics outlined in his report were of debatable propriety, if not le-

gality, because the agency is prohibited by law from engaging in domestic law-enforcement activities. The Justice Department is investigating some of them, he disclosed.

“Any institution in or out of government that has been functioning for over a quarter of a century, as the CIA has, would be hard put to avoid some wrong steps,” Colby declared. “But any steps over the line in CIA's 27-year history were few and far between and, if wrong, stemmed from a misconception

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WILLIAM E. COLBY

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of the extent of CIA's authority to carry out its important and primary mission—the collection and production of intelligence pertaining to foreign areas and developments.”

The 45-page report was made public after Colby presented it in private before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee on intelligence, chaired by Sen. John L. McClellan (D-Ark.). The senator promised an “in depth” investigation of the domestic surveillance activities, amid growing pressure on Capitol Hill to create new oversight committee to investigate the CIA. Colby is already scheduled to appear next Monday before a House Armed Services subcommittee chaired by Rep. Lucien N. Nedzi (D-Mich.) to review the same issues in open testimony.

Much of the questionable activity outlined by Colby was initiated during the tenure of Richard M. Helms, now ambassador to Iran and also a witness yesterday before the McClellan committee. Under both Democratic and Republican administrations, the ostensible reason was the need to know more about domestic unrest caused by black activism and protest against the war in Vietnam.

When McClellan was asked if he had been briefed by the CIA on any of these questionable activities, at the time they were under way, he replied emphatically: “No, I didn't know anything about them.”

One member of McClellan's subcommittee, Sen. John O. Pastore (D-R.I.), seemed much more disturbed by Colby's private briefing than his colleagues were. Pastore complained loudly: “There have been serious abuses, abuses which have not been explained in this document, abuses which go beyond the statutory authority. Whose fault it was, we have to find out.”

Colby's public list of controversial episodes left many unanswered questions about the scope of the surveillance and the people and organizations who were the targets. Still, compared to the CIA's historic refusal to discuss its affairs, the report represented an extraordinary break with the past. Here are the significant particulars which Colby revealed:

- As far back as 1967, at the behest of the Johnson administration, the CIA set up within its super-secret Counterintelligence Office a unit to look into possible foreign connections with American dissenters—antiwar activists and black radicals. The unit checked out various Americans with the CIA's overseas operatives and issued reports to other government agencies—an ac-

tivity which presumably is within its legal functions.

- In the same period of 1967-68, the agency's Office of Security planted 10 informers inside Washington, D.C., protest organizations, on the grounds that the CIA feared physical damage to its installations here, a much more debatable tactic. The program “inserted 10 agents into dissident organizations operating in the Washington, D.C., area,” Colby said. “The purpose was to gather information relating to plans for demonstrations, pickets, protests, or break-ins that might endanger CIA personnel, facilities, and information.” These agents were withdrawn a year later, Colby said.

- Sometime after 1970, when the Nixon White House was expressing its concern about domestic political turmoil and security leaks, the CIA launched activities aimed at both, according to Colby. The agency planted about a dozen agents inside “American dissident circles,” as Colby described them, and received reports from these agents until 10 months ago, when the CIA director halted the program.

The purpose of those agents, according to Colby, was “to establish their credentials for operations abroad.” But the CIA director conceded that, in the course of their undercover work, “some of these individuals submitted reports on the activities of the American dissidents with whom they were in contact.”

In 1973, when Colby and his predecessor, Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger were reviewing the CIA's domestic activities, the role of these agents was curtailed to reporting only on foreign attachments among American dissenters—but the agents were not themselves withdrawn until March, 1974.

- In approximately the same period, 1971 and 1972, the CIA conducted “personal surveillance” against five citizens who were not CIA employees. “We had clear indications,” Colby reported, “that they were receiving classified information without authorization and the surveillance was designed to identify the sources of the leaks.”

Colby did not disclose in his public document that some of those “targets” were Washington journalists, but the private memorandum from the Senate indicated that at least four of them were. Jack Anderson's column during that period disclosed U.S. diplomatic secrets about the India-Pakistan war, among other things. Michael Getler, who covers the Pentagon for The Washington Post, wrote a number of stories then about the secret arms negotiations under way with the Soviet Union.

- In the course of monitoring the an-

tiwar movement's foreign ties in the early 1970s, the CIA Counterintelligence Office assembled its own files on about 10,000 citizens. Colby said about two-thirds of the names came from FBI leads on the activities of Americans abroad, but about one-third were developed by the CIA itself. According to the Senate memorandum, the agency's Counterintelligence Office got about 5 per cent of the names—or around 500—from its 14 infiltrators inside antiwar organizations.

The CIA director denied that any member of Congress had been spied on or wiretapped by the agency or that any were included in those sensitive files on domestic dissidents, although he said one former member of Congress appeared in the file.

While Colby was vague about the details, he reported that over the years there have been other “lists developed at various times” of American citizens whom the agency decided to keep data on. These other lists, he conceded, “do appear questionable under CIA's authority” and grew out of “an excessive effort to identify possible ‘threats’ to the agency's security from dissident elements or from a belief that such lists could identify later applicants or contacts who might be dangerous to the agency's security.”

Colby reported that some of the “listings” have been eliminated in the last three years and that the CIA's current directives do not require any of them. But he did not say whether all of the lists have been destroyed.

In his private briefing with the Senate staff, Colby said Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas' name appears in a CIA file, but it is in an innocent context, according to the confidential memorandum. Time magazine reported recently that there was a CIA dossier on Douglas. “He has been quite cooperative and helpful in reporting his observations while outside the U.S.,” the memorandum relates. “The only questionable content is that an interpreter he hired during a visit in India was a member of the Indian Intelligence Service.”

- For a generation, the CIA opened and read the mail of American citizens without their knowledge—a “mail cover,” in intelligence jargon and a tactic of debatable legality if it is done without a court order. Colby said the practice centered on mail to and from two unnamed Communist countries (the Soviet Union and China, according to the memo) and was located in two American cities (New York and San Francisco, according to the memo). The practice was in use from 1953 to 1973, when it was halted, Colby said.