

Ford Won't Issue
CIA Report Now

President

WXPost

JUN 7 1975

Switches Signals

By William Greider

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Ford received the Rockefeller commission's investigative report on the Central Intelligence Agency yesterday, but the White House switched signals on its release and refused to commit itself to publishing the 299-page document.

The eight-member commission, which Mr. Ford appointed six months ago, has ducked one controversial area covered by its investigation—the allegations of CIA involvement in assassination plots—by deciding to exclude that subject from its final report.

Originally, Vice President Rockefeller's office alerted the press to expect release of the final report this weekend. It was set in type at the Government Printing Office, which was ready to publish some 3,000 copies.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen, however, told reporters yesterday that the President would first read the report himself and then decide if it should be made public and when. The abrupt changes in plans provoked a barrage of suspicious questions at the White House daily press briefing. Nessen's answers seemed to dissociate the White House from any arrangements the Vice President may have made.

"As far as the White House is concerned," Nessen said, "the question of releasing the report always has depended upon the President first having an opportunity to read it."

As evidence, Nessen cited a May 22 letter from Peter Clapper, public affairs director for the Rockefeller commission, which acknowledged that nothing could be released until the President approved. Did that mean, reporters asked, that the President hasn't decided whether to make the report public? "That is correct," Nessen said.

When the press secretary was asked about Rockefeller's frequent statements on public release and the arrangements made for this weekend, Nessen replied: "Whatever may

have happened elsewhere in the ensuing days I have no responsibility for."

The Rockefeller investigation started out Jan. 5 to look at a variety of controversial domestic activities by the CIA, including allegations of illegal spying on American citizens.

It also took on a new controversy that arose in March—

See CIA, A8, Col. 5.

CIA, From A1

charges of CIA complicity in the attempted assassination of several foreign leaders.

The cancellation of the Rockefeller commission's expected report on assassinations followed a chain of events that is still not clear.

In recent weeks, Vice President Rockefeller has repeatedly assured reporters that the subject would be dealt with in the commission's final report. As recently as Wednesday afternoon, when he was asked about the issue again Rockefeller replied: *He said*

"I'm not going to discuss anything that's in the report. That is in the report. It will be released, given to the President on Friday and he will have it probably released to the press so that it will be available on Sunday."

On the same day, Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), who chairs a Senate investigation plowing much of the same ground, issued a statement sharply criticizing Rockefeller for soft-pedaling the seriousness of the CIA's alleged offenses, particularly the agency's role in murder plots. *He said*

Then, Thursday evening, Rockefeller's office issued a brief statement announcing that the final report would not cover alleged assassinations, but that the accumulated material on the subject would be turned over to President Ford for his perusal and disposition.

Several sources at the White House and the Rockefeller commission said yesterday that—despite the Vice President's recent statements promising a report on the assassination charges—the decision was made three weeks ago not to include the subject in the final report.

A spokesman for the Vice President confirmed this but insisted that Rockefeller's recent statements were truthful because there is a paragraph or two in the final report—stating that the material on assassinations was not included.

Rockefeller told reporters yesterday that the commission's 11-member investigative staff was not able to do a complete job on the subject

and still meet the June 6 deadline set by the President.

"We didn't want, one, to hold up the rest of the report for another month or so," Rockefeller said, "and, secondly, we felt that by giving the material to the President directly . . . that he would then make whatever use in his opinion was right."

According to Nessen, the material gathered on alleged assassinations will be turned over to the Church committee in the Senate, following the same rules that have applied to other classified material held by the White House and sought by the Senate investigators.

The decision, however, apparently means that President Ford and his administration will not be making public reports on the sensitive allegations that CIA officials entertained plots in the early 1960s to kill Cuba's Fidel Castro, the Dominican Republic's Rafael Trujillo and the Congo's Patrice Lumumba, among others.

A spokesman in Rockefeller's office said the decision to leave out assassinations was made by the eight-member commission, with the concurrence of the President and his staff.

Another White House source said, however, that the decision was made solely by the Rockefeller commission—without any recommendation from the President or his advisers. The commission, this source said, considered three alternatives—a time extension for the probe, an incomplete report that would have detailed what evidence it has collected so far, or no report at all. It chose the last.

The final draft copy was sent to the White House on Thursday afternoon, but a printed "press proof" copy, bound in two volumes, was formally presented to President Ford yesterday morning by Rockefeller and five other commission members.

"I think it's an important documents," the President said. "It will give us the basis for some firm recommendations to make sure—make positive—that we end up with a CIA and an intelligence com-

munity that will do an excellent job for the future of this country and at the same time ensure the privacy of individuals within the Constitution, rules, laws and so forth."

When Nessen faced reporters after the ceremony, he turned aside a variety of questions suggesting that the White House may have decided that the report would do more damage than good to the future of the CIA.

At one point, faced with a confusion of queries, Nessen asked the press: "What are we talking about?"

"We're talking about a cover-up," a reporter replied.

On Monday, Rockefeller himself said that his investiga-

tion of the CIA had left "no stones . . . unturned." Yesterday, when asked to explain the comment again in light of the decision on assassinations, the Vice President replied: "We did not leave it unturned. We did all the unturning we had time to do and gave it to the President."

Several "press proof" volumes were assembled by the Government Printing Office and made available to selected commission members and to the White House yesterday, but a commission spokesman said it will be up to the President whether any more are printed or whether the original copy is revised.