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CIA Debate

Seen Dead
In SenateBy George Lardner Jr.
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Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho) said yesterday that plans for a closed-door Senate debate on the Central Intelligence Agency's involvement in assassination plots may be abandoned because of the August recess.

Church acknowledged that his Senate intelligence committee had been planning to submit its report on the issue for Senate consideration and possible censorship before making it public, but now it appears that the report may not be ready before Congress adjourns for the summer.

As a result, Church said, he would recommend public issuance of the report as soon as the committee approves it, probably some time next month. He said he felt the danger of piecemeal news leaks would make it too risky to hold until the Senate comes back in September.

"If we waited one more month, there would be nothing to report," Church told reporters. "I believe now that the committee should assume the full responsibility and issue the report when it is ready."

Vice Chairman John G. Tower (R-Tex.) disclosed earlier in the day the plan for consideration and perhaps censorship by the full Senate of the report on CIA-sponsored assassination attempts and schemes. He predicted that his would come in September, since he said he saw no chance of the committee's completing the report before the recess.

Although Church has promised a full public disclosure of the facts compiled in the assassination inquiry, Tower said, "You have to interpret what he means by full public disclosure. Obviously there are some intimate details that should not be disclosed."

Church insisted that there would not be "any censorship by the executive branch," but he said the committee has agreed to give the White House advance notice of top-secret or sensitive documents that may be cited, so that "inadvertent disclosures" may be avoided.

The committee met in executive session yesterday to hear from CIA Director William E. Colby on the 1970 assassination in Chile of Gen. Rene Schneider, who was commander of the Chilean army. Informed sources have told The Washington Post that the CIA encouraged a 1970 plan to touch off a coup in Chile that went awry and resulted in Schneider's death.

Church refused to discuss the episode beyond saying that it falls partly within the purview of its assassination inquiry and partly within the scope of its inquiry into covert CIA operations abroad.

Colby yesterday supplied the committee with most of the documents it has requested concerning CIA activities in Chile against the late Chilean President Salvador Allende, but Church said the White House is still holding back the top-secret national intelligence estimates on Chile during the period in question.

"The White House has indicated they want to discuss this particular request with us," Church said, adding that he did not know why. He said the intelligence studies on Chile were important to determine whether they suggested U.S. courses of action other than those that were carried out.