

President Bars House Unit From Seeing Secret Data

NYTimes

By NICHOLAS M. HORROCK

SEP 12 1975

13

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 12 —

President Ford ordered today that the House Select Committee on Intelligence be cut off from all classified documents, and he forbade Administration officials to testify before the committee on classified matters. He also demanded the return of classified material now in the committee's hands.

His actions appeared to place the White House on the most serious collision course with Congress regarding investigations of the intelligence agencies since the sweeping inquiries began earlier this year.

At the center of the dispute is the committee's decision yesterday to make public four words from a 1973 intelligence agency summary, over the objection of officials of the intelligence community.

The words were made public along with about 400 others last night, but neither committee members nor Government officials would identify the phrase at issue.

However, authoritative sources said the four words were "and greater communications security," which were part of a list of activities taking place in Egypt the day the 1973 Arab-Israeli war broke out.

The House committee voted 6 to 3 in a closed session yesterday afternoon to disclose the four words in making public a paragraph from a Defense Intelligence Agency secret summary of the activities. The summary was prepared on Oct. 6, 1973.

Mitchell Rogovin, counsel

Continued on Page 9, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

for the Director of Central Intelligence, told the closed session that the intelligence agencies believed the words compromised national security by revealing the "sources and methods" used to gather intelligence.

Today, in a news conference, William E. Colby, the Director of Central Intelligence, said he believed that keeping the four words secret was worth risking a constitutional confrontation between the President and the House.

The confrontation began early today. Rex E. Lee, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Civil Division, appeared

before the committee on behalf of the President and called the publication of the words of "irreparable harm." He relayed Mr. Ford's order.

Pike Questions Action

Representative Otis G. Pike, the committee chairman, responded, "In other words the executive branch is telling the committee of the House that it may not continue to operate." Mr. Lee said he believed it was up to the committee.

Since the committee investigation covers almost entirely national security matters, Mr. Ford's ban was considered of grave import.

Later, Mr. Pike, Democrat of Suffolk County, told a reporter, "I for one would be very surprised if the committee votes to return the documents that it already has as a result of subpoena, and I'd be even more surprised if the members voted not to continue operation."

Several hours after the morning hearing, the C.I.A. received a subpoena from the committee dated today.

Both Mr. Lee and Mr. Colby stressed that they were concerned as much about the committee's future acts as about what had been done.

When asked why executive-branch cooperation with the committee had been curbed, Mr. Colby said, "We're going to stop it until we can work out an arrangement where we have some assurance that there won't be any revelations without our discussing it together."

A committee source said he felt the committee could proceed with information from sources outside the Government and with leads developed through the classified documents it had already received.

Court Delays Feared

The committee has always had the option of going to court to enforce its subpoenas, but both committee members and Mr. Ford know that the time spent in court would seriously hamper the future of the investigation, which is scheduled to be completed by Jan. 31.

Until the Administration made an issue of the four-word phrase, no one had paid any attention to it. The words appeared in this context:

"Egypt [deletion] large scale mobilization exercise may be an effort to soothe internal problems as much as to improve military capabilities. Mobilization of some personnel, increased readiness of isolated units, and greater communications security are all assessed as parts of the exercise routine."

Long-time intelligence agents

said that "and greater communications security" would alert the Egyptians and Russians to the fact that the United States had penetrated their communications and even penetrated it when efforts were made to have greater security. If a particularly sophisticated technique were being used to protect communications, these words would tell an intelligence analyst that the United States had intruded upon it, the intelligence agents said.

But most suggested that neither Egyptians nor the Soviet Union had any real doubt that United States communications spying was excellent and this phrase would have little consequence.

Over-All Effect Feared

Administration sources said that the White House had become increasingly concerned with the aggressiveness of the House committee and with the effect this would have on other committees. When the House committee voted yesterday to declassify documents "unilaterally," one well-placed Administration source said, it raised the specter that other Congressional committees might decide to follow suit.

The intelligence agencies and defense units supply a vast amount of classified material to Congress and have over the years been able to "work out" releases of the material that did not quote specific language or compromise security.

"When Mr. Pike took that on," one source said, "he was shaking the whole tree."

Ford Sees Violation

Mr. Pike is apparently well aware of this. During the panel's public hearing today, Mr. Pike objected to the past arrangements between the executive branch and Congress.

"That's exactly what's wrong, Mr. Lee," he said. "For decades committees of Congress have not done their jobs and you've been loving it. You could come up here and whisper in one friendly Congressman's ear, and in my opinion that's why we're in the mess we're in."

President Ford, who is on a campaign trip, said today at an airport news conference in St. Louis regarding his actions concerning the committee: