

Ford Will Ask Congress For New Curbs on CIA

Washington

President Ford said yesterday he will ask Congress to pass new laws to control the Central Intelligence Agency, but he refused to rule out covert U.S. political operations in foreign countries.

Speaking to reporters called into his office for an unannounced news conference, Mr. Ford said the administration will propose administrative changes in the CIA in addition to asking Congress for new laws.

Although he refused to rule out U.S. political manipulation in other countries, Mr. Ford indicated there is a possibility the administration will move to ban CIA activities such as the agency's efforts to undermine the Allende government in Chile.

Referring to investigations of the CIA by the Rockefeller Commission and congressional committees, Mr. Ford told reporters:

"I think you have to certainly benefit from these exhaustive investigations, but I don't want to make any commitment one way or another until we actually submit the legislative proposals to Congress and decide to do whatever we want to do administratively."

Asked again whether he plans to rule out foreign political activities by the U.S. government, he replied,

"I wouldn't rule out necessary political activities by the United States if it involves our security."

About a month after taking office last year, Mr. Ford was asked about CIA involvement in Chilean politics and he startled reporters by openly acknowledging that the CIA had lent support to opponents of the Allende government. He described the activities then as "in the best interest of the people in Chile, and certainly in our best interest."

While indicating that he will

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propose substantial changes in the CIA, Mr. Ford told reporters he will not honor a House subpoena for more CIA material until he is assured that classified material will be kept secret.

He stopped only a step short of accusing the House investigating committee of a criminal act in releasing a classified intelligence summary last week concerning the 1973 Middle East War.

"I am very concerned," he said, "as to the damage to our intelligence sources if the procedure used by the committee in this last instance is to be the procedure used by the committee in the future. Until I find from the committee what their procedure is going to be, I will not give them the information."

"I was disappointed in the manner in which the committee handled some of this most highly classified material. I think it is fair to point out — and I don't want you to misconstrue what I am saying — but it is fair to point out that some of that material is specifically protected by law . . . If a private citizen were to release that information involving communications intelligence, it would be a . . . serious criminal offense."

Departing from his usual custom of meeting with the press before television cameras, Mr. Ford called reporters into his office on short notice and answered questions informally while sitting on the edge of his desk.

Aside from questions concerning the CIA, Mr. Ford spent most of the half-hour session discussing the Middle East.

While saying the United States has made no firm commitment, he acknowledged that Israel is seeking to get F-16 fighter planes and Pershing missiles, capable of delivering nuclear warheads.

"They are on the shopping list," the President said, "and they will be discussed with representatives of the Israeli government."

He justified continued arms assistance to Israel as part of a long-standing U.S. policy.

"We have for a long, long time supplied Israel with very substantial amounts of military hardware," he said. "This was a policy established a good many years ago . . . We have always felt that the survival of Israel in the Middle East was very important, and the military hardware that we have (given) in the past and will in the future provides for that survival."

Mr. Ford said Egyptian President Anwar Sadat knew when the interim agreement with Israel was signed September 4 that the United States would be making further weapons commitments to Israel. He refused to say, however, whether Sadat knew such sophisticated weapons as F-16's and 450-mile-range Pershing missiles would be considered.



AP Wirephoto

Mr. Ford answered reporters' questions as he sat on his desk