

Flop by U.S. Intelligence In Portugal

Washington

Refusing to talk about U.S. covert activities in Portugal, U.S. intelligence officials said yesterday they failed to predict either the coup there last year or the emergence of Portugal's leftist government.

Officials of three U.S. intelligence agencies told the Select House Intelligence Committee that they did not predict the coup partly because they were not paying great attention to Portugal.

Further, Director William Hyland said it was not clear to his State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research until last March that Communist Premier Vasco Goncalves, since thrown out, had taken control.

Intelligence analysis is being improved after failures in Portugal, Cyprus and the Mideast, CIA analyst Keith Clark testified. But he said: "I cannot guarantee against all surprises."

The officials refused to make any comment whatever when the committee's senior Republican, Representative Robert McClory of Illinois, began asking if there are U.S. covert activities in Portugal to counter Soviet covert efforts there.

"You mean you can't even say in open session if we have covert operations going on?" McClory asked.

"I would ask you not to press that question," replied Lieutenant General Samuel V. Wilson, who was in charge of the Defense Intelligence Agency's military attache system at the time.

However, when McClory asked later if counteracting Soviet covert operations was not one of the CIA's functions, Clark replied: "I believe it is."

All three officials said U.S. intelligence provided accurate assessments before the spread of Portuguese army discontent and conditions that became factors in the coup.

But Hyland testified "there was no specific warning of the coup of April 25, 1974, in Portugal."

Although the military discontent was known, he said later, "what was not detected, which became the key factor, was that it had become politicized It never came through that there was a revolt of sorts."

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