

Welch Death 2nd Group Claims 'Won't Curtail It Killed CIA Agent Spy Probe'

Washington

Chairman Frank Church (Dem-Ida.) of the Senate intelligence committee said yesterday the slaying of CIA agent Richard Welch should not curtail congressional investigations of the intelligence community.

Rejecting as "totally unfounded" any suggestion that disclosures by his committee were responsible for Welch's death, Church said, "This regrettable event must not be used as an excuse to curtail the effort by the Congress to expose improper activities."

Church said it has been the practice of his committee not to obtain the names of active agents at work abroad. "That purpose was instituted for the express purpose of avoiding any possibility of exposing agents," he said in a statement.

Church's comments came in reaction to remarks by a former CIA agent who said Congress must share the blame for Welch's death.

Athens

A group calling itself the November 17 Organization claimed responsibility yesterday for the killing of CIA agent Richard Welch.

The group is not publicly known, and police dismissed the claim as the work of pranksters.

A note sent to foreign newsmen said that the "American imperialistic use of Greece has to be avenged."

November 17 is marked here by students as the day the foundations of the former Greek dictatorship began eroding in 1973. An anti-government student rebellion at the Athens Polytechnic Institute precipitated the replacement of dictator George Papadopoulos by a hardline military junta. The junta in turn collapsed in the wake of the Cyprus crisis in July, 1974.

This is the second organization to claim responsibility for Welch's death. A person purporting to represent another unknown organization, Union of Militant Officers for the National Cause, phoned Greek newspapers Wednesday and said his group was responsible and it would be heard from again.

Police also dismissed that claim.

Welch, 46, the Central Intelligence Agency's station chief in Athens, was slain in front of his house last Tuesday as he returned from a Christmas party given by the U.S. ambassador. His body will be flown to Washington today.

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