

11 CIA Agents Passed Off as 'Journalists'

[Two articles: "15 Companies Said Involved," by Walter Pincus; "A New Climate For 'Reform,' by Laurence Stern.]

A New Climate For 'Reform'

By Laurence Stern
Washington Post Staff Writer

A drastically altered political climate will greet outgoing Central Intelligence Agency Director William E. Colby when he appears on Capitol Hill today to offer his prescription for reorganizing the intelligence community.

Just a few months ago there were predictions of major legislative surgery for the CIA—talk of ending covert operations, splitting off the analytical and operational branches of the agency, relocating the director to put him in the White House.

Now the forces for maintenance of the status quo are emerging as the Senate Government Operations Committee moves into the law-drafting stage of the intelligence controversy, which has been the liveliest subject of political interest in Washington since the Watergate scandals.

Traditional congressional intramural politics, for

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example, are now coming into play on the intelligence reform issue.

Some congressional observers saw this as the underlying reason for the announcement by Sen. John G. Tower (R-Tex.) Wednesday that he opposes formation of a new oversight committee to monitor the intelligence community.

Tower urged instead that the oversight function be left in the custody of the Armed Services committees, which have performed it for more than a quarter of a century in a spirit of clubby toleration. As the second-ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, Tower enjoys a position of influence on that panel.

The White House and intelligence community would gladly settle for that arrangement in place of the present congerly of six

See OVERSIGHT, A2, Col.3

OVERSIGHT, From A1 congressional committees that have a consultative role on CIA matters.

In the Senate there is a growing consensus for separate House and Senate oversight committees rather than a single joint panel. The fear among Senate advocates of tighter congressional control is that a joint committee bill might perish in the House or in conference.

The administration favors a joint committee approach to minimize the number of congressional staff personnel involved, since staffers are regarded by the intelligence professionals as potential leakers of national security secrets. It would also reduce the number of trips required between the CIA's Langley headquarters and Capitol Hill, where Colby has spent a larger portion of his tenure than any of his predecessors in the directorship.

The one issue upon which virtual unanimity has developed between administration officials and members of Congress is the demand for stronger punitive action against those in government and even in journalism who make public classified material.

It was in this spirit, perhaps, that Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.) asked one of yesterday's witnesses, former CIA official David Phillips, for a full explanation of Britain's Official Secrets Act, which imposes far-ranging official censorship over a wide range of governmental action—not only of a national security nature—and makes disclosure punishable by criminal prosecution.

Colby is supporting a legislative proposal that would impose criminal punishment on government

employees for divulging classified information during or after their active service.

There are also strong punitive provisions for disclosure of government secrets proposed in the bill known as S.1, which would recodify the U.S. Criminal Code and is awaiting action in the Senate.

One congressional participant in the intelligence "reform" process now under way prophesied that the net effect of the legislative labor on the intelligence issue will be to produce "an American official secrets act and no reform."



By James K.W. Atherton—The Washington Post
David Phillips: asked to explain Britain's secrecy act.