

Times and CBS Deny Backing C.I.A. Refusal to Give Senate Panel the Names of Journalists

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 10— Executives of The New York Times and CBS Inc. denied today that they had expressed to George Bush, the Director of Central Intelligence, support for the C.I.A.'s refusal to give senators the names of journalists who had worked for the agency in the past.

The denials were prompted by a report in today's issue of The Washington Post that C.I.A. officials had cited "support from some top American news executives" in declining a request from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence for the journalists' names.

The Post account quoted "sources within the intelligence community and on Capitol Hill" as having said that Mr. Bush had found support for the agency's position of "burying the past" in separate meetings last

week with top executives of The Times and CBS.

Arthur O. Sulzberger, the publisher of The Times, said last night that the question of whether the C.I.A. ought to provide the names of such journalists to the Senate committee, or to make them public, "never arose" during his 90-minute conversation last week with Mr. Bush and two C.I.A. aides.

But Mr. Sulzberger added that he had given to Mr. Bush a letter requesting, under the Freedom of Information Act, the names of any past or present employees of The Times who had worked in any capacity for the C.I.A. while associated with the newspaper.

Richard Salant, the chief of the CBS News division who attended with other CBS executives a similar meeting with Mr. Bush in New York last week, said that, contrary to The Post account, all of the

network officials present had "urged" the intelligence agency to make the names available to the Senate committee.

Well-placed sources confirmed today that Mitchell Rogovin, the C.I.A.'s special counsel, had told members of the Senate panel's staff that the meetings by Mr. Bush with the executives of The Times and CBS had taken place.

But there appeared to be some confusion over whether Mr. Rogovin had implied to the Senate panel that either of the two news organizations had concurred in the agency's refusal to supply the names.

One source familiar with the discussion said he did not believe that any such impression had been left by Mr. Rogovin, nor had any been intended by the C.I.A. lawyer.

A. M. Rosenthal, managing editor of The Times, wrote to William E. Colby, then Director of Intelligence, on Jan. 27 ask-

ing for written assurances that no full-time correspondents or part-time stringers were involved with the C.I.A.

Today, in a letter dated Feb. 3, Mr. Bush replied to that letter by repeating assurances in 1973. Mr. Bush said "no staff member or employee of The New York Times is used operationally by the CIA." But he added that it was agency policy not to comment "on possible agency or operational relationships with stringers or part-time correspondents of the U. S. media."

"I can give you positive assurances that the agency makes no attempts to influence material coming from such stringers or part-time correspondents for any U.S. media organizations," Mr. Bush's letter said. "Our very limited operational use of anyone connected with U.S. media is limited entirely to intelligence collection or sup-

port for intelligence collection operations."

Mr. Rosenthal said today, after receiving the Bush letter, that The Times did not accept the C.I.A. position that stringers could be used by the agency, or that the C.I.A. could withhold names used by the agency at present or in the past.

He pointed out that Mr. Sulzberger on Feb. 4, in the letter still unanswered by the C.I.A., had asked Mr. Bush under provisions of the information act for names and records "of employees and stringers or former employees and stringers of The New York Times who have acted, knowingly or unknowingly, as United States intelligence agents or as informants for the United States intelligence community."

Mr. Rosenthal said that both he and the newspaper supported "complete disclosure" of the names of any of its own

correspondents as well as those of other organizations in this country who had ever worked for or cooperated with the C.I.A. in gathering intelligence.

The House Select Committee on Intelligence, according to its still-unpublished report, determined that, as of last year, 11 C.I.A. officers were working under journalistic covers provided by 15 news organizations.

According to The Post article, Mr. Bush conferred at CBS with Mr. Salant, William S. Paley, the CBS board chairman, and Walter Cronkite, the CBS Evening News managing editor. At The Times, Mr. Bush met with Mr. Sulzberger, John B. Oakes, editorial page editor, and Sydney Gruson, executive vice president.

In a series of telephone interviews today, executives of The Washington Post, The Washington Star, Time and Newsweek magazines, and NBC had not conferred with any officials of those organizations since he took office.