

Colby Says He Would Curb C.I.A. in U.S. and Abroad

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WASHINGTON, July 2 — William E. Colby said today that as Director of Central Intelligence he would insist that the Central Intelligence Agency refrain from domestic investigations and curb its involvement in secret wars overseas.

Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on his nomination to be the new C.I.A. chief, Mr. Colby acknowledged that the congressional intent embodied in the 1947 law creating the agency had probably been violated when the agency was directed in 1964 to support a secret war in Laos.

He also said that the agency had made a mistake in providing equipment that was used by E. Howard Hunt Jr., a Watergate conspirator, in the 1971 burglary of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Symington Convinced

Mr. Colby, who is the deputy C.I.A. director for operations—the agency's division for covert operations—was questioned for nearly two hours in open session by Senator Stuart Symington, the acting committee chairman and the only Senator present for the hearing in the Senate Caucus Room, the scene of the Watergate hearings.

Never before has a nominee for C.I.A. director been so cross-examined in public on the policies he believes his largely secret agency should follow. The net result was that Mr.



Associated Press
William E. Colby at the House hearing on C.I.A.

Colby took several policy positions that reassured Senator Symington, who announced at the conclusion that he would enthusiastically support the nomination.

As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mr. Symington first exposed the way the C.I.A. was supporting an irregular army of meo tribesmen and Thai soldiers in Laos. Mr. Colby gave the senator assurances that it was "very un-

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likely" that the agency would get involved in such activities again. He explained that the agency had been drawn into Laos at the direction of the National Security Council because it was supposed to be a covert operation in which the United States could not be officially involved. The difficulty with such operations, he said, is that they get so big that they are no longer covert.

The Laotian operation was undertaken under a provision of the National Security Act of 1947 authorizing the C.I.A. to "perform such other functions and duties affecting national security as the National Security Council may direct."

'President's Army' Denied

Somewhat reluctantly, Mr. Colby provided a guarded insight into such operations by explaining that they were ordered by a special security council committee known as the "40 committee" and presently

headed by Henry A. Kissinger, the President's national security adviser.

Mr. Colby took exception to a Symington characterization that under this provision the C.I.A. was being turned into "the king's men, the President's army." But he acknowledged that such operations diverted the agency from what he said should be its "primary focus" of foreign intelligence gathering.

Mr. Colby was not asked directly whether he had personally been involved in discussions between the White House and the agency on assistance to Hunt or on covering up the Watergate investigation. But indirectly the Watergate affair came up as Mr. Colby was asked whether he believed the agency should engage in such domestic activities as drawing up "psychological profiles" of American citizens or supplying espionage equipment for domestic investigations.

Mr. Colby took the position that the agency had no business in domestic intelligence activities, a principle that he said he planned to "reinforce very vigorously." He also said he was "quite prepared" to leave the top job if ordered to do something he regarded as illegal.

Mr. Colby's arrival as the new director is awaited with some anticipation in the C.I.A. ranks demoralized by the personnel reductions made by his predecessor, James R. Schlesinger, particularly in the operations divisions. But Mr. Colby said he intended to continue the "personnel pruning" that in the past four months has reduced the agency's strength by 7 or 8 per cent.

Unless the rising personnel costs are curbed, he explained, the agency faces an eventual situation where it will have "all personnel and no programs."

As in previous Congressional testimony, Mr. Colby denied that the Phoenix program of political pacification in South Vietnam, which he headed for three years, was an "assassination program."

The purpose of the program, he said, was to help South Vietnam ferret out the leaders of the Communist "apparatus" directing a program of subversion and guerrilla warfare. Of the some 20,000 persons killed in the process, he said, 87 per cent were by military forces and "only 12 per cent" by South Vietnamese police forces.