

17 Democrats Visit C.I.A., Call for Tighter Scrutiny

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WASHINGTON, March 18 — After attending a briefing at the Central Intelligence Agency headquarters today, 17 new Democratic Representatives said that if they had learned anything it was that espionage operations should be more closely watched by Congress.

The consensus of the legislators, who attended the meeting at the C.I.A.'s invitation, was that for too long Congress had remained in the dark on the general policies of the C.I.A. as well as to the specifics of how it conducted its activities.

Members of the group were virtually unanimous in saying that Congress should exercise more legislative oversight on the agency's activities.

Yet a Congressional report dealing with the overseeing plans of House committee, which was made public today, devotes only one paragraph in its 81 pages to overseeing the C.I.A., and even the lone reference was couched in the most general terms.

Those attending the meeting said that William E. Colby, director of Central Intelligence had told them little that they had not already known. Further, they said, he had refused to answer some direct questions about the agency's budget and personnel, as well as possible involvement in the assassinations of foreign heads of state.

Colby Silent on Issue

"By declining to respond to my questions about assassinations, Mr. Colby provided confirmation that they had contemplated if not attempted such assassinations," said Stephen J. Solarz of New York.

"If such reports weren't true," Mr. Solarz went on, "Mr. Colby had an opportunity to scotch them right there."

The Brooklyn Congressman, who was involved in protesting both the Vietnam war and United States foreign policy in general, said "there is an urgent necessity to bring the C.I.A. under control with procedures and safeguards to prevent actions antithetical to the United States."

He noted that a large statue of Nathan Hale stood in the courtyard of the agency's headquarters and commented that the Revolutionary War spy "was no more successful than they are today."

Richard L. Ottinger of New York said the members of the group had come away "with a very uncomfortable feeling—how do you control this monster?"

But Mr. Ottinger conceded that some extremely complicated questions were involved. For example, he asked, "before the C.I.A. conducts a clandestine activity does it trot up to Capitol Hill to seek approval?"

Mistakes Conceded

Carroll Hubbard of Kentucky said that Mr. Colby had conceded that the agency made mistakes in such operations as 1961 invasion of Cuba; the "destabilization" of the Government of the late President Salvador Allende Gossens of Chile and the monitoring of activities of antiwar activists in the United States.

"I asked him about the opening by the agency of mail going overseas, and he said that between 1953 and 1973 lots of mail had been opened, but that this had stopped," Mr. Hubbard said.

James H. Scheuer of New York said he had gotten "the feeling that the C.I.A. is going to operate with a great deal more restraint."

Mr. Scheuer said there was some degree of Congressional overseeing of the agency "but it isn't enough." He noted that the House Foreign Affairs Committee was to have conducted some of this monitoring work but had not.

Thomas J. Downey of New York said the meeting "really shook me up." "The feeling I got was very disconcerting," he said. "I don't trust that organization and I don't trust the decisions of its officials."

Edward W. Pattison of New York said he considered the C.I.A.'s primary problem was that of its mission.

"Who decides what govern-

ments should be overthrown?" he asked. "And who makes such judgments as whether we need Allende or not?"

But there was little in the report of the House Government Operations Committee dealing with future monitoring that concerned the problems of the agency. In an attempt to sort out these problems the House last month created a Select Committee on Intelligence. Earlier, the Senate set up a similar committee.