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CIA Shaken by Timing of Firing

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The timing of the dismissal of Central Intelligence Agency director William E. Colby came as a devastating blow to an agency already reeling under the unaccustomed spotlight of congressional investigations and press exposure.

"This did it for whatever remained of morale out here," said one high-ranking agency functionary. "It was like a funeral — a death in the family."

Colby's departure has been long-heralded in thinly disguised leaks from White House sources and in public speculation. But high-ranking official sources said that Colby fully expected to carry on as director until the current congressional hearings into

CIA activities were completed and final reports were drafted around the end of the year.

The intelligence chief, it was learned, was not told of his dismissal until virtually the hour Sunday that press inquiries began flowing into the agency requesting confirmation of reports that he had been fired by the President.

During the past few months Colby had been meeting all inquiries about his impending departure from the CIA with such stiff-lipped responses as "I serve at the pleasure of the President" or "I'm expendable at any time."

But he and some of his closest associates were caught unawares, as it turned out, by the timing of President Ford.

The CIA now finds itself in the predicament of having to go through the remaining two

thirds of its hearings on Capitol Hill with a new and inexperienced director at the witness table.

High-ranking agency insiders are skeptical about the ability of Colby's successor, no matter how quick a study he is, to testify convincingly on such issues as whether covert operations should be abolished or what sort of congressional oversight arrangements should be provided.

Colby's expected replacement, the U.S. envoy to Peking, George Bush, has had no substantial experience in intelligence work.

"Anyone coming in fresh could not possibly have opinions on the range of issues which come up during the congressional hearings," said one senior official. "The effect

could well be to devastate the intelligence community."

The timing of the appointment could also taint Colby's successor with the remaining revelations of CIA excesses still to emerge from the Senate and House investigations of the intelligence community. Furthermore, the new director may be saddled with public criticism of whatever reorganization plan emerges from current executive and legislative deliberations on the agency's future.

One member of the House intelligence committee held that Colby's ouster will make it almost impossible for his successor to "be his own man."

An ironic postscript to the dismissal of Colby was a comment of Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.), who

has emerged as the most vocal congressional critic of CIA involvement in the internal affairs of other countries, particularly in the overthrow of the late Salvador Allende's government in Chile. Colby, said Harrington, probably was disposed of as a "reckless spiller of beans."

Tennessee-Sudan Tie

KHARTOUM, Sudan, Nov. 3 (AP)—Gov. Ray Blanton of Tennessee plans to open a public relations and trade office for his state in Khartoum, the official Sudanese news agency said Monday. Blanton met with President Jaafar el Numairi. Blanton said the Tennesseans can help the Sudanese develop river transportation, agriculture, animal husbandry and hydroelectric power, the agency said.