

Sparkman Plans Inquiry on C.I.A. Activities Abroad

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan 8—Senator John J. Sparkman, acting chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said today he was planning hearings to discuss what he termed "reports" and "rumors" that the Central Intelligence Agency is actively intervening in the internal affairs of other countries.

"We'll be probing and looking," the Alabama Democrat said in a telephone interview. "I've heard rumors and had reports [of C.I.A. activities] in two or three other countries. But I don't think they've been definitely established. That's the purpose of the hearings."

Mr. Sparkman refused to be more specific.

In an earlier interview with the CBS radio network, he said that the allegations involved C.I.A. "interference" in the "internal affairs of those countries."

The senator said he will set a date for the beginning of hearings when Congress convenes next week. At that time, he is scheduled to assume formally the committee chairmanship.

New Legislation Cited

Mr. Sparkman, who consistently supported the foreign policy of the Johnson and Nixon Administrations, issued a letter on Monday in which he told the C.I.A. to abide by new legislation calling for an immediate stop to most foreign operations not solely aimed at the gathering of intelligence.

In a letter made public today by the committee, William E. Colby, the C.I.A. director, promised his full cooperation in complying with the new law. The legislation, passed last month and signed by President Ford on Dec. 30, bars all foreign C.I.A. political and paramilitary operations unless they have been specifically approved by the President as being necessary to national security.

The new restrictions, which were approved as an amendment to the 1974 Foreign Assistance Act, also grant the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committees new jurisdiction to review C.I.A. operations.

List Given President

In his letter, dated yesterday, Mr. Colby told Senator Sparkman that he had submitted to the President "a proposed finding covering our current activities which were previously approved by him [President Ford] as a basis for compliance with the act."

Once the President reaffirms that the operations on the list are vital to national security, the C.I.A. director added, he will initiate discussions to

work out a procedure for fully briefing the Senators on the Foreign Relations Committee.

A Senate official noted that the new procedures could result in a profound change in the relationship between the intelligence agency and Congress; one that would enable Congress to monitor all C.I.A. overseas activities that result in political action.

If similar legislation had existed in 1970, for example, the President would have had specifically to approve and the C.I.A. would have had to brief the Senate committee on its efforts against the Chilean government of President Salvador Allende Gossens.

A Senate committee source expressed satisfaction with the Colby response. "He's ready to go," the official said, "He's not fighting this."

"It's a very positive thing," he added.

Limitation on Inquiry

In the telephone interview, Mr. Sparkman emphasized that his committee was not planning to look into the allegations of domestic spying by the C.I.A. "A lot of people don't get the distinction," he said. "We are limited to inquiring about the C.I.A. activities in foreign countries."

Hearings into domestic C.I.A. activities have been announced by Representative Lucien N. Medzi, Democrat of Michigan, chairman of the House Intelligence Subcommittee; Senator John C. Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Intelligence; and Senator Edmund S. Muskie, Democrat of Maine, chairman

of a subcommittee on Government Operations.

Some Senate officials suggested today that Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Democratic leader, who returned yesterday from a month-long trip to China, might seek to consolidate the Senate inquiries through a select panel similar to the one set up to investigate the Watergate scandals.

Recommendation Expected

But Mr. Mansfield, in a brief telephone conversation this evening, said only that he would make a recommendation at a party caucus next week.

Asked about the alleged C.I.A. involvement in domestic spying, the Senator said, "I don't think it has any business in that field. That's outside its charter."

Officials in the House suggested today that the speaker, Carl Albert of Oklahoma, probably would favor having a full investigation into the C.I.A. spying conducted by Mr. Nedzi's subcommittee. However, plans to push for a select committee in the House already have been announced by Representative Michael J. Harrington, Democrat of Massachusetts, and others who will urge such a step when the Democrats meet next week.

In a related development, Mr. Nedzi sent telegrams today to A. M. Rosenthal, managing editor of The New York Times, and Hedley Donovan, editor in chief of Time magazine, requesting that they assist "in securing the names of witnesses who have information and would be willing to testify thereto" before his pending subcommittee hearings.

On Dec. 22, The Times published the first account of the C.I.A.'s alleged domestic spying, quoting well-placed sources as saying that the intelligence agency maintained a file on nearly 10,000 American citizens and also conducted dozens of illegal break-ins, wiretaps and similar activities in the United States. A week later, Time magazine reported that the C.I.A. had conducted surveillance on some members of Congress as well as on Justice William O. Douglas of the Supreme Court.

Mr. Rosenthal, in a telegram responding to the Congressman's request, said The Times could not comply "since much of the information given to The Times was obtained on a confidential source basis."

"It was this confidentiality that put The Times in a position to print its stories," he said.

"Destruction of confidentiality," Mr. Rosenthal added, "would result in the inability of the press to inquire and report on such matters."

The White House, which has neither confirmed nor denied the reports, announced on Sunday the formation of an eight-member "blue ribbon" commission to investigate the C.I.A.'s alleged involvement in domestic spying. The panel, which will begin its meetings next week, is headed by Vice President Rockefeller.

18 Die in Colombia Crash

BOGOTA, Colombia, Jan. 8—A Colombian airline carrying 18 persons crashed shortly after take-off from the town of Neiva in Southern Colombia today. Officials said there were apparently no survivors.