

3 Panels to Question CIA Chief in Week

By Peter Masley

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Central Intelligence Agency Director William E. Colby in the next seven days faces questions from three congressional panels—one in public session—on whether the CIA engaged in illegal domestic surveillance.

In addition, he reportedly will meet today with the eight-member commission headed by Vice President Rockefeller that was named Jan. 5 by President Ford to investigate allegations that the CIA violated the 1947 law establishing the agency and proscribing its activities in the United States.

The Rockefeller commission is to hold its first meeting today.

On Wednesday and Thursday, Colby will be the first witness before two closed Senate hearings, and next Monday he is scheduled to testify in open session before the House Armed Services Special Subcommittee on Intelligence. Colby became CIA director in September, 1973.

His predecessor, Richard M. Helms, now ambassador to Iran, is expected to follow Colby in the three congressional hearings, two of which were disclosed yesterday.

Senate Majority Whip Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) yesterday criticized the number of congressional probes into CIA activities and called for establishment of a single joint investigating committee.

Appearing on "Issues and Answers" (ABC, WMAL), Byrd said he fears that if "every committee gets into the act and we have this game of one-upmanship" it would adversely affect legitimate CIA operations.

"Now, in order to avoid that," he said, "I should think there ought to be one committee." This is to be discussed Tuesday at the Democratic caucus, which Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) is asking to establish a single special committee on probing the CIA.

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Byrd's criticism was rejected yesterday by Rep. Lucien Nedzi (D-Mich.), chairman of the House intelligence subcommittee, who said his panel is tentatively scheduled to open hearings with Colby next Monday.

"We're just going to go where the road leads us," Nedzi said in a telephone interview, adding that the Monday hearing is contingent on the parent Armed Services Committee being formally organized by then.

The 94th Congress will convene on Tuesday. After the 93d Congress adjourned last month, The New York Times published reports that the CIA, during the Nixon administration, mounted large-scale illegal domestic surveillance, including creation of files on antiwar dissidents, wiretapping, mail interception and break-ins.

Nedzi said yesterday that he is considering calling all former CIA directors to testify. "I've been holding hearings throughout the last three years on various aspects of the problem," he said, reiterating his belief that legislation is needed to clarify the 1947 national security act.

He said yesterday that he feels it "probable" that his subcommittee will recommend to the Armed Services Committee amendments to the CIA charter.

The possibility of legislative changes in the CIA charter also was raised yesterday by Sen. John L. McClellan (D-Ark.), chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Intelligence Operations, the five-member panel that handles CIA funding each year in the Senate. It is composed of the three top-ranking Democrats and two top-ranking Republican members of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee.

"Serious allegations have been made in the media about domestic spying on the activities of the anti-Vietnam war movement and other dissident groups," McClellan said yesterday in announcing a one-day closed hearing with Colby and Helms set for Wednesday.

"It will be the purpose of the subcommittee to hear testimony as to the facts concerning these charges," McClellan said.

Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.), a member of the McClellan subcommittee, Saturday announced that the Armed Services Committee, which he heads will begin a series of hearings Thursday with Colby and Helms in closed session.

He held out the possibility that portions of his hearings may be in open session. Late in December Stennis promised his committee would conduct an "in depth" investigation of allegations against CIA.