

Senators Consider Public Assassination Hearing

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WASHINGTON, March 10—The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence will make a thorough investigation of allegations about the Central Intelligence Agency's involvement in political assassinations and the inquiry could end up in public hearings, committee sources said today.

Senator Frank M. Church, Democrat of Idaho, the committee's chairman, has pledged a careful investigation of allegations that the C.I.A. was involved in the assassination of leaders in foreign countries of plots to assassinate them. Meanwhile, several members of his committee have said privately they believe the question of whether the Government is involved in political assassinations should be treated in public session.

Senator Church has not ruled out the possibility of public sessions on the subject, but sources close to the Senator say he is concerned about embarrassment to the United States if details of the plotting become known.

Meanwhile, the White House appeared to be encouraging Mr. Church's committee to be the forum for an inquiry into assassinations.

A Hint by Nessen

After brisk and persistent questioning today, President Ford's press secretary, Ron Nessen, told newsmen "there certainly will be an opportunity for the Church commission to look into assassinations if they wish."

"The charter of the Rockefeller commission limits it to allegations of domestic spying," Mr. Nessen noted.

Many Washington observers took this to mean that President Ford would favor the Hill committee's examining an examination of the assassination question by Mr. Church's committee.

At issue are several news



Associated Press

Clarence M. Kelley, head of the F.B.I., addresses Veterans of Foreign Wars.

reports that the C.I.A. was involved in plots to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba and President Francois Duvalier of Haiti and in the assassinations of Rafael L. Trujillo, head of the Dominican Republic, and of Premier Patrice Lumumba of the Congo. President Ford has declined to comment directly on any of these allegations.

But reliable Administration sources have confirmed that the President was given an "oral" report by William E. Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, in January in which the matter of C.I.A. involvement in assassinations came up.

President Ford is also known to have told aides that he is concerned about whether a public investigation of these matters might embarrass the United States and hamper its conduct of foreign policy.

Concern Is Shared

Most members of the Senate committee share the President's concern for the national image and public stance. But several

have said privately that they believe the public should have the right to decide if it would approve of the Government's assassinating foreign leaders during peacetime as a matter of national policy.

"I don't believe the public can make this decision without a public hearing on just what our Government has done," said one Republican Senator privately. Another committee member has said bell eyes that such assassinations may be illegal under the Constitution.

Meanwhile, Clarence B. Kelley, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, defended today the bureau's need to investigate radical domestic groups.

In a speech before the Veterans of Foreign Wars here, Mr. Kelley said that "to ignore the extremist's threats would be to gamble recklessly with the lives and freedoms of the citizens we serve."

"We will not do that as long as domestic security responsibility is vested with the F.B.I.," he said.

He also said that there were

2,041 actual and attempted bombings last year, and 24 persons were killed and 206 injured. These statistics, he said, show that extremists are still a serious problem.