

CIA Opens the Mail



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IN TESTIMONY stamped "Secret" on every page, CIA chief William Colby has described how the CIA used to monitor the mails.

Not only did he reveal details that were left out of the Rockefeller report, but he admitted for the first time that the CIA had violated the law.

"It is my understanding," he confessed, "that it is illegal to open the mail, first class mail — that the only justification might be during war under certain special legal authority."

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HERE ARE the highlights of his secret testimony before a House subcommittee chaired by Representative Charles Wilson, (Dem-Calif.).

• Colby disclosed that the CIA is able to read mail without opening it. A secret chemical, whose name he cannot reveal for security reasons, enables agents to decipher the writing inside sealed envelopes. Colby swore, however, that the CIA has used this see-through chemical only overseas. It was unnecessary to use it in the United States, apparently, as long as the postal authorities cooperated with the CIA.

• The Rockefeller report mentioned that the CIA had opened mail in Honolulu, New Orleans, New York City and San Francisco. But Colby testified that the CIA, in addition, had opened mail in Miami during the April 24-28, 1961, period. Apparently, this had something to do with the CIA's Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

• The CIA also opened the mail of certain "CIA employees and foreign nationals who were the subject of inquiries." Their mail was also checked to find out who was corresponding with them.

• The CIA concentrated on monitoring the mail from the Soviet Union, and mainland China. But mail was also examined from North Vietnam, Cuba and other Communist countries. Most of these countries apparently use the Soviet postal system to route their mail abroad.

• The CIA gave a New York postal clerk "a \$500 Christmas bonus totalling \$3000 for five years," confessed Colby, for "transporting the mail bags to the area where CIA officers handled the mail." Paying off the clerk, Colby deadpanned, "was an improper act by the agency." He refused to identify the clerk. However, we can identify him as Peter F. McAuley. He said: "It was my job to help them — the postal service assigned me."

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COLBY was asked whether past Presidents knew that the CIA had been tampering with the mails. "I don't think we can say any President individually knew," said the CIA chief.

Had any attorney general been advised of the illegal operation? "Only (John) Mitchell, is our impression," replied Colby.