

# CIA Chief Tells Senate About the Poison Stash



UPI Telephoto

SENATOR BARRY GOLDWATER  
He sighted through the scope of a poison dart gun

## Public Probe Finally Opens

Washington

The Senate opened long-delayed public hearings yesterday into the Central Intelligence Agency with testimony about poison dart guns, destruction of records and apparent loose controls within the agency.

A special 11-member committee headed by Senator Frank Church (Dem-Idaho) focused initially on how a middle-level CIA scientist circumvented a presidential order to destroy bacterial poisons, but larger issues emerged from the testimony.

CIA Director William E. Colby, the panel's first witness, readily acknowledged his agency had improperly violated a 1970 directive from then President Nixon.

Colby said he couldn't explain why the CIA for five years had secretly kept 11 grams of lethal shellfish toxin.

He said some records relating to the episode were destroyed in November, 1972, with the approv-

al of his predecessor, Richard M. Helms. Colby testified he hadn't known the code-name for the poison project — MK Naomi — until earlier this year, but promised Church that "we're going to try to run it (the agency) tighter."

In an effort to set the tone for two months of hearings, Church said his committee must "make certain in the future that federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies perform their duties in ways which do not infringe upon the rights of American citizens."

For the first time in the committee's eight-month investigation, which previously was conducted behind closed doors, serious disagreements were openly expressed by two Republican members.

Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona said the panel's "criticism and analysis" has been excessive, and told employees of the CIA, "You were never more needed by this country than you are right now."

Goldwater left the hearing room long before testimony was concluded.

Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee said the committee had erred in deciding not to treat foreign assassination plots in open hearings.

"We ought to reconsider our decision to conduct an inquiry into assassinations in secret," he said.

The committee is planning to issue a public report on CIA involvement in such plots, a re-

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port that has occupied the panel for months and delayed hearings into alleged domestic abuses of the intelligence community.

Colby, testifying on the CIA's retention of bacterial poisons, was asked by Church if he could produce examples of delivery systems.

He handed up a sleek black pistol with a telescopic sight — a James Bond-type device that Colby said could shoot poison darts accurately a distance of 100 yards.

Committee members examined it with interest, and Goldwater began to remove some of its parts.

Colby said the pistol was only used for experimental purposes, so far as he knew. It was designed to kill an enemy agent silently without leaving a noticeable mark, he said.

The CIA's poison weapons program — including 37 lethal or incapacitating substances found in a vault earlier this year — has cost \$3 million over a 23-year period, he testified.

Colby said the only known use of a poison was a silver dollar equipped with deadly shellfish toxin that was carried by Francis Gary Powers, the ill-fated U-2 pilot who was shot down by the Soviets in 1960.

Powers chose not to take the suicide does, Colby testified.

Colby and a later witness, Dr. Nathan Gordon, a retired CIA scientist, agreed that Gordon was the middle-level CIA official who decided in 1970 to keep small quantities of shellfish toxin despite Mr. Nixon's 1970 order to destroy such substances.

Colby and Gordon disagreed on some particulars, however.

The CIA director testified that the toxin fell within the Nixon ban on biological warfare materials and should have been destroyed.

In addition, Colby said Helms — then head of the CIA — and Thomas Karamessines, a deputy, "recall that clear instructions were given that the CIA stockpile should be destroyed by the Army and that, in accordance with presidential directives, the agency should get out of the biological warfare business."

Colby conceded, however, that no written CIA instructions to this effect were issued.

Gordon testified that the

Army's biological laboratory at Ft. Detrick, Md., had kept the CIA's supply of shellfish toxin until Mr. Nixon's February, 1970, order. He said the Army then proposed — and he agreed — that the CIA should take custody of its own supply to keep it from being destroyed.

Gordon contended that the Nixon prohibition of such substances only applied to the Defense Department, and that in addition the shellfish toxin was a chemical substance not covered by the ban.

Senator Charles McC. Mathias Jr. (Rep-Md.) said he could not understand why Gordon reached this decision without conferring with higher CIA officials.

Gordon said he consulted with no one higher. He also differed with Colby by saying no CIA instructions on this matter ever reached him from Helms or Karamessines.

"I would never — never — have ignored an agency directive," Gordon said.

Colby accepted Church's statement that the shellfish toxin was capable of killing 14,000 persons. The CIA also kept eight milligrams of a cobra venom poison, but this did not figure in yesterday's testimony.