

Colby Opposes

Naming Agents

By Laurence Stern

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Central Intelligence Agency Director William E. Colby made an uncharacteristically public attack yesterday on the prospective release by the Senate intelligence committee of the names of 12 intelligence officials involved in assassination schemes aimed at foreign leaders.

He warned, in a hastily called press conference at CIA headquarters, that the naming of the CIA operatives as well as American citizens and foreigners who worked with the agency could subject them to "extra-legal retaliation" by individuals and "unstable or extremist groups."

Colby said, in response to a question, that he was not acting at the request of the White House, which earlier asked the Senate committee not to make public its assassination report.

The director acknowledged that he already had asked the committee, headed by Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), in testimony and by letter not to divulge the names of agency officials and cooperative private citizens. Colby's intention was now to put himself on record publicly against the committee's plans to release the names.

Colby also wrote a letter to Armed Services Committee

Chairman John C. Stennis, asking him to persuade the Senate to reject all sections of the report except the recommendations, or at least strike all names mentioned in the report, a Senate source said.

The Senate intelligence panel has already deleted 20 of the 32 names the CIA asked it to eliminate from its public report.

Church, upon learning of Colby's statement, said the committee had decided to include only the names of those who were "inseparably involved in the decisions that led to the involvement of our government in assassination attempts." He made it clear he was unswayed by the director's comments.

"We feel we have acted judiciously and properly," said Church.

In past years CIA directors were rarely seen in public, let alone at press conferences. The only other formal press conference in the agency's history, according to CIA spokesmen, was Sept. 12 during the height of the agency's confrontation with the House intelligence committee.

Colby, asked why he was

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resorting to the extraordinary measure of holding a press conference, said he wanted to make clear publicly that he felt it was "wrong" to release the names.

He said that he and other top-ranking officials of the agency were already subjected to crank calls and threats. Recently a pipe bomb exploded in the home of the field agent in charge of the Denver office of the CIA's Domestic Collection Division.

Colby said his concern extended to middle-level and senior officials of the agency whose names figure in the report. They are people, he said, who carried out orders that general public attitudes "thought appropriate at the time."

"Exposing our people to hostile retaliation is not in the tradition of our country," said Colby.

Testimony given to the Senate committee, he went on, was provided with the expectation that neither it nor the identity of the CIA witnesses would be made public.

Colby said he had cooperated fully with the Senate committee although he, like the President, stood opposed to any public discussion of details of past assassination activities by the CIA.

Colby noted that the committee had agreed under the pressure of an appellate court battle to delete the name of one CIA official who had challenged the committee's decision to name him.