

Senators Won't Seek Newsmen's Names at C.I.A.

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The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Operations abandoned today its efforts to obtain the names of American and foreign journalists who have cooperated with the Central Intelligence Agency, saying that their identities were not crucial to the success of its investigation of the Federal Intelligence agencies.

Senator Walter Huddleston, the Kentucky Democrat who heads the panel's Subcommittee on Foreign Intelligence Activities, said that the C.I.A. had agreed instead to provide the senators with "certain files describing its association with journalists over the years.

He said the committee now possessed evidence suggesting that the agency, apart from using reporters to gather intelligence abroad, had attempted to manipulate or distort news articles reported by foreign journalists, and that he believed the materials to be supplied would show whether that practice had extended to Americans as well.

Impact on Free Press

Senator Huddleston said that George Bush, the Director of Central Intelligence, made clear at a luncheon meeting today with himself and Senator Charles McC. Mathias Jr. the agency's position that it was "not at liberty to reveal the names" of any individuals who had cooperated with it, including journalists.

The Senator said the committee's concern was to determine what impact such arrangements, which have been halted, had had "on the free press in this country," and that that responsibility could be fulfilled

by discovering the sorts of individuals involved, the positions they had held and their relationship to the C.I.A.

That, he said, was "all the information we need" to make an "accurate assessment" of the danger posed by such practices, and he added that "we will not seek the names" because "the name itself is not important to us."

Mr. Huddleston conceded, however, that the committee could probably deduce, from the documents promised to it today, the identities of individual journalists or at least the names of the organizations for which they worked.

He said he did not believe now that that would become necessary, since the committee had no plans now to call news executives or reporters to testify before it.

But he said that it might be forced to do so "if we find illegal practices or absolute wrongdoing" on the part of any of those involved.

Consisting on Practice

Both Senators Huddleston and Mathias, a Maryland Republican, said that their refusal to press Mr. Bush for the names of reporters and organizations concerned was consistent with the Senate committee's past practice of declining to seek from the C.I.A. the identities of its operatives of working undercover.

However, the panel's report on plots by the agency against the lives of foreign leaders, issued last November, included over the C.I.A.'s protests the names of a number of its clandestine officials and operatives.

The agency ended its relationships with correspondents for major domestic news organizations in 1974, and last week

Mr. Bush put a halt to its use of stringers, or part-time correspondents, as agents for the collection of intelligence overseas.

As of last year, however, nearly a dozen C.I.A. staff officers working under "deep cover" abroad were posing as journalists for obscure foreign and domestic publications in connection with their work, according to a report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence.

William E. Colby, who resigned last month after nearly three years as director of Central Intelligence, has said that

the C.I.A. avoided using American journalists who worked as its agents to alter or manipulate the news, but employed foreign reporters for that purpose "all the time."

The New York Times reported yesterday that the Senate committee had been given by the C.I.A. "summaries" of instances in which it had used journalists in its employ for various purposes.

It was understood today that what the committee would now receive are the C.I.A. documents used to prepare the summaries, but with identities and organizations excused.