

Senate Committee Finally

By Murrey Marder

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate Armed Services Committee yesterday approved the nomination of William E. Colby to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency, after an inquiry spread over three weeks.

Sen. Harold E. Hughes (D-Iowa) cast the only dissenting vote on Colby, explicitly reserving the right to vote for confirmation on the Senate floor if he chooses, after studying Colby's responses to questions.

Acting Committee Chairman Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) said after the vote yesterday that he does not know if there will be a Senate floor fight over Colby, but said, "I believe he will be confirmed."

Colby is a career professional with 22 years of service in the CIA, most of it in clandestine intelligence work.

In three hearings, including an unusual open inquiry July 2 on his qualifications for the top CIA post, Colby was questioned most closely about his direction of the controversial anti-Vietcong "Phoenix" program in South Vietnam. He was also questioned about CIA involvement in the Watergate scandal, clandestine U.S. activities in Laos and Cambodia, and other subjects.

Colby denied that the Phoenix program, which he helped supervise as head of the U.S. pacification effort in South Vietnam from late 1968 to 1971, sanctioned the murder of South Vietnamese civilians suspected of being Vietcong agents. Thousands of Vietnamese were killed in the process of "neutralizing" the Vietcong, and Colby acknowledged there was initially a "counter-terror" program which was later abandoned. The deaths, he

said, came in Vietcong fire-fights with allied troops.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) said Wednesday, after prolonged questioning of Colby in a closed hearing, that he wanted assurance that "this type of program will never be repeated by an agency of the United States—particularly the CIA."

Kennedy also questioned Colby Wednesday about the

extent of CIA activities in the Watergate scandals, which were also explored yesterday in the televised hearings. Kennedy is not a member of the Armed Services Committee but was invited to participate in questioning Colby. The Senator said his vote on the Colby nomination will depend on his study of Colby's responses to additional questions submitted by Kennedy.

Approves Colby as CIA Head

Colby also was questioned Wednesday during the closed hearing about the recent assignment of CIA personnel to field posts in Cambodia, which, Sen. Symington contended, raised questions about whether U.S. involvement in clandestine warfare "on the Laos pattern" might be repeated in Cambodia.

In the questioning Colby reportedly told the Senators

that CIA personnel assigned to province capitals in Cambodia have no "paramilitary" function, but only gather intelligence. The State Department similarly has said, without identifying the men as CIA agents, that there are "10 American civilian officials" engaged in gathering information in the provinces. Other sources said there are more than double that

number of CIA agents doing similar work in Cambodia.

Symington said yesterday that "I consider it unfortunate and necessary" to conduct such activity in Cambodia at this time, but he said Colby was operating under administration instructions.

Colby was nominated by President Nixon on May 10 to succeed James R. Schlesinger

as CIA director, when the latter was named Secretary of Defense. Colby's extensive service in what has been dubbed the "dirty tricks" branch of CIA, aroused many of the recent questions about his administrative capacity to direct the agency, although he has been described by associates as a "professional's professional" in CIA work.