

C.I.A.'s Budget Is So Secret That Even Most Members of Congress Know Nothing About It

By DAVID E. ROSENBAUM

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 26—Every year, the Senate and House vote to allot money to the Central Intelligence Agency. But most members of Congress do not know how much money they are allocating, or what it will be used for.

In fact, they do not even know when they are voting to allocate it.

It is a system that has been in place since Congress agreed, by law, 25 years ago to let the C.I.A. decide how much Congress and the public should know about the agency's activities. And the agency's budget is one of its best-kept secrets.

To monitor the agency, the Senate and House have formed small subcommittees of senior members, most of them political conservatives, who, according to experts, rarely challenge the figures and information supplied to them by the agency.

Following a report by The New York Times last weekend that the C.I.A. had allegedly mounted a massive intelligence operation against dissident groups within the United States, in direct violation of the law, Congressmen of both parties and various ideologies and many other influential persons have called for detailed Congressional reviews of the agency's operations.

Proxmire Asks Action

"Immediate and severe action is necessary," said Senator William Proxmire, Democrat of Wisconsin, in a statement that was echoed by many others.

"The seriousness of this is such that I would recommend a full and exhaustive investigation by a special committee," said Clark M. Clifford, the former Secretary of Defense, who helped to draft the original legislation that established the C.I.A.

Similar statements have been made each time there has been an intelligence scandal since the agency was created by Congress in 1947.

Yet, Congress has been reluctant to act. More than 200 measures designed to make the C.I.A. more responsive to Congress have been introduced in the last quarter century, but none have been enacted.

The infrequent Congressional investigations have been held in closed sessions and have produced little change in Congressional oversight procedures.

Congress has continued to allow the agency's budget to be camouflaged in the stated budgets of other departments and agencies, and the appropriations to be spread throughout a number of different appropriations bills.

There is not a single line item in the Federal budget or a single dollar figure in any appropriations bill that can be identified as applying to the intelligence agency.

Stennis Speech Recalled

The prevailing view in Congress seems to have been that expressed three years ago by Senator John C. Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, who is the single most influential member of Congress on intelligence matters.

"You have to make up your mind that you are going to have an intelligence agency and protect it as such and shut your eyes some and take what is coming," Senator Stennis said in a Senate floor speech.

His fear and that of many other members of Congress and the intelligence community is reportedly that, if knowledge of C.I.A. operations become widespread in Congress, some Senators and Representatives may disclose confidential information that could endanger the country.

Congress had delegated to four subcommittees, two in the Senate and two in the House, its oversight function with regard to the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Senate and House Armed Services Committee each have intelligence subcommittees made up of the senior members of the full panels. The Senate subcommittee has five members, headed by Mr. Stennis. The House subcommittee has seven members, headed by Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan.

The Senate and House Appropriations Committees also have subcommittees dealing with funds for the intelligence agency. In both cases, the subcommittee members are the five senior members of the subcommittees that deal with defense appropriations.

The subcommittees seldom meet. This year, the Senate Armed Services subcommittee met twice, the House Armed Services subcommittee six

times and the Senate Appropriations subcommittee five times. The House Appropriations subcommittee did not report a record of its meetings.

Minutes of these meetings were not kept, and in most cases the actions taken were not recorded. Not only was the public thus kept in the dark, but so were the other members of Congress.

"I do not think there is a man in the legislative part of the

Government who really knows what is going on in the intelligence community, and I am terribly upset about it," Senator Howard H. Baker Jr., Republican of Tennessee, told his colleagues in a speech on the Senate floor last October.

Senator Baker and Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., Republican of Connecticut, introduced legislation in September that would create a 14-member Joint House-Senate Committee

on Intelligence Oversight with jurisdiction over all intelligence-gathering activities.

Other bills that were introduced in the Senate this year would establish a joint committee on national security, a joint committee to study government surveillance activities and a special Senate committee to study how the Senate could improve its oversight of intelligence matters.

The House Armed Services Committee considered but did not act this year on a measure that would further define the prohibition on C.I.A. activities in domestic intelligence.

The Senate Government Operations Subcommittee on Inter-Governmental Relations held two days of hearings on the Senate bills earlier this month. They, like the House

bill, are likely to get further hearings next year.

In addition, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee are to be given more access to the information about the C.I.A. in the next Congress.

"It is the duty of Congress, not the option in a democracy, to police the vast American intelligence set-up," Senator

Weicker said at the Government Operations panel's hearings on Dec. 10.

"It won't wash," he added, expressing a view that seems to be gaining more support in Congress, "for Congress to complain that it was not informed of some nefarious action when Congress has permitted itself to remain ignorant or passive when knowledgeable."

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