

Carter's CIA Findings—

Nothing 'Illegal, Improper'

Secrecy Defended

Washington

President Carter said yesterday he has reviewed reports that the CIA secretly paid millions of dollars to foreign leaders and concluded, "I have not found anything illegal or improper" in the agency's work.

Appearing somewhat angered, Carter also said Americans must understand the need for secrecy — and the danger of leaks — in some aspects of covert intelligence work.

In the second news conference of his presidency, he also:

- Said some natural gas is being withheld from consumers, called that "understandable" and said he might do the same if he ran an oil company.

- Disclosed that the leaders of all parties to the Middle East conflict will visit him by the end of May, starting with Israel's Premier Yitzhak Rabin in early March, and followed by leaders from Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia.

- Suggested that he might stop production of the B-1 bomber if the Soviets demonstrate "a commitment to disarmament."

- Maintained that he is trying to make American concern for human rights felt around the world and never intended to single out the Soviet Union as the only major transgressor.

Carter departed slightly from his "no comment" policy on the reported CIA payoffs to Jordan's King Hussein and at least 16 other foreign officials during a 30-minute, televised news conference from the old Executive Office Building next to the White House.

He said he and his intelligence oversight board have reviewed "the more controversial revelations" made in recent news reports, finding some "quite erroneous" and others having "some degree of accuracy."

But, he said, "I have not found anything illegal or improper."

He neither confirmed nor denied any of the reports, nor did he explain whether he meant that such covert, multimillion-dollar payoffs for intelligence might be considered legal and proper if they did take place.

Later, he seemed to modify his conclusion slightly, saying, "The impropriety or illegality does not exist in any ongoing CIA activity."

Carter said, however, he would take corrective action and tell the American people what had happened if he discovered any "illegal" or "improper" CIA operations in the future. To that end, he said, "I

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have taken direct personal responsibility for operation of all the intelligence agencies of our government."

Carter said he and Admiral Stansfield Turner, nominated to head the CIA, "will try to be sure . . . that everything we do is not only proper and legal but also compatible with the attitudes of the American people."

He seemed to be restraining anger when he went on to lecture the reporters — and the television audience — of the need for some protective secrecy in intelligence matters affecting national security.

"It makes it hard for us to lay a groundwork . . . (for defense of the nation) in time of war if we don't have some degree of secrecy," he said.

On other subjects, Carter was asked why the American people should make the conservation sacrifices expected under his forthcoming energy policy when they are suspicious that producers have been withholding natural gas from the market even during the winter energy crisis.

He said he would sell the need for sacrifice on the basis of the "benefits" it would bring. But, as to the gas issue, he said, without elaborating:

"It is obvious to all of us that there are some instances where natural gas is withheld from the market. That's understandable. If I was running an oil company I would reserve the right to release or to reserve some supplies of natural gas."

On other international issues, he said he is not trying to pick on the Soviet Union with his repeated statements on human rights. He said he made similar comments about conditions in South Korea, Cuba and some unidentified South American nations.

"Without taking credit for it," he said, "there's been a substantial move toward concern for human rights throughout the world . . . in a dozen or more countries.

"In Uganda, the actions there have disgusted the entire civilized world . . . Britain is now considering asking the U.N. to go into Uganda to assess the horrible murders that have apparently taken place there."

On defense spending issues, Carter said "I don't know yet" whether he will decide to put the controversial, multimillion-dollar B-1 into full production or stop it after further experimentation.

"Part of the factor to be considered is the attitude of the Soviet Union," he said. If Moscow provides "some demonstration of commitment to disarmament, obviously it would make it less likely that we'll go on with the B-1."

He said he still considers his campaign pledge to pare \$5 billion to \$7 billion in waste out of the defense budget a goal that can be achieved in the future, although he conceded overall defense spending will likely continue to increase because of inflation and the impossibility of forecasting potential enemy threats.

Carter also commented on these other subjects:

- Energy: He said there is a "horrible conglomeration of confusion" in the nation's energy situation, but he expects Congress to give quick approval to a sweeping national energy policy he plans to unveil in an address to a Joint Session of Congress April 20. Meantime, he said, he plans to send Congress legislation creating his proposed Federal Energy Department next week.

- Congress: Despite rumors to the contrary, he said, he is getting along smoothly with Congress and its leaders.

- Cuba: Restoration of normal diplomatic relations with Cuba depend upon "tangible evidence of the re-establishment of basic human rights" there and an indication Cuba will refrain from any further "overseas adventures" such as its military intervention in Angola. He said he is in "indirect" contact with Cuba's leaders through "intermediaries."

- Campaign: Vice President Walter Mondale is preparing a package of voting law changes providing for public financing of congressional elections, improvement of voter registration systems and automatic casting of electoral votes for the presidential candidate who carries a majority of a state's popular votes.