

Ex-Agent Told Secrets, CIA Charges

Washington

The Central Intelligence Agency yesterday accused Frank Snepp, a former CIA analyst who has written a new book critical of the U.S. evacuation from South Vietnam, of violating his secrecy oath.

The agency also said Snepp, who spent five years in the CIA's Saigon office, had violated a "specific promise" he made last May 17 to CIA Director Stansfield M. Turner that he would submit his book to the CIA for security clearance before publication.

Turner relayed the charges to the Justice Department yesterday, and Attorney General Griffin B. Bell said he had referred them to the civil division.

David Anderson, head of the division's litigating section, said he is looking into whether any action could or should be taken against Snepp or Random House, which plans to publish the book, "Decent Interval," next week.

The book charges that the April, 1975, evacuation was an "institutional disgrace" caused by major intelligence failures by U.S. officials in Washington and Vietnam.

Snepp, 34, who had been the CIA's principal analyst of North Vietnamese political affairs, resigned from the agency in December, 1975. He declined to comment yesterday on the CIA charges that he violated his oath.

However, he said in a postscript to his book that he had "resolved not to submit my manuscript to the agency for clearance and censorship" after learning that a CIA official had briefed two journalists on the evacuation.

"In my view, if the CIA could officially leak to the press to whitewash its role in Vietnam, it had forfeited the right to censor me in the name of security or national interest," Snepp wrote.

Washington Post