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Stennis Seeks CIA Power Curb

By Stuart Auerbach
Washington Post Staff Writer

Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called yesterday for legislation to curb the powers of the Central Intelligence Agency, as unprecedented Senate hearings continued on the confirmation of President Nixon's nominee to head the CIA, William E. Colby.

Stennis, still recuperating at Walter Reed Hospital from gunshot wounds suffered in a Jan. 30 robbery, said his committee staff has already started work on proposals to revise the legislation setting up the CIA.

He was backed by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), acting chairman of the Armed Services Committee, who said:

"The law has got to be changed. We are going to eliminate anything that will allow the CIA to run a war, which they did in Laos. I would like to see them concentrate on intelligence."

After a full day of testimony opposing Colby's confirmation from three former intelligence operatives in South Vietnam and from Rep. Robert Drinan (D-Mass.), who said Colby played "a despicable part" in allowing American atrocities in South Vietnam, Symington announced that he would recall Colby to testify in open session next week.

"The man ought to have a chance to defend himself against the charges," said Symington.

But the Missouri senator indicated that Colby's Senate

Symington commented, "I've known Mr. Colby for a good many years. I do think he's an honest, dedicated American."

Later, it appeared that the main purpose of the hearings is to pierce the secrecy surrounding the CIA. "We're trying to break stuff out," Symington said after yesterday's hearing.

This series of hearings has been unprecedented in the 26-year history of the supersecret CIA. Colby's appearance July 2 was the first time a nominee has appeared in open session before the Armed Services Committee debating his confirmation.

And yesterday's hearing was the first time opponents have been given a chance to testify in public on the qualifications of the man picked to head the CIA.

They made the most of it. Drinan, the first witness, accused Colby—in his former position as CIA station chief in Saigon and head of the pacification program called Phoenix—of presiding "over a pattern of total lawlessness and absolute violation of the basic and fundamental norms of constitutional government in South Vietnam."

Drinan, who is also a Roman Catholic priest, said, "The Phoenix program has brought about the virtual dictatorship of President Thieu because the United States has put all of the potential political opponents of President Thieu in jail."

Drinan said he talked to Colby in June, 1969, when he visited Saigon on a study team on religious and political free-

Although Colby conceded that the number of political prisoners had increased as the pacification program grew, he refused to take any responsibility for violations of the South Vietnamese constitution or for allegations of torture and brutality in the prisons, Drinan said.

"He was responsible for the sweeping injustices done to thousands of South Vietnamese," Drinan charged.

Colby's nomination was also opposed by Paul Sakwa, the former head of the CIA's spies in South Vietnam, who called Colby "an uncontrollable agent" who "slanted intelligence, submitted misinformation and permitted United States funds to be used in rigging the 1961 election in South Vietnam."

"He acts with a certain flamboyance which is typical of the old OSS [Office of Strategic Services, the World War II spy group] . . . who form a kind of clique in the agency," said Sakwa, who is no longer with the CIA.

David S. Harrington, a former Marine pacification officer in Vietnam, and K. Barton Osborn, a former Army intelligence operative in Vietnam, also testified against Colby on the basis of his connection with the Phoenix program.

"That program," said Osborn, "has been one of continued illegal practices, including gross examples of torture and assassination, from 1968 to the present."

While Colby ran the program, he continued, "the inhumane practices not only con-

fellow committee members appeared unimpressed with the criticism of Colby, they reacted favorably to portions of Drinan's testimony calling for greater control over the CIA.

The CIA, said Symington, "has gone beyond its charter. But I don't want to take it out on an individual."

He promised a more thorough oversight of the CIA by the Senate committee, and agreed with Stennis that the law should be changed to forbid the agency from running clandestine wars or engaging in any domestic spying operations.

Stennis wrote:

"The experience of the CIA in Laos, as well as the more recent disclosures of matters here at home, have caused me to definitely conclude that the entire CIA act should be entirely reviewed."

He said the committee staff has already started the review, and promised that hearings would be held on the proposed changes.

Symington said the committee will meet in executive session Monday to discuss any possible CIA involvement in the secret bombing of Cambodia. Staff members said no vote will be taken on Colby's nomination until after he appears again.

Symington refused to say if Colby would be questioned on any matters brought to him by Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox, who spent an hour with the senator Thursday. Neither man would reveal the subject of the meeting.