

Sen. Stennis Seeks to Restrict CIA Domestic Role

By Judy Nicol

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sen. John C. Stennis, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said yesterday that he hopes to hold hearings aimed at further restricting the Central Intelligence Agency's involvement in domestic affairs.

"The main thing is to limit (CIA) operations, domestic operations," said Stennis on Face the Nation, a CBS interview program.

"I totally disapprove" of domestic political intelligence operations by the CIA, said the Mississippi Democrat who is chairman of the Central Intelligence Subcommittee of his Armed Services Committee.

He said he was told in June, 1972, by Richard M. Helms, then CIA director, that the CIA had no involvement in the Watergate burglary. He said Helms, now ambassador to Iran, "came to my office a very few days thereafter and assured me they did not have anything to do with planning or anything in connection with that break-in" (of the Democratic National Committee offices in the Watergate office building.)

Helms could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Helms' successor, William E. Colby, has acknowledged that the CIA had erred in preparing a psychiatric profile of Pentagon Papers defendant Daniel Ellsberg and in providing cameras, tape recorders and disguises to White House aides E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy. Liddy and Hunt were later convicted in the Watergate break-in.

The CIA's charter, the 1947

National Security Act, says "the agency shall have no police, subpoena, law-enforcement powers or internal security functions" in the United States.

But the 1947 statute contains a loophole which has served as a charter for special foreign and domestic operations. It says that the agency shall "perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct."

Stennis, speaking of the Watergate scandals that unfolded as he was convalescing from gunshot wounds received in a January robbery, said, "As an American citizen I'm ashamed of it."

The senator said that he had attended a recent hearing at the U.S. Court of Appeals on President Nixon's refusal to turn over tapes of conversations relating to the Watergate matter.

If the Supreme Court rules that Mr. Nixon should turn

over the Watergate tapes and the President refuses, Stennis said, "I think it would be the most grave situation that's arisen maybe in a hundred years."

In an ABC broadcast yesterday, Sen. Howard Hughes (Iowa) said that the American people "should not be afraid of the impeachment process."

"To be afraid to use (the impeachment power) would mean we would be placing in the hands of this President and all future Presidents an implied power that they could do anything they wanted to in defiance of the law and the courts . . . with impunity, with immunity," Hughes said on ABC's Issues and Answer program.

"If the facts indicate that the President is in violation of the law, or if the President is refusing to obey the direct orders of the Supreme Court, then not to use (impeachment) would be a failure of the system entirely," said Hughes.

A third Democratic senator,

in remarks prepared for delivery in the Senate today, called for a Commission on the Office of the Presidency to examine the institution.

Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.) said "the American people seem to have gone beyond simple respect for the office of the Presidency. . . Instead we have begun to create a monarchy out of an office intended to be the bulwark of democracy."