

CIA Probers Seek To Question Nixon

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Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho) said yesterday that Senate investigators will attempt to question former President Nixon as part of their inquiry into the Central Intelligence Agency and other government intelligence operations.

The chairman of the Senate committee in charge of the investigation, Church, said Nixon's testimony would be sought in connection with the so-called "Huston plan" for domestic surveillance and any other illegal activities of the CIA during the time that he served as President.

The committee discussed the question at a closed session yesterday morning and "we are now in the process of approaching Mr. Nixon and his attorney," Church said.

The former President's lawyer, Herbert J. Miller Jr., said yesterday afternoon that he had yet to be contacted and declined to discuss whether Nixon would agree to submit to questioning voluntarily.

According to informed sources, a Nixon deposition was sought by the staff of the Rockefeller commission during its recent investigation of CIA domestic operations, but the former President rejected



SEN. FRANK CHURCH
... heads inquiry

the request. Unlike the Church committee, the Rockefeller commission had no subpoena power.

A delegation of Watergate special prosecutors and grand jurors questioned Nixon in California last month on "a wide range" of issues, but it is not known whether the CIA's operations were among them. The former President

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testified under oath for some 11 hours and was not under subpoena.

Miller said he has been besieged with so many requests for Nixon's testimony that he made it a policy not to discuss any of them. "The line stretches from here to Chicago," he said; any request from the Church committee "would be a matter to be discussed with my client."

Church indicated that the committee would make no attempt to question Nixon before winding up the current phase of its investigation, which centers on the CIA's involvement in foreign assassination plots.

As Vice President in the Eisenhower administration, Nixon was White House "action officer" for the initial planning of the Cuban Bay of Pigs invasion. The CIA was reportedly involved at the same time in unsuccessful plans and attempts to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro that were picked up and continued through the Kennedy administration.

Church, however, said Nixon's connection with the Bay of Pigs planning "has only the most tenuous relationship to the assassination issue as such." He said the committee was attempting to wind up the assassination phase of its investigation by the end of the month and doubted that the former President's testimony would be "very important" on that score.

But looking ahead, Church said the committee would want to ask Nixon about "presidential control of the intelligence community" and about such issues as the Huston plan.

Named after Nixon White House aide Tom Charles Huston, the plan was drafted in

1970 and called for intensive spying—including illegal entries, electronic surveillance, the opening of private mail and increased use of undercover agents on college campuses—to cope with domestic protests.

The proposal was approved by Nixon in July, 1970, but reportedly was rescinded five days later in the face of strong objections from the late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. Memos from Huston to Nixon made public during the investigation of the Watergate scandal contained warnings that some parts of the plan were "clearly illegal" and posed "serious risks to the administration."

Church pointed out that the resolution setting up the Senate committee "calls for us to make a thorough investigation of that [Huston] plan." He said the committee probably would want to question Nixon about it, although no final decision has been made.

Church also indicated that the committee staff would contact Nixon's lawyer in an effort to determine whether the former President might, despite current impressions, be able to supply helpful information on the assassination issue as well.

"We want to be careful. We want to be sure," Church said. "We don't want to leave anyone out who ought to be contacted."

Stepping up its pursuit of that issue, the committee spent yesterday afternoon questioning retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale in executive session and announced plans to hear from nine other witnesses this week.

Lansdale has said that he drafted contingency plans for dealing with the 1962 Cuban missile crisis that "may" have included Castro's assassination. A counterinsurgency expert with much experience in Vietnam and the Philippines, Lansdale has indicated that he was instructed to draft the contingency plans by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, but said that neither President Kennedy nor Robert Kennedy told him to list Castro's assassination as one of the options.

The Senate committee has been attempting to determine the "chain of command" that led to the CIA's involvement in assassination plots during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations and the early days of the Johnson administration.