

NO CIA LEAKS

CPYRGHT By DAVID LAWRENCE

WASHINGTON. Although the Senate held a session in secret for several hours on Thursday—something it rarely does—to debate a proposal to enlarge the committee which deals with the Central Intelligence Agency, the raising of the issue itself, was a wasted effort.



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For, even if the Senate hadn't voted, as it did, to shelve the measure, the President of the United States is empowered by Constitutional precedents to decide to what committee of Congress, if any, he wishes to give information concerning the operations of any executive agency involving national security.

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TWO subcommittees—composed of members of the Armed Services Committee and the Appropriations Committee—have been carrying on satisfactorily the relations between the Senate and the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Senate, however, is divided today between those who consider themselves authorized not just to "advise" but to make American foreign policy, and those who feel a sense of responsibility to the President as the person charged by the Constitution with the conduct of relations with the other governments in the world.

It was evident from the start that the purpose of the move to enlarge the committee was primarily to get information to use in ways which could unwittingly do damage to American foreign relations.

Again and again, news and radio dispatches in recent weeks from Peiping and Moscow have reported how gratified the Communists were to be able to publicize the dissent expressed in the Senate as an indication that this nation is not behind its government and will force a surrender in Vietnam.

BUT EVEN IF there were no war going on, the restrictions on giving information concerning the Central Intelligence Agency are clear-cut.

This was pointed out by Rear Adm. William F. Raborn, who has just retired as the head of the CIA. In an interview published this week in

"U.S. News & World Report," he said:

"The national security act makes the director of Central Intelligence exclusively responsible for protecting the security of the sources and methods of the entire intelligence community. I was authorized by the President and by National Security Council directives to discuss such matters only with the special subcommittees designated for this purpose, not with any others.

Q. What is the reason for this limitation?

A. It is not arbitrary or bureaucratic—we are safeguarding the lives of trusted agents and our own staff people all over the world who contribute to our government's intelligence objectives.

"We owe it to them to take every precaution to protect them—and we owe it to our government to deny hostile intelligence services even indirect hints or the slightest clues which might enable them to take steps to blunt our intelligence operations, methods and sources.

Q. DO YOU MEAN it is a question of security leaks?

A. I prefer to say inadvertent disclosure. Even a professional intelligence officer has to be alert to draw the line between information which might point to the source of the method we used to obtain it.

The more people who have both types of information, the more you multiply the chance that somebody will overstep that line by accident.

The meetings between CIA officials and the existing Congressional committees which have been satisfactory under both Republican and Democratic Congresses.

Senators have respected the importance of protecting the sources and have recognized that to use in public speeches any information based on CIA data would only impair the usefulness of that organization.

The strangest thing about the whole episode is that, in the midst of a war crisis, some Senators should insist upon any move which, by reason of indiscreet disclosures, could damage the United States abroad. Unfortunately questions like these are not clearly explained to the voters, or they would repudiate at the polls those members of Congress who put their own quest for publicity above the interests of their country.