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CIA Activities Defended, Colby Pledges Openness

By Oswald Johnston
Star-News-Staff Writer

The Central Intelligence Agency still performs clandestine operations around the world but will no longer lie to the American people about them, CIA director William E. Colby told an unbelieving and unfriendly audience yesterday.

During a two-hour questioning session before a largely hostile panel, Colby revealed no secrets and evaded most efforts by his questioners to trap him into embarrassing admissions.

In a brief prepared statement to the panel, sponsored by the Center for National Security Studies, a newly constituted and large self-appointed group of foreign policy experts, Colby tried to justify operations abroad as a useful adjunct of national policy. But he claimed the scope of "dirty tricks" operations has diminished since Cold War days.

The symposium, devoted to the CIA's covert programs, had over a period of two days heard numerous papers denouncing such operations as illegal, immoral and unconstitutional.

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his questioners was virtually never acknowledged, let alone responded to. Panelists several times denounced as "an outrageous lie," or "another lie" a Colby assertion that torture of Viet Cong was not U. S. policy in the Phoenix program, or that U. S. military attaches in Vietnam doubled as intelligence agents. Colby seemed not to have heard, most of the time.

On the subject of government lying, Colby asserted that the CIA, once obsessed with "non-accountability" of its clandestine operations, will no longer deny them when called to account publicly. It will merely refuse to discuss them and try to keep them a secret, he said.

"I have proscribed the phrase 'plausible denial,'" Colby said. "I don't believe we can tell the American people an untruth." The room rocked with derisive laughter.

One panelist, Nancy Stein of the North American Congress on Latin America, drew applause with a long denunciation of U. S. oppressive imperialism and criminality in the underdeveloped world. This provoked Colby's only show of anger of the afternoon,

when he heatedly denied the 20,000 Vietnamese killed in the Phoenix program, which he ran, were "murdered" and denounced her applauding the assassination in Uruguay of U. S. foreign service officer David Mitrione.

THE REVELATION last week of some \$11 million in CIA funds pumped into Chile to oppose deposed president Salvador Allende produced many questions yesterday but produced no new revelations.

Rep. Michael Harrington, D-Mass., who was inadvertently responsible for the disclosure of secret Colby testimony on the Chile operation, tried to win admission that Congress had been insufficiently briefed on the policy. It is up to Congress to legislate the methods by which it oversees the CIA, Colby replied.

Colby repeated earlier denials that the agency had any direct part in the Chile coup. "We were looking for a change in government," he admitted, thereby drawing another chorus of derisive laughter, "in the 1976 elections there."

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