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CONFERENCE

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Colby Denies Any Direct CIA Role in Overthrow of Allende

BY RICHARD RESTON
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WASHINGTON—In the face of occasional shouts of "liar" and "war criminal," CIA Director William E. Colby Friday defended his agency's right to conduct covert operations abroad and denied any direct U.S. intelligence role in the 1973 military coup in Chile.

The head of the Central Intelligence Agency appeared on Capitol Hill for three hours of public testimony at the conclusion of a two-day conference on the secret activities of the CIA. The conference was sponsored by the Private Center for National Security Studies and was held in a hearing room of the New Senate Office Building before several hundred spectators.

While Colby denied a direct CIA role in the Chilean coup, he nevertheless conceded: "We did look forward to a change in government,

but through democratic elections by political forces." He said the clear objective of U.S. policy in that country was to "encourage the continued existence of democratic forces for future elections."

The Chilean coup, in September, 1973, took the life of Marxist President Salvador Allende.

The focus on Chile at the conference was prompted by last weekend's disclosure of a letter by Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.) that reported the CIA had funneled up to \$8 million into that country to undermine the Allende government.

Colby refused all comment on the specific methods and techniques used in covert CIA activities ranging from Chile to Indochina and other nations of the developing world.

In his opening statement the director defended the policy of secrecy covering certain CIA actions.

"If we cannot protect our intelligence sources and methods, I fear we may reach a situation in which our adversaries profit from our openness while we are blinded by their secrecy . . .

"In addition, in a world which can destroy itself through misunderstanding or miscalculation,

important that our leaders have a clear perception of the motives, intentions and strategies of other powers so that they can be deterred, negotiated about, or countered in the interests of peace or, if necessary, the ultimate security of our country."

Colby faced an openly hostile conference panel and audience. His testimony was often interrupted by hisses, jeers and derisive laughter.

At one point, when Colby was explaining CIA activities in Vietnam, a panel member broke in with a sharp "that's an outrageous lie." Later, another panel member called out, "Another lie, another lie."

From the audience came shouts of "How many did you kill in Vietnam, Colby?" and "You're not only a liar, you're a Nazi war criminal."

To the Vietnam comment, Colby answered with a terse but even-voiced: "I didn't kill anybody."

A final question came from a Vietnamese in the audience began with this comment: "How can you go home at night and respond to your wife and children after all the killing in Vietnam?" Colby said he has spent seven years in Vietnam trying to help the Vietnamese protect themselves, and that he had come away from that country with "great affection, admiration and sympathy for the Vietnamese people."

At no point during the long and somewhat stormy session did the CIA director lose his temper or composure.

The conference panel included two members of Congress, one from the CIA, State Department

and Defense officials, and Daniel Ellsberg, the man who leaked the Pentagon Papers to the press.

Ellsberg and Colby exchanged sharp remarks at one point during the afternoon discussion. Ellsberg accused Colby of not understanding the United States Constitution and of pursuing a policy of secrecy that makes the U.S. government similar to the Soviet regime and its policies of suppression.

Time and again Colby attempted to defend the covert activities of the agency.

"The agency conducts such activities only when specifically authorized by the National Security Council. Thus, CIA covert actions reflect national policy," Colby said.

"National policy has been in a state of change, and CIA's involvement in covert action has correspondingly changed."

He said CIA covert operations overseas were now only a small part of the overall U.S. intelligence-gathering mission. He said this was true because the United States was no longer faced with the same kind of Communist subversion and insurgency that characterized the 1950s and 1960s.

Some of the sharpest debate during the conference came over Colby's role as head of the old Phoenix program in Vietnam, an operation designed to disrupt and eliminate major sectors of the Communist Viet Cong and North Vietnamese leadership apparatus.

Colby appeared at the conference as part of a new CIA effort to explain agency plans and operations in public and with more candor.

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