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Putting the Lid on CIA Scandals

There has been a quiet but powerful effort to shut the lid on CIA scandals.

Three days after Adm. Stansfield Turner was sworn in as the new CIA chief, he spoke to Attorney General Griffin B. Bell about plugging leaks. Turner would like to impose criminal sanctions against government officials who disclose CIA secrets.

On Capitol Hill, Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) told colleagues that he had no inclination to investigate past scandals. His committee had enough to do, he said, just keeping up with current intelligence operations.

The committee unanimously agreed at a secret meeting not to dwell on the CIA's past. "The committee feels it is not possible with the resources available to investigate all past wrongdoings," a spokesman told us.

There is one curious exception to Inouye's disinterest in old CIA skeletons. He directed his staff to proceed cautiously with an investigation of the John F. Kennedy assassination. This was a promise, Inouye explained, that he had made to the Senate.

But competent sources claim Inouye has fallen under the influence of the CIA, which has quietly encouraged him to shut off inquiries into past scandals but to go ahead with a discreet investigation of the Kennedy murder.

The CIA's strategy, according to these sources, is to stymie the House assassination probe. Too close scrutiny of the tragedy might embarrass the CIA, which withheld crucial facts from the Warren Commission. The CIA, therefore, would prefer to shift the investigation to the Senate back burner.

This is merely one manifestation of the CIA's grim, new determination to

keep out of the headlines in the future. For the CIA is largely behind the drive to tighten security in Washington.

As a result of this backstage push, both houses of Congress are preparing to take a new look at the secrecy question. There is growing sentiment on Capitol Hill, led by Rep. Charles Bennett (D-Fla.), to give the federal government the power to jail news leakers. President Carter, meanwhile, is trying to limit the number of people who have access to secret documents.

There are legitimate secrets, of course, which the government should protect. But invariably, the classification power is used to protect government officials, not to protect the country. It is perilous to empower those who direct the people's business to decide which facts cannot be divulged, under pain of a prison sentence.

We have broken our share of CIA secrets. It might be useful to review a few of them as examples of the secrets that the CIA has sought to hide from the populace:

- Back in January, 1971, we revealed that the CIA had recruited Mafia mobsters to knock off Cuba's Fidel Castro. We named the mobsters and their CIA contacts.

- We reported in March, 1972, that the CIA had plotted to block leftist leader Salvador Allende from taking power after he was elected president of Chile.

- We broke the story in November, 1972, that the CIA, together with the FBI and Secret Service, had been spying on prominent Americans. We quoted from a secret CIA report on singer Ertha Kitt as evidence that the

CIA had a strange interest in her sex life.

- In April, 1973, we uncovered the fact that the CIA had attempted to obstruct the FBI investigation of the Watergate scandal. We divulged the following month that White House staff chief H. R. Haldeman had asked the CIA to hamper the investigation.

- We told in May, 1974, of the CIA payoffs to world leaders. We followed with a report that the CIA had also provided visiting leaders with women. Among the recipients of CIA favors, whom we identified, was Jordan's King Hussein.

- In February, 1975, we told of love traps which the CIA operated in New York City and San Francisco to blackmail foreign diplomats. Through hidden one-way mirrors, CIA agents filmed the sexual adventures of the diplomats.

- Not long afterward, we broke the story that the CIA had paid the Howard Hughes organization a fantastic \$400 million to recover an obsolete Soviet submarine from the bottom of the Pacific.

We have also written that the CIA has been penetrated by the Soviet KGB and that some CIA station chiefs have taken emoluments from foreign nationals

These revelations, in our opinion, have never violated security. True, we have embarrassed the CIA. We have caught the CIA playing the same dirty games as the Soviet KGB. The purpose presumably was to enhance U.S. influence around the globe, but the result has been precisely the opposite. It was a mistake, we believe, for the CIA to operate at the KGB level.

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