

Ford Upset by Leaks on CIA, Nessen Says

Sensitivity of Material and Possible Damage to Reputations Cited

BY DON IRWIN
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—President Ford is "displeased" by continuing leaks of "alleged partial information" about the purported role of the Central Intelligence Agency in plots to assassinate foreign leaders, the White House said Tuesday.

Press secretary Ron Nessen said that Mr. Ford was concerned because classified data dealing with the alleged plots, now under review in Congress and within the Administration, were difficult to appraise, and were of "great sensitivity."

"People's reputations are at stake, and the President feels it's not in the national interest to spew out incomplete, unclear portions and bits and pieces day after day," Nessen said during a long exchange with reporters.

Nessen refused, in responding to newsmen's questions, to direct the President's displeasure against individuals, specifically Vice President Rockefeller. The Vice President headed a commission that reported June 10 on the CIA's domestic operations but turned secret materials dealing with assassination charges over to the White House without public comment.

Last Sunday, Rockefeller said during a television interview that former President John F. Kennedy and his brother, former Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy, might have played roles in alleged assassination plots by the CIA.

On Monday, when Nessen was asked for Mr. Ford's reaction to Rockefeller's remarks, he referred questioners to the President's last press conference. At that meeting, on June 9, Mr. Ford emphasized the sensitive nature of the assassination material and cautioned the congressional committees to which it was being made available to use "utmost prudence" in handling it.

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES
18 JUNE 1975

When asked Tuesday if the President was upset with Rockefeller, Nessen replied: "I think I talked about that yesterday. But his (Mr. Ford's) feeling about leaks . . . he feels really strongly that this is not really the orderly and proper way to handle this."

Nessen refused also to comment on Rep. Michael J. Harrington (D-Mass.), who was barred Monday by his former colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee from access to classified information because he had leaked classified information about CIA operations in Chile.

"I don't think I ought to comment on the workings of Congress," said Nessen, who has frequently done just that. As laughter welled up, he added: "In that particular area."

Meantime, presidential counsel Roderick M. Hills told the Washington Star that the White House was combing records of the National Security Council for clues to U.S. policy between 1959 and 1963.

Published allegations have linked the CIA with the assassination in 1961 of Rafael L. Trujillo, dictator of the Dominican Republic, and with plots to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Hills said he could not say whether the council's minutes contained any reference to assassination plots. But he said the search could determine "who is responsible for what" in the area of Caribbean policy during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations.

The National Security Council minutes were not reviewed by the Rockefeller commission, Hills said. He indicated, however, that they might be made available to the select Senate committee headed by Sen. Frank Church (D-Ida.) that is investigating CIA activities.

Nessen had nothing but praise for the work of the Church committee. Mr. Ford, he said, believes it has operated "in a very responsible way."

When asked if the President would support a decision by the committee

to release assassination data, Nessen said that the matter had not been discussed and that no decision was likely until the committee had completed its inquiry.

Nessen did not itemize the news stories that had caused the President's concern. There have, however, been a variety of reports, some of them conflicting, alleging CIA links with conspiracies to kill foreign leaders and with assassinations.

Nessen, a former NBC correspondent and United Press International reporter, denied that he was issuing "a warning or a caution or a criticism" to the news media.

"I'm just offering you the President's views on how he thinks this ought to be responsibly handled in the interests of history and the interests of national security in the national interest, in the interest of foreign relations, in the interest of people's reputations," Nessen said.

When asked how to comply with the President's wishes except by suppressing available information, Nessen replied that Mr. Ford "is asking for a responsible manner of handling it." Despite Mr. Ford's "strong feelings," Nessen said, the President has not initiated any investigation of the sources of the leaks.