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CIA director says files reveal nothing on Riha whereabouts

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Nothing in the files of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency reveals whether missing University of Colorado Prof. Thomas Riha is alive or dead, CIA Director Stansfield Turner has told a federal judge.

Turner made the statement in a letter to Denver U.S. Dist. Judge Richard P. Matsch this week after the judge asked Turner to review CIA files that have been withheld from Riha's estate. Attorney Martin Buckley, representing Riha's nephew, had complained the CIA was withholding some documents on Riha and deleting material from other documents.

The Turner letter says the CIA has disclosed all it can about the case without endangering confidential sources of information.

"I am not insensitive to the plaintiff's desire to determine whether his uncle is alive or dead," Turner wrote to Matsch. "However, in my opinion, the most that can be said about the information contained in agency documents is that it is inconclusive."

But Buckley said Wednesday that he has new reasons to doubt the CIA is revealing all it can about Riha's disappearance and whereabouts.

He said he got a memo this week from military intelligence that Riha was sighted by an unidentified person in Canada in 1971, two years after he vanished from the Boulder campus. The CIA never has reported the alleged Canadian sighting, Buckley said.

He said he'll give further thought to that fact and Turner's letter before deciding whether to ask for additional court intervention.

Turner said he had reviewed nine documents and other materials that had been withheld completely or in part. He said two concerned a reported sighting of Riha in his native Czechoslovakia in 1973. Their disclosure could lead to identification of the original source of the information who might be put in danger, Turner said.

He said "The CIA took no investigative action on the reported sighting." The information was "third-hand," according to Turner, and "the actual identity or reliability of the original source of the information is not known to this agency."

Turner said material deleted from other documents would reveal secret information about CIA organization and personnel. One document contains "unsubstantiated derogatory information on individuals not known to be connected with the disappearance," and that information isn't pertinent to the case, he said.

Two other documents, which were withheld entirely, are cables which, according to Turner, contain speculative information that wouldn't shed light on Riha's disappearance or whereabouts.

Turner said he is satisfied that the agency has been as forthcoming as possible in releasing information to the plaintiff.