

# New files reveal Bush-Ford rift over CIA probe

Los Angeles Times

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — While he was director of the CIA, George Bush secretly battled with the Justice Department and White House officials in an effort to restrict a federal criminal investigation of senior CIA officials, according to newly released files in the Gerald R. Ford presidential library.

The new materials show that in October 1976, citing the need to protect intelligence sources, Mr. Bush repeatedly sought to prevent some documents from being declassified and CIA witnesses from being called before a federal grand jury. The grand jury was investigating charges that officials working for or with the CIA, including former Director Richard Helms, had lied under oath to Congress about CIA operations in Chile.

When White House officials reminded Mr. Bush that President Ford had already given a public pledge that his administration would not use the classification process or take any other action to prevent the exposure of illegal activities, Mr. Bush still balked, saying he had not personally received any written directive from the president spelling out this policy.

"An impasse exists between the Justice Department and Director George Bush of the CIA," White House counsel Philip W. Buchen wrote to Mr. Ford. Mr. Buchen told the president that if the Justice Department failed to obtain the information in dispute, it "would abort the pending investigation and lead to no prosecution."

In a memo at the time to another White House official, Mr. Bush said, "There is no intention on my part or on the part of this agency to take any action that might reasonably be construed as an effort to thwart or frustrate the investigation being conducted by the [Justice] Department.

"At the same time, I mean to do whatever is necessary and appropriate to carry out my statutory mandate to protect intelligence sources and methods," he said.

President Ford supported the Justice Department and his White House aides and instructed Mr. Bush to let federal prosecutors have what they needed. The Justice investigation eventually resulted in Mr. Helms' 1977 plea of no contest to two criminal charges of failing to testify "fully, completely and accurately" to Congress.

Mr. Bush's efforts contrasted sharply with those of his immediate predecessor at the CIA, former Director William E. Colby. It was Mr. Colby who first referred to the Justice Department the allegations of false testimony by CIA officials, thus leading to the criminal prosecution that Mr. Bush was seeking to restrict.

When asked for comment, Craig Fuller, Mr. Bush's chief of staff, said through a spokeswoman that the vice president's office first heard of the Buchen files when questions were raised by the *Times* yesterday. He said he would withhold comment until seeing the documents.

The Washington Post \_\_\_\_\_  
The New York Times \_\_\_\_\_  
The Washington Times \_\_\_\_\_  
The Wall Street Journal \_\_\_\_\_  
The Christian Science Monitor \_\_\_\_\_  
New York Daily News \_\_\_\_\_  
USA Today \_\_\_\_\_  
The Chicago Tribune \_\_\_\_\_  
**BALTIMORE SUN - 16A**  
Date **30 Sept. 88**

ILLEGIB