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By MICHAEL O'NEILL

Washington, Dec. 10.—The biggest laugh around town

these days results from the frantic efforts of the super-secret Central Intelligence Agency to get off the hook for the whopping U. S. intelligence failure in the Middle East crisis.

All of a sudden there are numerous "leaks" to the effect that the CIA really turned in a Grade A performance: specifically, that it tipped Ike in advance to the decision of the British and French to invade Egypt. If it did, Ike is the only one who knows it and he has said publicly his first knowledge of the decision came from the newspapers.

The CIA is understandably anxious to bolster its reputation. If U. S. intelligence can't find out what our allies are up to, what's going to happen if Russia or somebody else decides to pull off a sneak attack like Pearl Harbor? It's a little more embarrassing because CIA Director Allen Dulles is just fixing to build himself a \$47,000,000 spy nest over in Virginia where almost nobody wants it.

**Would Like to Know Why Intelligence Failed**

Sen. Hubert Humphrey, a leading Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, already has called for a sweeping Congressional investigation of the Administration's foreign policies. In particular, he said, the inquiry should find out why U. S. intelligence failed to catch on to the Israeli-British-French plans.

A lot of key Democrats are lining up behind the investigation idea so right now we're headed for another one of those "great debates"—reminiscent perhaps of the MacArthur dismissal hearings in 1951 and the Pearl Harbor investigation in 1945-46.

The current controversy began at 11:32 A.M. Tuesday, Oct. 30, when Prime Minister Eden arose in the House of Commons and announced the British-French decision to move into the Suez Canal zone if Israel and Egypt did not comply with their quit-fighting ultimatum.

**Told Ike After Eden Had Begun to Talk**

That same day, at 4:36 P.M., White House Press Secretary James C. Hagerty announced that the President's "first knowledge" of the ultimatum had been "obtained through press reports." America's allies didn't get around to notifying Ike until about 16



Sen. Hubert Humphrey Wants probe of foreign policy

minutes after Eden began his speech. Shortly before Eden's announcement U. S. Ambassador Winthrop W. Aldrich was given the brushoff when he tried to find out what was going on in London.

From this and other circumstances observers generally concluded Ike had no advance inkling of the British-French decision. But the "leaks" say this isn't so.

These "inspired" reports say the CIA delivered an ultra secret report to the White House a full 24 hours before the Israelis attacked on Oct. 29 and 48 hours before the British and French intervened. The report, the surprisingly "well-informed sources" say, also went to Secretary of State Dulles, the FBI, and six other members of an intelligence advisory committee which reports to the National Security Council.

**It Didn't Say When Nor Predict Ultimatum**

According to the leaks, the CIA report said flatly that Israel would attack Egypt and that Britain and France had decided to invade the Suez Canal zone. But it did not say when these things would happen nor report the British-French plan to fire an ultimatum at Israel and Egypt.

The CIA concludes the "leaks"

said, that the document sent to the White House was solid—not an "iffy" affair at all—and that it represented intelligence at its finest. According to this view, Hagerty's statement that Ike got his first report from the press did not mean he had not learned it privately beforehand.

But all this doesn't answer the \$64 question raised by Congressional critics: If the United States knew about the disastrous British-French decision 48 hours ahead of time, why didn't it make any move to break up the play?

**Say We Didn't Send Any Private Protests**

Key American diplomatic officials confided that this government did not send any private protests to London or Paris against any reported invasion decision. This was confirmed by British and French sources.

Dulles knew about a Suez invasion plan the British and French had drafted after Egypt nationalized the Canal and he knew about the troop buildup on Cyprus. But U. S. diplomats said he was convinced until the very moment of Eden's speech, that he had talked our allies out of going into action.

Top officials here, and not, too privately, expressed irritation over "poor intelligence" during the hectic conferences following Eden's announcement. Although the CIA discounted it, reliable sources also reported that a row developed on the issue inside the Administration and that the CIA ordered its inspection division to investigate.

**Report \$750 Million Is Hidden in Budget**

The CIA, whose reported \$750,000,000 appropriation is hidden in the budget, is so hush-hush even Congress isn't told everything it does. So there's no telling exactly what was in the report sent to the White House. But Congressional critics said there must have been something wrong with the report—or the intelligence system—if it failed to prod Administration leaders into action.

In any event, Humphrey and Co. are determined to find out what went wrong. While the U.S. taxpayer is paying those hundreds of millions a year in hidden funds for the big spy agency the Democratic critics say this isn't doing much good if U.S. intelligence falls down as badly in the future as it did in the Middle East. They say another flop could mean the agency's destruction.

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