

La CIA: Does it wear a white or black hat?

By Kathy Barnard

of the Tribune

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency is not perfect.

That is the one thing that members of a seven-man panel at the University of Idaho Borah Symposium

agreed upon Tuesday night after more than two hours of discussion and debate.

The second night of the annual symposium was dedicated to CIA activities in Latin America. A somewhat smaller crowd than Monday's gathered at the UI Student Union Building to listen to the speakers chastize and defend the use of covert intervention in other countries in that region.

Mendo Cordera, a member of Nicaragua's Sandinista government who works at the Nicaraguan Embassy here, and Jaime Barrios, head of Chile Democatico, described what impact "La CIA" has had on their countries in recent history.

"Covert operations by the CIA are part of a greater policy design that is leading Central America to war," Cordera said. He said the counter revolutionary force being supported by the American intelligence agency has wreaked havoc in his country politically, socially and economically.

Approximately 1,500 Nicaraguans have died in the conflict, half of those being women, children and elderly, he said, and approximately \$150 million damage has been done to property in the small country. Barrios also chastized the agency for its involvement in the downfall of President Salvador Allende in the mid-1970s.

According to the Chilean, Allende was elected by his countrymen in a "clean" election, but because the Nixon administration did not agree with his plan to shift to a more socialistic economic system, he sent the CIA in to sabotage Allende's administration.

There is evidence, according to Barrios, that the CIA attempted to bribe Chilean Congressman not to confirm Allende's election and spent at least \$8 million on propaganda and other covert operations in the country against Allende and for his successor Augusto Pinoche.

"My question is how were U.S. interests served by the rise of this dictatorship (Pinoche's)?" Barrios asked.

Michael Harrington, a former U.S. senator, and Ralph McGehee, a CIA agent for the past 25 years, joined in the criticism of the agency.

Harrington, who served on the House Intelligence Committee in the late 1960s and early 1970s said his main complaint with the use of covert action is what it does to the image of the United States as "a society that holds itself up as different than other countries ... and then becomes the driving force in the destruction of another country's government."

"The CIA has used the red herring of 'the Soviets are coming, the Soviets are coming, the Soviets are coming!' so we can move in and implement our own policies," McGehee agreed. "And if the agency cannot find proof of Soviet intervention in a country, it manufactures it."

Only William Colby and David Atlee Phillips attempted to defend the agency's action, and they, too, had to concede the CIA has been less than perfect in the past.

Of the Chilean situation, Colby, a former director of the CIA, said, "I don't want to justify that action because I think the whole operation was misguided, mistaken and totally wrong."

But, he added, it was not a "white hat and black hat" conflict either. He said the agency was concerned about Allende's close relationship with Fidel Castro. Phillips, former director of the agency's Latin American operations, agreed