

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE C-8

9 February 1987

UPSTATE POL TARGETS CIA

His goals no secret Key panel chairman



Matthew McHugh

By HARRISON RAINIE

WASHINGTON—Rep. Matthew McHugh (D-Ithaca), an increasingly prominent and respected lawmaker, has taken the helm of a House intelligence subcommittee that he vows will rein in the CIA and keep closer watch on all covert spy operations.

McHugh was named last week to head the legislation subcommittee of the House Intelligence Committee and immediately joined in writing a bill with the committee's chairman, Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), that would end the practices that the Reagan administration used to launch the secret arms-for-hostages deals with Iran.

"We are going to eliminate any ambiguity in the law that could be used by an executive to do things he should not constitutionally do," vowed McHugh.

The intelligence oversight amendments co-written by McHugh would prohibit the President from launching a covert action unless he gave advance written notification to Congress. In "extraordinary circumstances"—such as the interception of the Achille Lauro hijackers—when "national security" interests prevent prior notification, the President would have to give notice within 48 hours.

In addition, the written presidential "finding" that launches a covert campaign must also be disclosed to all statutory members of the National Security Council, including the secretaries of defense and state.

The measure will prevent "future Iran-type scandals," McHugh said, because it will



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not allow the President to issue a secret finding (as he did on Jan. 17, 1986, to begin U.S. sales of arms to Iran) or keep its contents secret from Congress and key cabinet members.

The measure is likely to sail through McHugh's panel—probably after public hearings later this month—and be passed by the full House. The Senate Intelligence Committee is considering a similar proposal.

McHugh said, though, that his agenda is broader than that bill. He wants to strengthen the office of the inspector general at the CIA to make it independent, investigative and analytical instead of the "captive" office that it is.

McHugh said he plans to look at the recommendations developed by the Tower Commission that was convened by President Reagan to look at his foreign policy apparatus.

The Democratic lawmaker said that if the Tower Com-

mission spells out a policy-making role for the National Security Council he will look at ways to make the council "more accountable," perhaps by requiring Senate confirmation of the national security adviser and through legislation that might ban the council from getting involved in foreign policy at the operational level.

He also is considering introducing legislation that will establish clear legal penalties for breaking the nation's intelligence oversight laws. In current laws there is no criminal or civil penalty for failing to notify Congress about covert action or, for instance, not following the terms of the Boland Amendment that tried to prevent the administration from giving military aid to the Contras in Nicaragua.

McHugh is one of the most widely trusted liberals in the House and is likely to turn the moribund subcommittee into a legislative power. He is considered thoughtful and

low-key, so his strong opinions on the Iran-Contra scandal carry weight.

"Even if (the Iran-Contra scandal) does not lead to legal problems, it has created a very substantial foreign policy disaster for the U.S. in the Middle East, among our NATO allies and, most of all, in decimating our antiterrorism policy," he said. "That is why it is a more serious scandal than Watergate.

"Our national interests were not damaged in Watergate. But in this scandal American capabilities and interests around the world have been seriously eroded.

"The policy was fundamentally flawed and the striking thing as you look at the record is that no one perceived ahead of time the kind of damage it could cause. Those who implemented policy felt they were not accountable.

"I don't know what is the worst thing to say about the President—that he didn't know what was going on, or that he did know. One of them is true and it is a very distressing picture."

Spy mystery?

Were the Soviets spying on Rep. Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.)?

That's the question folks are asking in the wake of mysterious activities last week at the office building at 25 Main St., Hackensack, where he has a district office.

Several months ago an unusual business took space in the building. It claimed to be a petroleum company. It had an unlisted phone number. It was run by Russians.

Torricelli might be a prime target for surveillance because he's an important member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, with access to sensitive U.S. operations around the world.

Last week, the Russian "oil-men" left town in the dead of night, leaving much of the furniture behind. The landlord says they owe a couple of bucks and he hasn't been able to find them.

The FBI isn't talking. But Torricelli's neighbors think it is all very suspicious.