

WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Hornets' Nest at Langley

By ROBERT KEATLEY

WASHINGTON — By now the United States must have the world's most-publicized secret spy service.

The Central Intelligence Agency's deeds and misdeeds are spread through the daily press. Its ex-employees publish books and articles—some telling all, others loyally covering up some things for "the company." As usual, assorted foreigners still blame it for causing trouble by exploiting such varied folks as Cambodian Buddhist monks, Ustashi terrorists, Panamanian students and the entire Austrian army.

More importantly, an eager Congress and a reluctant Executive Branch are into the act. Several congressional committees threaten to strip away CIA secrecy in search of alleged illegal domestic and unwise foreign activities. Meantime, a new Vice President, until recently an official overseer of the intelligence game, heads a presidential commission appointed to do much the same. And Nelson Rockefeller already concedes "violations or abuses" of the CIA charter did occur.

All this produces hard times at Langley, Virginia. That's where the CIA has its headquarters and most of its staff. And that's where William Colby, as director of Central Intelligence, manages—nominally, at least—the entire American intelligence community, including the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency and other organizations. Agency morale is down and there's gloom about the future. A kind of "what-did-we-do-to-deserve-this?" atmosphere pervades.

Despite the repercussions, though, there's wide agreement that scrutiny is overdue. CIA (and other) ventures into forbidden domestic police work may not be as "massive" as alleged, but transgressions did occur. More than one President called on his secretive snoops to investigate, and even harass, political foes. Meantime, newer members of Congress complain that committees charged with overseeing intelligence operations were negligent, and they're out to change that. They complain the old boys on Capitol Hill deliberately went too easy on the old boys in the spy trade; where the money went, and why, Congress didn't want to know.

For example, the late Senator Allen El-
STAT of Louisiana for years was one of five Senate watchdogs. Yet when questioned once on the floor about secret financing of war in Laos, he made it clear he hadn't been told much.

"I did not know anything about it. . . . I never asked, to begin with, whether or not there were any funds to carry on the war in this sum the CIA asked for. It never dawned on me to ask about it," he said. According to many critics, that was typical of the rather casual supervision of intelligence operations by Congress.

But no more. Many legislators now demand accountability, and the Executive Branch realizes it must be provided. The CIA itself concedes times change, and it must be more open. "The employees of the agency and I are wholly committed to being responsive," Mr. Colby recently told a Senate committee.

Another Casualty of Vietnam

In part, this change reflects a broad disenchantment with many aspects of foreign affairs. The origins of that may lie in Vietnam. For years, Congress acquiesced in war there and financed it regularly. But today's legislators, determined to prevent a rerun of that conflict anywhere, search suspiciously for signs of new American involvement in unsavory foreign climes. This produces laws which inhibit and dismay Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who believes Congress is meddling mischievously in his affairs. And it makes the CIA—which has often conducted clandestine "dirty tricks" in foreign countries—a prime target for congressional wrath and suspicion.

"It's all part of the general attack on foreign policy," complains an agency hand.

Yet this shouldn't be surprising. This is the age of official detente, and many Americans think it's time to scrap Cold War leftovers. They no longer feel they're fighting world communism, rushing into every perceived breach with guns and money. This creates more dispute about what the government does abroad (as at home, thanks to Watergate). Because of its supporting role in foreign policy, plus domestic misdeeds, the CIA and other intelligence agencies no longer get their reverential treatment of old.

But the many investigations under way do raise troublesome questions. Issues involved include those of what should be the

The CIA has attracted a swarm of critics, but is it possible to have international arms control without good intelligence capabilities?

size, mission and control system for the intelligence community. There also are lesser questions of who should be in charge, and what are the possible long-term adverse effects of the investigations on morale and efficiency.

For example, there's dispute about how Congress should oversee intelligence activities in the future. Capitol Hill's conservatives might prefer the old way of knowing little; the new activists, however, want to know all. But if they learn all, will they also tell all—to the detriment of national security?

Keeping some secrets is essential to the intelligence trade. Thus some administration officials worry about how to reconcile congressional desire to keep informed with their claimed need to classify certain information. An agreement on supervisory procedures, as well as a trust which doesn't now exist, will be needed.

Congress is also looking at the size and diversity of the intelligence community, which may include bits of some 60 government agencies. It seems likely a smaller, less overlapping structure will emerge, probably with tighter controls within the Executive Branch as well as more stringent congressional oversight. Mr. Colby officially manages all intelligence activities already, for example, but officials say he doesn't really control the Pentagon's DIA, among other agencies. New legislation could tighten the command and control system.

Meantime, Mr. Colby has given Congress an additional problem. He says there are "good" secrets (the names of agents, for example) and "bad" secrets (information which would embarrass the government but wouldn't damage security if revealed). While he promises to be more talkative than his predecessors, he also wants new laws to keep ex-employees from talking too much. He says their revelations can injure the national interest.

"To improve this situation," he told Congress, "we have proposed legislation, and I invite this committee to support the strengthening of controls over intelligence secrets." Already, the idea—which hasn't been detailed yet—has been denounced as an unconstitutional effort at prior restraint of free speech. Meantime, some agency hands oppose it on tactical grounds; they think Mr. Colby is compounding CIA problems unnecessarily by seeking such controversial laws now.

And that raises another issue: Should Mr. Colby keep his job?

He isn't universally admitted within his own shop, and there is sniping at him from outside. Mr. Kissinger, it is rumored, believes the CIA boss told Congress too much, making possible various press leaks which got it into trouble. Others say Mr. Colby is a bad manager of the huge intelli-