

STAT

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-19THE WASHINGTON POST
21 August 1978

Colby Denies Leaking Story On CIA Domestic Snooping

United Press International

Former director William E. Colby denied yesterday he leaked the explosive 1974 story about the Central Intelligence Agency's illegal involvement in domestic surveillance.

But Colby, who headed the CIA from 1973 to 1976, conceded he confirmed the story to New York Times reporter Seymour Hersh before publication 3½ years ago.

The story led to four government investigations of the CIA, opening some of the agency's secret activities to public scrutiny and leaving part of its staff demoralized.

The CIA's counterintelligence chief, James Angleton, retired within 48 hours after The Times story was published. Colby and Angleton were old bureaucratic enemies, and the feud has continued, with Angleton's extreme partisans trying to leave the impression Colby acted contrary to U.S. interests and might even be a Russian spy.

In a letter to the editor in Sunday's edition of The Washington Star, Colby responded to an article in Commentary magazine by writer-critic Edward Jay Epstein that was reprinted in The Star three weeks ago.

"While [Epstein] seems to have abandoned his earlier hypothesis that I might have been a Soviet 'mole'

[agent] within CIA... he makes other equally farfetched assertions which call for clear rebuttal," Colby said.

He said his comments to Hersh "had absolutely no connection with my professional differences of opinion with James Angleton over how counterintelligence should be conducted in CIA" and denied assertions he used the disclosure of the information to oust the counterintelligence chief and three top deputies.

Colby insisted his overhaul of the CIA's counterintelligence operation "strengthened rather than weakened that effort over the way it was conducted previously."

Epstein said "it was Colby himself who had engineered the leak" of the "family jewels"—the details of two decades of questionable CIA activities.

"I did not leak the so-called 'family jewels' to Seymour Hersh of The New York Times," Colby said in his letter.

He said Hersh came to him before publication of the story "with a much exaggerated account of those past events."

"It was clear to me that he was going to publish that story, so I tried to bring him down to a more accurate perspective, and I gave him no material he did not already have," Colby said.