

More Embarrassment Ahead?

Covert CIA Project Under Hill Wraps

STAT By Norman Kempster
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The CIA has informed Congress of at least one still-secret project which, if disclosed, could prove as embarrassing to the nation as recent CIA projects in Italy and Angola, a member of the House Foreign Relations Committee said today.

Rep. Leo J. Ryan, D-Calif., said he strongly objects to the secret project, but he said he was prohibited by law and by congressional rules from revealing it.

Adding to the mystery, Ryan said the project was "very substantive" in terms of its cost — apparently indicating at least several million dollars — and was "very broad-based."

"It has been going on for some years and I seriously suspect that at some future time it will seriously embarrass us," Ryan said.

RYAN, a member of the subcommittee that oversees CIA projects, said the panel was informed of the secret project in the same way that it was told of the CIA's plan to funnel money to non-Communist politicians in Italy and to support two anti-Soviet factions in the Angola civil war.

Ryan denied that he was the source of press reports concerning Italy and Angola. He said President Ford and the CIA have blamed congressional leaks in an effort to reduce the number of members of Congress who must be informed of covert projects.

Ryan held his press conference shortly after President Ford moved to block publication by the House Intelligence Committee of reports on CIA activities in Angola and Italy.

Under the terms of an agreement between Ford and the committee, the President can stop release of committee reports by declaring that disclosure "would be detrimental to the national security."

THE COMMITTEE voted last month to issue the reports. The report on Italy did not include the most recent subsidies to anti-Communist politicians, but one source said it did detail a quarter century of aid to the Christian Democratic and other non-Communist parties in Italy.

Ryan said he will urge a meeting of the full International Affairs Committee to discuss procedures by which Congress can more effectively object to CIA actions.

Under the present law, the CIA must inform six committees, three in the Senate and three in the House, of covert action. But there is no requirement that the committees must be informed before the projects begin, and there is no provision for the committees to block programs of which they disapprove.

Ryan said he favors some provision that would permit Congress to bring objections directly to the President, who would still retain

ASKED IF HE would support a congressional veto procedure, Ryan said, "I'm not so sure I'd go that far, but if other members want to do that I might go along."

Ryan confirmed for The Washington Star earlier this month that CIA Director William Colby had informed the oversight subcommittee of plans to subsidize Italian politicians. But he volunteered no information that the newspaper had not obtained from other sources.

In a prepared statement that began his press conference, Ryan said, "I emphatically and flatly reject any implication that I am or have been the source of any leaks to the press."

Ryan said he opposes strongly both the Italian and Angolan programs. He said the national security is not involved in either case.

In the case of Angola, he said, the United States' standing at the United Nations might be strengthened if the nation avoided involvement in Angola.

"If we stay out of there and the Russians go in, it gives the lie to the African notion that we are imperialists and the Russians are not," he said.