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CIA Director Defends Riha Data Release

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Adm. Stansfield Turner, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has maintained that the agency has been "as forthcoming as possible" in releasing its information on the disappearance and whereabouts of Professor Thomas Riha.

Turner said he is satisfied that information about Riha which the CIA has withheld from Riha's estate "appears to have no probative value insofar as Thomas Riha's disappearance or whereabouts is concerned."

Turner made his remarks after his recent review of CIA records and reports on Riha, who vanished without a trace from Boulder more than 8½ years ago. At that time, Riha was an associate professor of Russian history at the University of Colorado.

TURNER AGREED TO the Riha-case review in response to a recommendation made last Aug. 1 by U.S. Dist. Judge Richard F. Matsch of U.S. District Court in Denver.

Matsch made the recommendation in an effort to resolve a long-standing battle that representatives of Riha's estate have been waging for CIA information on the missing professor. That battle principally was joined by Martin D. Buckley of Denver, attorney for Riha's estate and its

conservator, Zdenek Cerveny of Boulder, Riha's nephew.

In an Oct. 8 letter to Matsch, Turner said he had requested a summary of the facts in the Riha case to be prepared by CIA officials for his review.

TURNER ALSO SAID he reviewed CIA documents relating to an alleged sighting of Riha in Czechoslovakia in 1973. That report, Turner noted, is based upon "third-hand information" furnished in confidence to the CIA by one of its intelligence sources.

The CIA director stressed that he was

bound to protect the identity of the confidential source. And Turner said the CIA took no investigative action on the reported sighting and doesn't know the identity of the original source of the sighting report or whether the information is accurate.

In his letter to Matsch, Turner said, "I am not insensitive to the plaintiff's (Cerveny's) desire to determine whether his uncle is alive or dead. However, in my opinion, the most that can be said about the information contained in agency documents is that it is inconclusive."