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Statement of Mike Mansfield - Joint Committee on Central Intelligence

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D, Montana) - FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY
JANUARY 14, 1955

JOINT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. President: Because of the very nature of the Central Intelligence Agency, I think that it is imperative that a Joint Congressional Committee be established for the purpose of making continued studies of the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency and problems related to the gathering of intelligence affecting the national security. I feel that there should be a Joint Congressional Committee authorized, and that the CIA should, as a matter of law, keep that Committee fully and currently informed with respect to its activities.

The need for the Central Intelligence Agency is seldom questioned any longer and I certainly am not challenging it now. What I am concerned with, however, is CIA's position of responsibility to none but the National Security Council. I believe this should be changed. It is true that intelligence services of other major countries operate without direct control of the legislatures. This is understandable in a totalitarian government, such as the Soviet Union. It is even understandable in a parliamentary democracy, such as Great Britain where the entire administration is a part of and is responsible to Parliament. Our form of government, however, is based on a system of checks and balances. If this system gets seriously out of balance at any point the whole system is jeopardized and the way is opened for the growth of tyranny.

There has been almost no Congressional inspection of the Central Intelligence Agency since the latter's establishment in 1947. It is conceivable that as the need for an intelligence service had been evident...
in 1946, the Congressional Reorganization Act of that year would have made provisions for congressional participation in the committee structure of Congress. As it is now, however, CIA is freed from practically every ordinary form of Congressional check. Control of its expenditures is exempted from the provisions of law which prevent financial abuses in other government agencies. Each year only a handful of Members in each house see the appropriation figures. There is no regular, methodical review of this agency, other than a briefing which is supplied to a few members of selected sub-committees.

I agree that an intelligence agency must maintain complete secrecy to be effective. If clandestine sources of information were inadvertently revealed, they would quickly dry up. Not only would the flow of information be cut off, but the lives of many would be seriously endangered. In addition, much of the value of the intelligence product would be lost if it were known that we possessed it. Secrecy for these purposes is obviously necessary.

However, there is a profound difference between an essential degree of secrecy to achieve a specific purpose and secrecy for the mere sake of secrecy. Once secrecy becomes sacrosanct, it invites abuse. If we accept this idea of secrecy for secrecy's sake we will have no way of knowing whether we have a fine intelligence service or a very poor one.

If a new committee is set up as proposed in this legislation, all bills, resolutions, and other matters in the Senate or in the House of Representatives relating primarily to the CIA, would be referred to the Joint Committee; and the Joint Committee would, from time to time, make whatever reports are necessary to the Congress concerning its relationship.
with the CIA.

This resolution would establish a Joint Committee, composed of 6 members of the Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate and 6 members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. In each instance, not more than 4 members shall be of the same political party.

The Joint Committee or any duly authorized subcommittee thereof would be authorized to hold such hearings, to sit and act at such places and times, to require, by subpoena or otherwise, the attendance of such witnesses and the production of such books, papers, and documents, to administer such oaths, to take such testimony, to procure such printing and binding, and make such expenditures as it deems advisable. The Committee is, in addition, empowered to appoint its staff; and is authorized to utilize the services, information, facilities, and personnel of the departments and establishments of the Government.

Mr. President, in my opinion, the CIA is in somewhat the same category as the Atomic Energy Commission; and just as a special committee, with well defined authority and powers has been created on a joint congressional basis to oversee and supervise the interests of the AEC, so I believe should a Joint Congressional Committee be created for the same purpose in connection with the CIA. I realize full well, because of the very nature of the duties of the CIA, that there has been no public scrutiny of its activities. This may be necessary in this day and age, but I do believe that a Joint Congressional Committee should be created for the purpose of seeing that good management is maintained in the CIA and also to keep a constant check on its intelligence policies. It is
well, too, that this Joint Committee should be in a position to criticize any mistakes which the CIA may make.

Until a committee of the kind I am proposing is established, there will be no way of knowing what serious flaws in the Central Intelligence Agency may be covered by the curtain of secrecy in which it is shrouded. In 1949 the Hoover Commission examined the CIA. A task force stated that "The Central Intelligence Agency has not yet achieved the desired degree of efficiency and dependability in its estimates. Without it, the National Security Council cannot succeed in assessing and appraising the objectives, commitments, and risks of the United States in relation to our... military power, with sufficient continuity or definiteness to constitute a practical guide to the military establishment as to the size of our military needs." It recommended that vigorous steps be taken to improve the Central Intelligence Agency and its work.

The purpose of the Joint Congressional Committee would be in a sense to safeguard as well as to supervise the policies of the CIA. In my opinion the Congress should, because of the very nature of the work of the CIA, do everything in its power to protect its activities and to make it possible that the CIA, as an organization, will not lose its effectiveness, and will be able to continue its extremely important work in such a manner as to warrant the necessary amount of freedom of activity and the necessary security to perform the duties allocated to it under the law.

Mr. President, if a joint committee is established, CIA officials will no longer be defenseless against criticism because their lips are sealed.
They would have a Congressional channel to turn to. The joint committee, in turn, could maintain the confidence of Congress and the public, without loss of security. To this end, Mr. President, I send to the desk a bill and ask that it be referred to the appropriate Committee for consideration.
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Mansfield (for himself, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Beall, Mr. Capehart, Mr. Chavez, Mr. Cotten, Mr. Daniel, Mr. Duff, Mr. Ervin, Mr. Flanders, Mr. Fulbright, Mr. George, Mr. Greene, Mr. Hill, Mr. Humphrey, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Kefauver, Mr. Langer, Mr. Lehman, Mr. McNamara, Mr. Morse, Mr. Mundt, Mr. Murray, Mr. Neely, Mr. Neuberger, Mr. Pastore, Mr. Payne, Mr. Smathers, Mrs. Smith, Mr. Sparkman, Mr. Welker, and Mr. Young) introduced the following joint resolution; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on ____________________________.

Case of S.P.
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Mansfield introduced the following joint resolution; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on ____________________.

JOINT RESOLUTION

To establish a Joint Committee on Central Intelligence.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there is hereby established a Joint Committee on Central Intelligence to be composed of six Members of the Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate, and six Members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Of the six members to be appointed from the Senate, three shall be members of the C.I.A. subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, and three shall be members of the C.I.A. subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate. Of the six members to be appointed from the House of Representatives, three shall be members of the C.I.A. subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, and three shall be members of the C.I.A. subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives. Not more than four members appointed from either the Senate or the House of Representatives shall be from the same political party.

Sec. 2. (a) The joint committee shall make continuing studies of the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency and of problems relating to the gathering of intelligence affecting the national security and of its coordination and utilization by the various departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Government. The Central Intelligence Agency shall keep the joint committee fully and currently informed with respect to its activities. All bills, resolutions, and other matters in the Senate or the House of Representatives relating primarily to the Central Intelligence Agency shall be referred to the joint committee.

(b) The members of the joint committee who are Members of the Senate shall from time to time report to the Senate, and the members of the joint
committee who are Members of the House of Representatives shall from time to time report to the House, by bill or otherwise, their recommendations with respect to matters within the jurisdiction of their respective Houses which are (1) referred to the joint committee, or (2) otherwise within the jurisdiction of the joint committee.

Sec. 3. Vacancies in the membership of the joint committee shall not affect the power of the remaining members to execute the functions of the joint committee, and shall be filled in the same manner as in the case of the original selection. The joint committee shall select a chairman and a vice chairman from among its members.

Sec. 4. The joint committee, or any duly authorized subcommittee thereof, is authorized to hold such hearings, to sit and act at such places and times, to require, by subpoena or otherwise, the attendance of such witnesses and the production of such books, papers, and documents, to administer such oaths, to take such testimony, to procure such printing and binding, and to make such expenditures as it deems advisable. The cost of stenographic services to report public hearings shall not be in excess of the amounts prescribed by law for reporting the hearings of standing committees of the Senate. The cost of such services to report executive hearings shall be fixed at an equitable rate by the joint committee.

Sec. 5. The joint committee is empowered to appoint such experts, consultants, technicians, and clerical and stenographic assistants as it deems necessary and advisable. The committee is authorized to utilize the services, information, facilities, and personnel of the departments and establishments of the Government.

Sec. 6. The expenses of the joint committee, which shall not exceed $ per year, shall be paid one-half from the contingent fund of the Senate and one-half from the contingent fund of the House of Representatives upon vouchers signed by the chairman. Disbursements to pay such expenses shall be made by the Secretary of the Senate out of the contingent fund of the Senate, such contingent fund to be reimbursed from the contingent fund of the House of Representatives in the amount of one-half of the disbursements so made.