

House committee launches secrecy probe

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Armed Services Committee is undertaking an inquiry aimed at curbing overuse of the secrecy stamp and closing what the chairman calls the "open season" on government secrets.

Without mentioning either columnist Jack Anderson's disclosure of Nixon administration strategy papers on the Indian-Pakistani war or the Pentagon papers, the Rep. F. Edward Hebert, D-La., announced Wednesday a major inquiry by his committee into proper classification and protection of national security secrets.

In the meantime, Anderson reported that Kenneth B. Keating, U.S. ambassador to India, had, in a secret cablegram, challenged Nixon administration statements made to justify U.S. policy toward India and Pakistan.

Herbert indicated that targets of his committee probe, shortly after Congress returns Jan. 18, will include both unnecessary secrecy and "the callous disregard by some individuals" who publicly expose sensitive information.

While federal officials often abuse their right to classify, he said, this does not give any individual "the right to unilaterally

ignore any classification action and thereby break existing law.

"Recent events clearly indicate that despite existing law we now have an open season on all classified information in government," Hebert said. "Our national security requirements therefore demand early and prompt legislative action to correct these apparent deficiencies in the law."

The corrective law, he said, should "strike a proper balance between the right of the public to know and the indispensable ability of our government to function."

Columnist Anderson contended Wednesday the only security involved in the papers he released was the job security of officials responsible for what he called the blunder of America's siding with Pakistan during the Indian-Pakistani war.

Anderson said the papers showed the White House lied.

The administration has kept silent about Anderson's release of the material. But government agents reportedly are trying to determine who turned over the papers to Anderson.

Hebert said subjects of the House probe will include adequacy of the National Security Act and merits of his own

proposed bill to create a national commission on classification and protection of national security information.

Meanwhile, Anderson's agency, Bell-McClure Newspapers Syndicate, released Wednesday night another column carrying what Anderson said was a paraphrased version of a secret cablegram sent by Ambassador Keating to Secretary of State

William P. Rogers.

Keating was quoted as being "very interested to read" a U.S. Information Agency account of a White House briefing by Kissinger. Anderson said the cablegram was dated Dec. 8.

"While he (Keating) appreciated the tactical necessity of justifying the administration's position, he felt constrained

to state that elements of this particular story do not coincide with his knowledge of the events of the past eight months," according to the column.

Anderson wrote that Keating questioned a U.S. statement that a \$113-million relief program for East Pakistan was initiated "at the specific request of the Indian government."

According to Anderson, the ambassador referred Rogers to a Keating report on a conversation with Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh. The Indian government was said to be "reluctant to see the relief program started prior to a political settlement" because it might "bail out" Gen. Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan, then-president of Pakistan.

FDA proposes HCP ban

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration has proposed a ban on hexachlorophene in feminine hygiene sprays, a \$53-million annual business, until it can determine if the chemical is safe and effective.

The proposal, one of several related ones published today in the Federal Register, reflects the government's growing concern over whether several germ fighters may be posing a human health hazard. Interested parties have 60 days to comment.

The FDA said it does not know whether hexachlorophene (HCP) is harmful, let alone what the human tolerance level may be, nor the number of sources which a consumer may be exposed to.

"Until we have such information," FDA Commissioner Charles C. Edwards said, "the only prudent course is to reduce the total human exposure to HCP."

If adopted, the program would ban use of hexachlorophene in all cosmetics, restrict skin cleansers containing more than .75 per cent to prescription and hospital use, require cautionary labels on cleansers containing lesser amounts, and require premarket testing of all drugs and cosmetics containing the chemical.

The cleansers pHisoHex and HyperPhase would be among products limited to hospital or prescription use.

A month ago, the FDA proposed warning

labels for those and other products containing three per cent hexachlorophene solutions, warned against their use for total body bathing and recommended a total rinse after use.

That action was prompted by studies suggesting that newborn babies and burn patients absorb measurable amounts of hexachlorophene into their bloodstreams, and that rats injected with the chemical and infant monkeys bathed with it develop brain lesions.

Sterling Drug Inc., whose Winthrop Laboratories division makes pHisoHex, issued a statement charging the FDA with "premature and illogical" action in attempting to further restrict use of its product.

The statement issued in Washington by the company's public-relations representative said the FDA's warning in December resulted in some hospitals discontinuing use of pHisoHex.

"Significantly, we have been informed that epidemics of staphylococcal infections have broken out in the nurseries of four hospitals which discontinued the use of pHisoHex..." the statement said. "The inference to be drawn is obvious."

The statement did not elaborate and public relations agent Gordon L. Smith said the company would not disclose the names and locations of the hospitals mentioned.

Two GIs killed in action

SAIGON (AP) — Two Americans were reported killed in action last week, the U.S. Command announced today, and both were fliers shot down over Laos.

The command's weekly casualty summary said another 50 Americans were reported wounded, including one in the Laotian air campaign. And the number of Americans missing or captured increased by six to 1,491, apparently as a result of the intense air activity last week in Laos and North Vietnam.

It was the 13th straight week that fewer than 10 combat deaths were reported. The previous week one U.S. combat death was reported.

The South Vietnamese command in its weekly summary reported 206 government troops killed, a drop of more than 25 per cent from the total the week before, and 514 wounded, compared to 633 the previous week.

The allied commands claimed 874 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong killed, nearly 300 less than the week before.

It was the first week in nearly seven years that no Americans were reported killed in ground combat. However, daily communiques last week reported two Americans killed in helicopters that were shot down and another in an armored personnel carrier that hit a mine. Because of

complexities in the reporting system, these three deaths were not included in the weekly summary.

The deaths in Laos brought to 101 the number of U.S. airmen reported killed in Laotian operations since March 1970.

The U.S. Command also reported five Americans died from nonhostile causes last week.

Retired general arrested

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Retired Air Force Gen. Olbert F. Lassiter, charged with two others with illegally diverting millions from the Penn Central railroad, was arrested here Wednesday, authorities said.

Lassiter was arrested on a Pennsylvania warrant for a hearing at 10 a.m. Thursday in Municipal Court, authorities added. He was placed in the county jail.

He formerly headed Executive Jet Aviation, a charter airline.

Lassiter is accused of conspiring with David C. Bevan, former finance chairman of the financially troubled railroad, and Charles J. Hodge, a Wall Street broker.

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