

Gates Denies Charges He Distorted Data to Suit White House Policy

Nominee for Top CIA Post Angrily Rebuts Critics Who Hurt Candidacy

By DAVID ROGERS

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WASHINGTON — Robert Gates, shedding the aloofness that has been his trademark, delivered an angry rebuttal of charges that he distorted analysis in the Central Intelligence Agency to win favor with superiors and suit the policies of the Reagan administration.

Appearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee, Mr. Gates spoke in a voice quavering with emotion as he sought to defend his integrity against adverse testimony by former colleagues that has threatened his candidacy to lead the CIA.

"I never distorted intelligence to support policy or to please a policy maker," said Mr. Gates, using words such as "per-

CIA, KGB May Cooperate

Richard Kerr, the acting head of the Central Intelligence Agency, says the U.S. is ready to open an era of cooperation with the revamped Soviet intelligence service. See story on page A4.

nicious" and "reckless" to describe the allegations against him. "It is a period when we got a lot right. We got some important things wrong, but people were basically calling them as they saw them."

Republicans applauded the force of Mr. Gates's presentation, but the former CIA deputy still faces doubts among the moderate and conservative Democrats who are most important to him in the committee and full Senate.

Sen. John Glenn (D., Ohio), who had been silent previously, weighed in yesterday with questions challenging the CIA's independence in evaluating Pakistan's nuclear weapons program in the 1980s. And Chairman David Boren's (D., Okla.) cross-examination of the nominee reflected continued concern about Mr. Gates's role in the Iran-Contra affair and his handling of a politically sensitive intelligence assessment in 1985 on the Soviet role in the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II.

The attack on the Pope was a preoccupation for former CIA Director William Casey, and though Mr. Gates said he had no fixed opinion on Moscow's complicity, the 1985 paper was structured to make the case for the plausibility of Soviet involvement. Written in a matter of weeks, the analysis was distributed to cabinet secretaries and the White House, but was sharply criticized months later by an internal CIA study that found the work "spotty" and lacking balance.

The episode is embarrassing for Mr. Gates because he had been the conduit for

Mr. Glenn's questioning regarding Pakistan touched on Mr. Gates's active role within the agency on behalf of military aid to Afghan resistance groups fighting the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul. This covert program was carried out in close alliance with Pakistan through the 1980s, and the senator indicated that the CIA inspector general's office was investigating if intelligence had been skewed in the same period so as not to disrupt relations over the nuclear weapons issue.

Mr. Gates said he remembered no instance in which the CIA had been pressured to "tone down" intelligence related to the Pakistan weapons program, but his answers suggest that there may have been an effort to work around the legal wording of restrictions affecting assistance to the Islamabad government. Aid to Pakistan is subject to an annual certification by the president that the government doesn't have a nuclear weapon. In this connection, Mr. Gates described a "caution" from the Reagan administration for the CIA "to be very careful about the words that were used describing the situation."

More often, "caution" was hardly the watchword for Mr. Gates, who cut a swath through the agency as he rose under the guidance of the late Director Casey. "You did too good a job for Bill Casey," said Sen. Ernest Hollings (D., S.C.), who has swung against the nominee since the hearings began last month, and Mr. Gates admitted that he must address the perception of politicization at the agency if confirmed as director.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn (D., Ga.), who is slated to question the nominee this morning, indicated last night that he remains troubled by the testimony against Mr. Gates. More broadly, the hearings could force lawmakers to reassess their own responsibility to keep closer tabs on intelligence analysis.

Senate and House oversight committees have historically paid more heed to budget issues and covert operations, yet the hearings have suggested that ideological differences had a far-reaching impact on what policy makers were told of the Soviet threat to the U.S. and role in the Third World.

Mr. Gates faulted the CIA for being "flabby" in assessing Moscow's intentions in developing countries in the 1970s, and his critics argue with equal ferocity that the Casey era brought on a hard anti-Soviet line that led the U.S. to ignore evidence of a Soviet retreat in the 1980s. Thousands of papers and intelligence estimates were produced in Mr. Gates's tenure in the top management, and he seems to have been torn between his intellectual, analytical background and his political ambitions to rise in the bureaucracy.

With obvious pride yesterday, he cited an October 1986 memo arguing for more sensitivity to changes in Soviet society;

Lawmakers' Bank to Close Probe Sought

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WASHINGTON — The House vote close its members' bank in an effort to quell the growing controversy involving lawmakers' overdrawn checks.

On the same 390-8 vote, the House decided to subject some of the bank's records to an ethics inquiry in an effort to root out abuses. The resolution, which came the same day as disclosures that House Speaker Thomas Foley and Majority Leader Richard Gephardt were among those with overdrawn transactions, sponsored by Democratic and Republican leaders.

Still, lawmakers feared that the check-writing scandal could hurt them at polls next year. House members concede that the banking abuses fed the impression among voters that lawmakers acted as if they were above the law. And many of them, fearing for their careers, held guarded discussions with their political consultants on how best to defuse the issue.

California Rep. Vic Fazio, chairman of the House Democrats' campaign committee, said he didn't think the episode would hurt incumbents "across the board." But he allowed that some individual members' large overdraft problems could suffer.

Amid the check-writing controversy, Speaker Foley indicated that other perks of office would be scrutinized, probably curtailed. In particular, Washington Democrat said he opposed the practice of having the House's sergeant-at-arms "fix" members' parking tickets in the District of Columbia. He indicated

