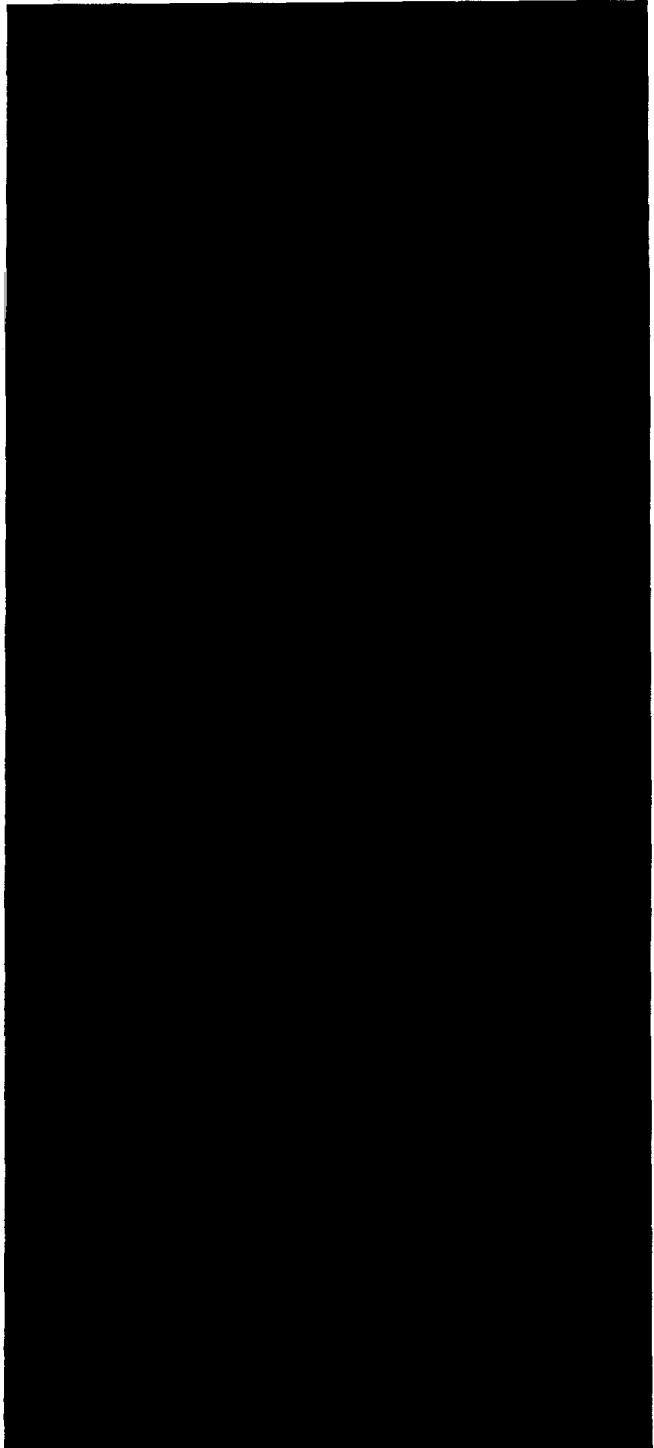


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CIA Or The Wings Of Man?

It would not bother us too much if now and then Washington fooled "them countries in Europe," to coin Will Rogers' phrase. But we are still Boy Scouts enough to have a little resentment whenever Washington fools "them people in America."

We see a good bit of that in the latest disclosures of CIA activities over the past couple of decades. In the messy world most immediately at hand, covert intelligence operations are probably a necessity for the world's most powerful country. But was it necessary to conceal from the voting public even the fact that we were massively engaged in covert wars, overthrows and foreign-policymaking through the CIA?

The people of other countries seemed to know about it better than the people of our own. There was a time when we would routinely dismiss some of the accusations. Aren't those people conspiracy-minded, we would think. It is, we would muse, ridiculous for anyone to think that we would be incessantly engaged in interfering with the internal affairs of other countries; we just don't have the time or inclination. A little bribing here or there, perhaps, if the legislators are cheap; but not assassinations, subsidized revolts or massive military operations unknown to the American public.



More recently we have gotten smarter. When we heard names such as "Air America" and "Air Asia Limited" we would put on our worldly smile and think: Actually, that's probably one of those little CIA fronts. We know about that. We've read "Terry and the Pirates."

Well, as our man James McCartney reports from Washington, it turns out that the CIA's Air America, which operates in Southeast Asia, has been a rather good-sized front. It has some 18,000 employees and as many planes as Pan American. It is bigger than Delta.

If we are going to run one of the world's major airlines in Southeast Asia, it ought to be properly advertised. We assume the CIA would not object to a slogan like "Leave the Flying to Us."