

Why CIA Is Secret

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When it comes to secrecy in government, this nation has a good habit of turning up its nose. It likes its government operating out in the open and subject to the close examination of all citizens. It even has a form of government noted for its checks and balances, worked out so that one arm of government always is subject to another. It likes government kept within easy reach of the people.

Thus, when an organization such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) becomes an important part of our government and spends an estimated billion dollars a year, there is bound to

Very Little Known

be controversy. It is bound to happen because the CIA is surrounded by secrecy. Not even CIA funds are clearly appropriated, but rather, are scattered throughout the budgets of other agencies. No one knows exactly how many people the CIA employs but estimates run to around 15,000. No one knows exactly what the CIA does, although it is known that its official responsibility is the collection and evaluation of intelligence relating to national security.

The short of it is that few people know very much at all about the CIA and probably no one but the President knows all there is to know about it. Naturally, this runs against the normal pattern of our government and raises the ire of Congress, which feels that it is entitled to a certain amount of information.

But a little examination will show that we either have the CIA as it is today or we have none of it at all. At the present time, the CIA communicates with two congressional subcommittees, parts of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. But the communication ends there as the subcommittees carry their information no farther than their own ranks.

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The CIA was blamed in some quarters for the failure to give advance warning of the attack on South Korea in 1950 or of Chinese intervention that fall. Later CIA was credited with a hand in supplying Chinese Nationalist troops in Burma in 1950-54; in bringing down Iran's Premier Mossadegh in 1953 and the Arbenz regime in Guatemala in 1954; and in supporting the right-wing Nosavan regime in Laos in 1960. CIA's most spectacular success came to light as the result of a sensational failure. The shooting down of Francis Gary Powers in mid-Russia in May, 1960, apparently put an end to four years of aerial reconnaissance

over the U.S.S.R. by high flying U-2's. CIA's most publicized failure came in April, 1961, when Fidel Castro crushed an agency-organized invasion of Cuba by rebel forces at the Bay of Pigs.

The CIA role in Viet Nam, at first in support of the Diem regime, was emphasized Oct. 4 with the recall of the CIA chief there, John H. Richardson, reportedly at the request of U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge. Richardson, according to Saigon reports, worked closely on operational matters with Diem's brother and close adviser, Ngo Dinh Nhu, who was killed Nov. 2 with Diem in the uprising. It remains unclear or unknown just what role the CIA played in that uprising but it is suspected that it had a prominent part.

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This unknown status of the CIA in international affairs is one of the things that ruffles the feathers of some members of Congress. They want to know if the CIA is making policy for the nation, how many people it employs, who is making the decisions or drawing plans for agency operations and how it carries on its work.

But if Congress in general knew the answers to the questions it asks of the CIA, the organization would be largely destroyed. It would no longer be an effective intelligence agency if all its actions were known. Once exposed, the enemy could ferret out its agents and governments could take actions to meet any of the plans the agency had.

Rep. Leslie C. Arends (R. Ill.) is a member of the House CIA subcommittee.

No Maker Of Policy

In a recent statement on the floor, he said: "Our subcommittee has regularly inquired into CIA's operations and from time to time has made specific inquiry into some specific aspects of its activities . . . Contrary to what we read and hear from time to time, the CIA does not pursue an independent foreign policy. The agency does not make policy. It simply gathers facts upon which policy may be based. It simply carries out orders dictated by those who make policy."

From the subcommittee testimony and the nature of the CIA, it would seem impossible to maintain the organization and still subject it to the scrutiny of the full House and Senate. It may run in some respects against our political grain but we are not exactly dedicated to any refusal to change when and if the facts of the world seem to warrant a change.