

New Tours May Give Public Better Understanding Of CIA

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WASHINGTON — I have just come from an authorized tour of the Central Intelligence Agency headquarters in the light of day. It was a controlled tour, to be sure, and very similar to the one that the general public will receive when the CIA comes out of the cold later this summer.

Within a few weeks, the visitor to Washington who makes the proper arrangements in advance with his congressman will be allowed inside the gates to view the sylvan setting where the CIA is located in nearby Virginia, hardly 10 minutes from downtown Washington.

He will not learn any secrets or see any undercover agents darting about but he ought to come away with a better understanding of what CIA is all about. He may even decide that the investment in intelligence — be it \$6 billion or \$10 billion a year — is worth it.

The vista through the main gate is not unlike that of a private garden community in a resort area or the campus of a huge university — trim lawns and sidewalks with humanity criss-crossing to and from work. The place has an ambience unlike anything in government.

When I called to see if the CIA's new openness policy was for real, Herbert Hetu, the recently named public information chief, said, "Sure, come on out." I was cleared at the gate (The sign out front now openly reads "CIA. It used to say "Bureau of Public Roads.")

I drove past parking lots and several maintenance shops, taking the long way around to the handsome headquarters building, one of the better pieces of federal architecture. I passed a power station, a water tower and antenna. At the headquarters, I was checked in by a receptionist and escorted to Hetu's office.

"Basically what we have here is an office building," Hetu explained. "We will show people the ground floor but the rest is just offices where people sit at desks and write reports."

Although the plans are still in the formative stage, the tour is likely to start with a short orientation film in a small auditorium known as the "Bubble." Then the tourists will walk to the main building next door and receive a guided tour of the first floor corridor which is lined with huge indoor plantings and magnificent modern art on the walls — all on loan from a private collection. The place is tidy and cheerful.

There will be maps and exhibits along the way, including such things as the photographs taken of Soviet missiles in Cuba during the 1962 missile crisis. The pictures were shot from a balloon. There will be a walk through the library.

What worries Hetu and the new CIA director, Stansfield Turner, is how to handle the crowds that will be clamoring for a look. The tours will necessarily be confined to Saturdays when most of the employees are at home. This means also that no more than 500 persons will be shown through the place on a given day, for both logistical and security reasons.

"At least," said Hetu, "we will get people inside the gate. They can feel it and touch it and perhaps we will correct some misconceptions."

that everybody is working under cover and engaging in cloak and dagger activities."

The idea is to remove some of the mystique from the CIA which, for most of the employees, is essentially a collection and processing agency. Hundred of people (the employment figure remains secret) work at desks assembling data collected by other

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federal agencies. Others use computers, the information storage and retrieval systems and the library to interpret the raw data in ways that will be helpful to our national security and our foreign policy makers.

Few people realize that the CIA turns out some of the best maps in the world and some of the most extensive background material available anywhere relating to population trends, worldwide weather conditions, crop forecasts.

CIA analysts look at weather from the standpoint of how it affects a country's economy, its food supply, and, in turn, its foreign policy as well as America's.

The building bustles with people who are trained not as spies but as accountants, lawyers, computer specialists. Twice a year, some of them produce a National Basic Intelligence Factbook with everything you need to know at a quick glance about every country in the world. It's an unclassified document that anyone can buy.

When President Carter recently referred to the CIA outlook report on the international energy situation through 1985, there was a heavy demand for the document from the news media. The project actually was started one year ago and had no connection with Carter's energy program. The document is available along with a separate study on the prospects for Soviet oil production.

There are agricultural maps of the Soviet Union, an atlas of the Indian Ocean and a fantastic street

guide of Moscow which any tourist would delight in having. The public will be fascinated by CIA's map-making capability.

"What we are trying to do is to put out more of this unclassified information," Hetu said. "Admiral Turner feels the public is paying a lot of money for this and there is probably a great deal of stuff like the energy report that can be published."

It will be six to eight weeks before the tours begin officially. But media types are being admitted on request. Dan Rather and a CBS crew have been in and out of CIA for three weeks working on a story that will be part of a forthcoming "60 Minutes" show. The CIA reserves the right to review the CBS film but not to control Rather's commentary.

A lot of old CIA hands are apprehensive about opening the gates even on a limited basis. There are certain people who don't want to be photographed or even seen around the place.

But, after a small peek, without spotting anyone I had ever seen before, I can't help but conclude that opening the doors at the CIA just a little isn't likely to tell our enemies anything they don't now — but it may tell Americans something they ought to have known all along.

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