

17 JUN 1983

DDI 4201-83/1

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: John H. Stein  
Deputy Director for Operations

Robert M. Gates  
Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT: Use of Intelligence for Public Diplomacy

REFERENCE: DCI memo dtd 7 June 83, same subject

Your 7 June memorandum raises two issues—what could be done to get more intelligence information into the public domain in order to increase public support for national security policies, and how to make the distinction between classified and unclassified information more readily apparent to busy readers. Both are classic questions that arise with some frequency; the first has generated a substantial literature (See Tab A). Both issues deserve consideration and discussion involving you, the DDCI, and the four DDs. What follows is, therefore, intended as the basis for such a discussion.

#### Distinguishing Classified Information

Distinguishing between classified and unclassified information is the simpler issue. We can do so in current intelligence publications, and have done so in the past, by using different typefaces. We could also underscore the difference in both the PDB and NID by citation of media sources where appropriate. We would need to reverse the decision made by Admiral Inman that all material in the NID carry a minimum classification of Confidential. And this probably would force us to drop the distinction between reporting and analysis, since a format that tried to make three distinctions—unclassified reporting, classified reporting, and analytic judgment—would be very cumbersome. We could also make the distinction in many formal papers by sorting information into classified and unclassified paragraphs. And we could consider paragraph classification of DO reporting, which would have the effect of making more DO reporting available at lower classification levels. Or we could try to alleviate Secretary Shultz's problem alone by annotating his copy of the PDB to highlight the classified information that needs protection—for example by underlining such information in red.

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All of these devices are ways to reduce the problem, not eliminate it. The basic difficulty is that busy readers are inundated by information from many sources we do not control. We know of at least one instance in which Secretary Shultz thought he had seen information in the newspaper when in fact he had read it in the INR summary. We can try to flag classified information for them more clearly, and perhaps we could get all intelligence agencies to use a common format. But readers still have to take the time and trouble to concentrate on the distinction and remember it. Moreover, such distinctions distract attention from the substantive message.

There is another theoretical possibility—putting out intelligence publications that do not contain unclassified information—but this is impractical. We have to use unclassified information to put the secret information in context and to cover the full range of issues that confront policymakers. Moreover, the media often prove to be the fastest sources of information. And information often moves from one category to another—data gleaned from intelligence subsequently appears in the press, and information initially seen in the media gains credibility when confirmed by secret sources.

#### Release of Information

The question of releasing more intelligence information is much more complicated, since there are a variety of ways it might be done and each has different implications for both policymakers and intelligence professionals. The possibilities range from freer release of more individual bits of intelligence information to the release of unclassified analytic papers on particular subjects—with a number of variants in between; they are discussed below. All involve resource costs and other trade-offs. Those who argue for release of more intelligence see potential benefits for the formulation and pursuit of US national security policy. As professional intelligence officers, however, we must be concerned with the impact on our ability to do our jobs. The central fact is that systematic release by CIA of intelligence information undermines our very reason for existence. CIA involvement in a program explicitly intended to influence US public opinion raises serious questions of legality, as well as propriety.

This is not to say that no intelligence information can ever be released. Material has been released since time immemorial, and no single decision to release information is likely to destroy us as an institution. But a politically motivated pattern will.

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**1. Release of More Raw Intelligence**

We presently entertain requests for release of specific pieces of intelligence information on a case by case basis. It is obviously possible to release more, if a policy decision to that effect is made, but not without risks. And the benefits in terms of increased public support for national security policy are by no means certain. In general, the more the source of information is protected, the less convincing the information is likely to be.

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Our experience with using intelligence information to prove that events are occurring is, in any case, poor. There have been successes, of course, such as the missiles in Cuba and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

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**2. Compilation of Unclassified Information**

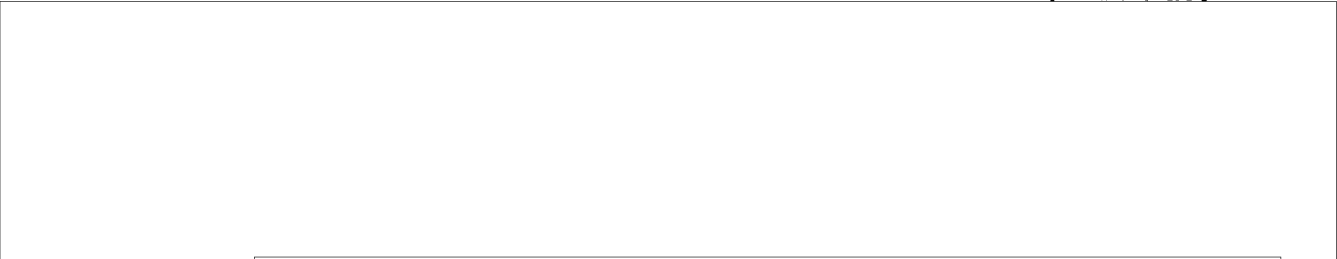
We already compile a substantial amount of unclassified information and release it, [redacted]

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[redacted] We could do more that might be useful to policymakers dealing with the public—for example, compilations of the public speeches and writings of foreign leaders. This would, of course, absorb some resources. And it likely would generate criticism on Capitol Hill, where the use of CIA resources to do unclassified research has been questioned in the past. Other organizations, such as the State Department and the Congressional Research Service, can also do this sort of research—with or without help from us.

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**4. Downgrading Classified Analytic Papers**

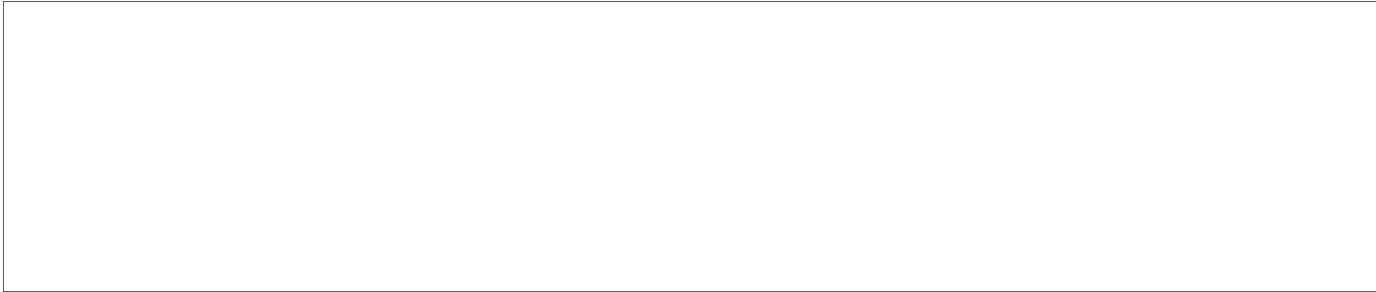
As you are aware, we were releasing a substantial number of unclassified analytic papers, often based on classified studies, until July 1981, when you decided that the guidelines should be tightened. Direct release of CIA papers other than periodicals dropped off sharply—from over 60 per year in 1978 and 1979 to 25 in 1982 and only 8 in the first five months of this year. The arguments for and against such papers were detailed at that time in a study reproduced at Tab D. We clearly could go back to publishing unclassified analytic papers. Costs would be relatively low, as long as the topics were subjects we would be analyzing in any case. Our past experience has been, however, that sanitized papers seldom prove convincing on contentious issues. Indeed they often prove counterproductive, because they generate accusations that the release is politically motivated. They also

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create potential foreign policy problems. The difficulties can, however, be reduced by establishing clear criteria for sanitization and release and applying them evenhandedly, whether or not the material in question supports specific policy goals.

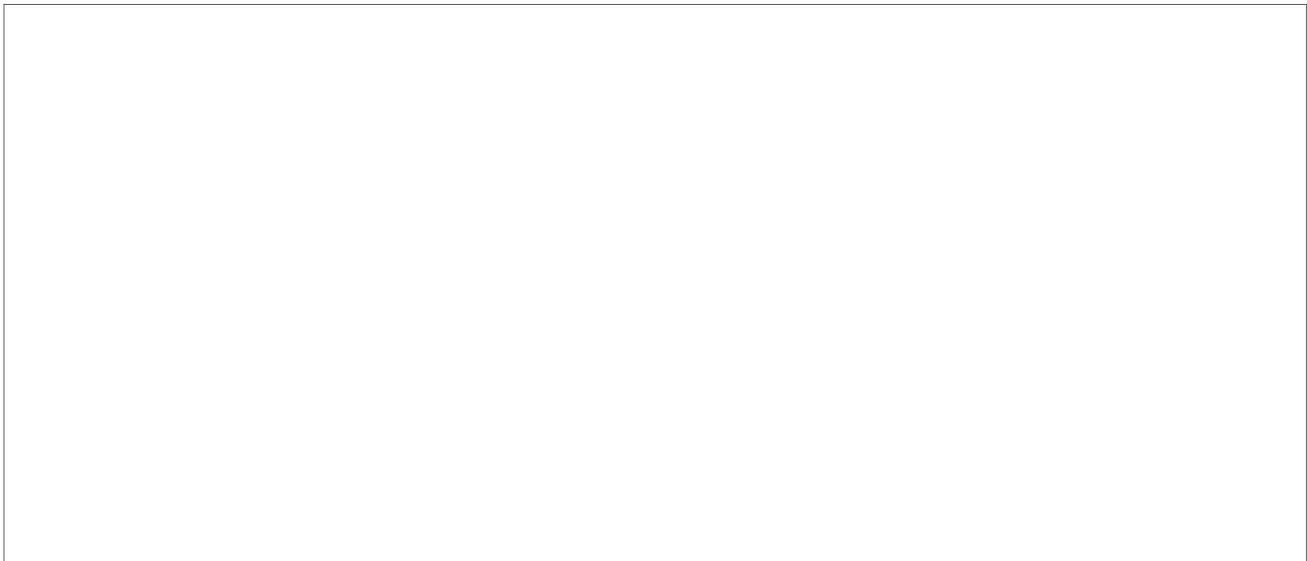


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**6. General Considerations**

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Any alternative that involves release of information that was legitimately classified in the first place generates further dilemmas.



**7. In Sum**

We are in no position to judge the potential benefits to US national security policy that might accrue from public release of more intelligence information. On any particular substantive issue, that will depend on how convincing the intelligence information is; such decisions must, in any event, be made by our elected leaders. Considering the potential costs to intelligence operations of the various alternatives, however, we believe the following generalizations are valid:

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- Our current procedures, under which we respond on an ad hoc basis to specific requests for release of intelligence information and

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But they are cumbersome. If more and faster release is desired, we can devote additional resources to the effort, at some cost to our collection and analysis efforts. We can also consider paragraph classification of DO reporting, which would facilitate more rapid release.

- If we know in advance that periodic release of information on particular topics is desired, we can accumulate and sanitize the material as it arrives and make it available on a more timely basis. We can also do more systematic compilation of unclassified information.

- Relaxation of recent restrictions on public distribution by CIA of unclassified versions of analytic papers would involve relatively small resource costs and would have some benefits for us. But it has substantial potential for adverse publicity. It probably would enhance public understanding on some issues, such as Soviet defense expenditures. But it probably would not have a decisive impact on highly contentious issues.

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John H. Stein  
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Robert M. Gates

Attachments:

- A - Selected Studies
- B - [Redacted]
- C - NSC/ICS-400292
- D - NFAC 2918-81

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cc: DDCI

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