

Central Intelligence Agency



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The Honorable Lee H. Hamilton  
Chairman  
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is to inform you of my concerns over recent requests directed at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from other, nonintelligence committees of the House of Representatives. These requests call for detailed classified intelligence information about special activities, collection requirements, collection and assessment capabilities of the CIA and internal security information on both former employees and foreign defectors.

On November 18, 1985, Chairman Rangel of the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, citing oversight of the narcotics policy as his authority, requested in writing a closed briefing on requirements for narcotics intelligence collection assigned to CIA; information on CIA's capabilities and activities to collect and assess information about narcotics cultivation, processing and trafficking; and information on links between trafficking, political insurgency and terrorism. Mr. Rangel's letter expresses interest in whether the Agency has enough resources devoted to narcotics collection and whether it has assigned the appropriate priority to this subject.

On November 26, 1985, Chairman Brooks of the House Committee on Government Operations requested an accounting of each polygraph test concerning Larry Wu-Tai Chin, Edmund L. Howard, Sharon M. Scranage, and Mr. Yurchenko, including polygraph tracings, questions asked, examiner notes and any other official or unofficial documentation on these cases. Mr. Brooks' letter describes his Committee as having oversight of the use of the polygraph by the Federal Government.

On December 4, 1985, Chairman Solarz of the Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs orally requested for himself and Ranking Minority Member Leach a covert action briefing on a country in southeast Asia. This is just one of many instances where foreign affairs matters and those special intelligence activities called covert actions have overlapped.

The growing tendency of Committees of Congress to include within their scope of inquiry the oversight of intelligence as it pertains to their subject matter is of great concern to me as Director of Central Intelligence. Although I recognize that some intelligence-related activities may directly affect a matter otherwise within the jurisdiction of such committees, the responsibility for congressional oversight of intelligence activities has been assigned by law to the House and Senate intelligence committees. These select committees have both the appropriate legislative mandates and the expertise necessary to conduct intelligence oversight and to protect intelligence from unauthorized disclosure.

If the oversight process on sensitive intelligence matters is to function effectively, I cannot respond routinely to congressional requests for information outside these normal channels. This Agency will continue, as in the past, to cooperate with any committee of Congress on matters where this can be done without exposing sensitive information needlessly. We also intend to continue to furnish intelligence products to those committees which have a need for that information. However, I would hope that congressional needs can be satisfied or coordinated in most instances by your Committee to the extent practicable.

My purpose in writing to you is twofold. First, I wish to be forthcoming with you regarding this problem and my position on it. Second, I seek your assistance in having the oversight committees play a more central role in dealing with these kinds of requests from other committees. I solicit your views and those of your Committee on this matter.

Sincerely,

*William J. Casey*

William J. Casey  
Director of Central Intelligence

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