

CIA LONG-RANGE PLANNING FOR 1985-1990

PHASE 2 - COVERT ACTION GOALS

I. Covert Action in Perspective

Covert action consists of actions which are not attributable to the United States and which are designed to influence foreign governments, organizations, persons, or events in support of US foreign policy. Covert action as a tool of foreign policy has been well established in the US political firmament since 1947, when the National Security Act, which chartered the Central Intelligence Agency, authorized CIA to: "Perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct." Driven by growing concern in the late 1940s about the threat to Western interests posed by the Soviet Union and its communist allies, US policymakers set the Agency on a course that saw the rapid development and use of a wide variety of action capabilities.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, these capabilities were employed on a broad scale. Whether offensive or defensive, programs of that period almost invariably had as their ultimate objective the countering of communist activities. International organizations with mass participation were established, worldwide media capabilities were created, political action and paramilitary skills and mechanisms were developed and kept at the ready, and major attention was devoted to the recruitment and training of staff personnel and field agents needed to implement the programs. During this period, the Agency intervened covertly in numerous countries around the globe in response to policy direction to shape elections, support the democratic center, oppose extremism (especially from the left), and counter the efforts of countries and forces perceived to be inimical to US and Western security interests. Not until later, in the 1970s, would issues such as international terrorism, narcotics, nuclear proliferation, and technology transfer, among others, emerge as problems requiring covert action attention.

By the early 1970s, public attitudes about the appropriate role for the US in world affairs had begun to shift as a result of the adverse turn of events in Vietnam. Compounding the problem, the national trauma of Watergate led to a period of introspection and caution in foreign affairs, which found declining use for covert action as an instrument of policy. With this decline, the Agency's covert action capabilities atrophied.

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Not until the late 1970s did US policymakers, faced with the collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran, the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, among other problems, begin turning once again to the Agency for covert support to policy initiatives. Since then, the rapid increase in tasking has stretched the Agency's action capabilities to the limit and made necessary the development of a program to rebuild certain capabilities.

As we assess its future role, covert action should play a narrower, more selective role throughout the 1980s than was the case in the 1950s and 1960s. In contrast with the international organizations, political party operations, and large-scale paramilitary programs of that era, we foresee program actions that are more tightly focused, more bilateral than multilateral in scope and with an increased capability for unilateral action. It will be important for Agency management to ensure that CA programs are designed to support clearly defined policy objectives, and not employed as a substitute for policy. Nor, except in rare circumstances, should CA programs be allowed to become more than subordinate elements in the overall policy mechanisms for dealing with foreign problems. Keeping CA within such a restricted framework will be difficult at times, but the Agency's central responsibility for program design and implementation will require that policymakers be sensitized to and respectful of the limits of covert action.

To prepare for tasking in the latter half of this decade, the Agency will require the capability to mount and sustain propaganda, political action, and special operations/paramilitary programs. The recruitment and training of staff personnel to manage the programs will be among our highest priorities of the next two fiscal years as we seek to recreate a cadre of "triple-threat" case officers who can handle CA as well as FI and CI responsibilities. Attention will also be needed to ensure that a cadre of CA specialists is maintained. Our parallel objective is to have on-line by 1985 a variety of infrastructural capabilities for program support into the 1990s.

II. Setting the Stage: Infrastructure Development 1981-1985

In the summer of 1981, the Agency decided on the nature of CA infrastructural capabilities needed for the 1980's. Supplementing the primary need for improved human resources, both staff and agent, a multi-point development program was initiated to provide by 1985 a skeletal capability to respond to a variety of covert action requirements. This development effort is guided by several principles:

-- The CA mechanisms must be secret and show no affiliation with the US.

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-- The mechanisms should be small and easily disposable. The large counter-front organizations appropriate to the 50s and 60s will not be appropriate to the 80s and 90s.

-- The new infrastructure should allow the Agency to carry out its CA mission entirely unilaterally if desired. The leak problem will not go away. The new capability must accept this reality and be built in such a way that leak damage can be minimized.

-- The infrastructure must be "on shelf", ready for rapid use. Because of time required to build, we cannot wait for the need to be clearly defined. The skeleton capability will allow the Agency to surge resources to meet specific demands.

-- The Agency must once again aggressively explore new ways to use state-of-art developments in covert action.

With these principles, the reestablished infrastructure will enable the Agency to:

-- respond to two insurgency/counterinsurgency situations simultaneously--at least one entirely unilaterally;



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A list of specific projects is provided as attachment

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This then is the mechanism we hope to see in place as we enter the second half of this decade. The major resource commitment should be completed by FY-86. After that, we will face primarily maintenance expenses both with our human and equipment resources. If maintained, the Agency should have a covert action capability able to meet the demands of the 1980s and beyond.

III. The World Environment: 1985-1990

The latter half of the 1980s will find the US continuing to confront risks to its national security interests. The Soviet Union will remain the principal adversary. Although anticipated leadership changes in Moscow will probably result in some policy shifts, the Soviet Union will continue its

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efforts to undermine the US position wherever possible. Some percent of our total covert action effort will be devoted directly or indirectly to dealing with the Soviet threat. Issues

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Provided at Tab B are the key findings of the DDI assessment of probable international problems of the late 1980s which will require policy attention. The DO shares these perceptions. What are the implications for covert action?

IV. Implications for Covert Action

A. Geographic Issues

Given the outlook for US national security interests in the 1985-1990 time frame, US administrations will continue to consider covert action a valuable foreign policy instrument. We cannot estimate the overall program size by the latter half of the decade.

Our planning assumption, however, is that covert action should not continue on a course of open-ended growth. Resource requirements should begin to level off by FY-86.

To guide the process of rebuilding capabilities, we should focus on countries or regions of relatively permanent US foreign policy interest, and on issues that seem destined to require policy attention throughout the decade.

Because the Soviet Union will represent the greatest threat to US interests for the foreseeable future, special effort will be required to counter Soviet initiatives inimical to US interests worldwide. This will require, *inter alia*, strengthening and some redirection of current CA

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Attached is the final version of the CA long-range planning paper.