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LEAHY DENIES HE DISCLOSED CIA SPY TACTIC
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Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., vehemently refutes charges he disclosed valuable CIA intelligence information during a network news show last year.

An article published in the November issue of Reader's Digest accuses the three-term Democratic senator of inadvertently revealing a secret CIA spy tactic while appearing on the CBS "Morning News" show on Oct. 11, 1985.

In the story, authors Rowland Evans and Robert Novak say Leahy disclosed classified information obtained during a CIA briefing the morning of the broadcast. The disclosure tipped off governments around the world about a CIA tactic of intercepting phone calls to gather intelligence material, according to the article.

During a television discussion of the Achille Lauro hijacking incident, according to the article, Leahy revealed that the United States knew the hijackers were still in Egypt despite claims by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to the contrary. "Our intelligence was very, very good," the story quotes Leahy as saying.

In a letter to Reader's Digest, made public Thursday, Leahy vehemently denied the charges that he revealed the secret CIA tactic, and demanded an apology for publishing the "gross error."

In the letter, Leahy said administration officials had already revealed the information at a news conference the night before the broadcast. Leahy also sent the magazine excerpts from various news organizations that indicate the information was made public before his television appearance.

Leahy called the article's contention he disclosed secret information "a well-timed, politically motivated libel by two writers known to have close ties to the far right."

Leahy, who is running for re-election, is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and has emphasized his congressional seniority while campaigning.

In another letter to Reader's Digest released Thursday by the Leahy campaign, James Schlesinger, a former CIA director, demanded that an apology be published for Leahy. The letter urges the magazine in the future to "check such serious charges against the historical record - before they are published."

The authors of the article say they stand by their story.