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EXCLUSIVE

CIA Morale "Restored"

Former CIA officers say the agency is U.S. "first line of defense" against invasion and subversion

By Jim Motavalli

NEW CANAAN—It was an auspicious time for the Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO) to hold its New England section meeting at the posh Roger Sherman Inn in New Canaan. That same week, former Secretary of State and NATO Commander Alexander Haig was in town visiting friends, and his close-cropped security men were spied patrolling about, checking out suspicious characters. In 20 years those guys will be AFIO members.

AFIO is headquartered in McLean, Virginia, near CIA headquarters in Langley. Veteran spooks like Clare Boothe Luce, David Atlee Phillips and Admiral Bobby Inman are members. Former President Gerald Ford is the honorary director. It's a very conservative organization which believes that "effective intelligence is the nation's first line of defense against surprise from abroad, subversion at home and possibly dangerous miscalculation by our national leaders in the conduct of foreign and defense policy."

FBI men are "agents"; CIA men are "officers." The former agents and officers were mainly genial, back-slapping men in their 50s and 60s, attired without exception in conservative dark blue and black suits. They greeted host Eleanore Hoar (herself a former CIA officer) with brief thumbnail biographies. "I was involved in the secret war in Laos; for the last four years I've been doing POW/MIA work," said one. "I was in the Defense Intelligence Agency, retired in 1972 and joined Exxon as head of security operations," said another.

Hoar pinned little name tags on each with a smearing magic marker. She is a friendly, informal type, with none of the acerbic glaciality of a Jeanne Kirkpatrick. Now living in Darien, where she works as a tutor for dyslexic children, Hoar began her CIA career in 1953 working with her husband as part of the agency's China "listening post" in Hong Kong. From there it was on to Peru in the early 60s. Like most former of-

ficers, Hoar will say *where* she was, but not *what* she did there.

Hoar got out of the Agency in 1963. Having two officers under one roof "didn't make for good family solidarity," she said. But she followed CIA affairs closely. "I felt so powerless during that period in the 70s, when (in the post-Watergate years) the Church (Senate) and Pike (House) committees were stripping everything away from the intelligence agencies. Without good intelligence the president can't make informed decisions. I was so glad to hear of AFIO."

Mike Speers was standing next to a man Hoar described as "an FBI type." Speers, whose Ford Escort sports Vermont "AFIO" license plates, is the president of the New England chapter, but he's no super-spook. "My intelligence experience is pretty minute," he said. "I was a buck sergeant breaking codes during the Korean War. After that I was in the State Department until my retirement." Now he lives quietly in Weston, Vermont and collects rare books on intelligence matters.

"It's good to have a professional running the CIA again," Speers said. "Bill Casey is an old pro." The man AFIO-ers love to hate is Jimmy Carter's appointee, Admiral Stansfield Turner, who sought to curb some of the excesses of the Nixon years, like the overthrow of Allende in Chile. Turner is an AFIO member, oddly enough, but he doesn't always pay his dues. "His personnel policies were just incredibly stupid," Speers said. "He tried to cut the agency's staff by a third, get rid of everybody over 50. These were people who'd spent 20-30 years building up contacts."

Casey, Speers said, "has restored morale." And, in the opinion of many intelligence observers, sharply increased the level of covert activity, resulting in such public embarrassments as the mining of Nicaragua's harbors and the *contra* manual that called on the guerrillas to "neutralize" municipal leaders. Speers denies this. "Covert activity has stayed at the same level throughout," he said. "The public is saddled with the misperception—derived from reading James

Bond novels—that 90 percent of the CIA's business is to subvert other governments. It's not. Actually, 90 percent is analyzing information collected by others." Given the volume of revelations about CIA covert activity, both abroad and—contrary to its charter—in the U.S., 10 percent of the "company's" business is a lot of business.

Speers' New England AFIO chapter has 66 members. Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire are all well represented. Not all AFIO members have intelligence backgrounds—membership is open to any interested party—but most have done time somewhere. "Everyone you see here tonight was in intelligence," said Speers, "except for John Quirk."

Quirk turns out to be a man in his 40s with a large pot belly. He is the founder of something called the Foreign Intelligence Press, based in Guilford. He's putting out a series of highly favorable books on such intelligence agencies as the CIA and the Israeli Mossad. "These books are not going to be exposes," he said. "They're not going to knock the agencies like (Phillip Agee and (Victor) Marchetti did." The books, mostly written by former agents (the KGB volume is by a defector Quirk's got "under wraps"), will "show the importance of intelligence gathering in our society."

Quirk believes he's working alone against a red tide. "There are definitely Soviet agents of influence in American book publishing," he said. U.S. publishers, he claimed, won't touch a book that's positive about the intelligence community. Renegade ex-agents like Phillip Agee even have friends planted at some companies, he said, making sure that nothing gets by. "It can be very subtle, not obvious," said AFIO member Bill Smith. (Smith appeared to be in his late 20s and was the youngest person in the room. He wouldn't talk about his cloak-and-dagger background, but he did say his name *really* is Bill Smith.)

Some people, Quirk laments, are under the mistaken impression that *his* company is anti-intelligence. "I even get resumes from (the left-leaning think-tank) the Institute for Policy Studies. God, you should see some of the things they put out—anti-CIA, anti-defense, pro-Sandinista. There was one thing they put out saying the whole country was being shot with radiation." An observing AFIO member added, "Well, you know who funds them—the KGB." Everybody nodded.