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A Report on the Congress and National Security Affairs

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National Security and the Intelligence Gap

Throughout the post-World War II era, the United States has relied upon foreign intelligence activities to support U.S. foreign policy objectives and protect U.S. interests overseas. Clandestine collection, counterintelligence and covert operations have all been essential elements of the U.S. intelligence effort. Yet today, as at no other time in the post-war era, serious questions have been raised as to the adequacy of U.S. intelligence capabilities. The recent crisis in Iran underscores the inadequacies of U.S. intelligence. Thus, growing consensus is emerging that U.S. intelligence capabilities have been degraded to such an extent that the U.S. is increasingly incapable of identifying and recruiting sources overseas, conducting effective counterespionage activities at home, and of using covert actions to anticipate or alter the course of events abroad to benefit the U.S. interests. It is therefore appropriate that the record of recent U.S. intelligence failures be recounted for public analysis, and that proper attribution be given for the underlying causes of U.S. intelligence inadequacies, so that prompt remedial action may be taken.

CUBA

Intelligence failures over the past two years with respect to Cuba are particularly illustrative of the current U.S. problem. Beginning in 1977, the Carter Administration brought about a major shift in U.S. policy towards Cuba that included the suspension of all U.S. SR-71 reconnaissance flights over Cuba and the categorization of Cuba as a "low priority" target for U.S. human intelligence collection efforts. The SR-71 over-flight suspensions and the decline of the human espionage effort in Cuba led to a failure to monitor the Soviet military build-up in Cuba and Cuba's support of revolution and terrorism throughout Latin America.

Since the 1977 SR-71 overflight cancellations, the Soviet Union has:

- 1) deployed MIG-23 fighter-bombers in Cuba;
- 2) constructed a second pier at the naval port of Cienfuegos, which is capable of servicing two or more Soviet submarines;
- 3) had two Foxtrot-class submarines visit Cuban ports;
- 4) introduced the SA-3 Goa air-defense missile system (with a low altitude detection capability of from 150-60,000 feet) into Cuba;
- 5) increased early warning radar sites in Cuba;

- 6) deployed a Soviet combat brigade, which took the U.S. months to confirm after its actual deployment date.

This series of events, and in particular the undetected deployment of Soviet combat troops in Cuba, has helped the Soviets to build up Cuba as a military base, and potentially provided the Soviets, as Rep. Kemp has stated, with "a basing infrastructure that could enable them to support a future division-sized deployment force in a matter of days." The Soviet build-up in Cuba, and particularly the development of naval facilities at Cienfuegos, has led the Defense Planning Committee of the Atlantic Alliance to conclude that the wartime potential of Cuba could pose a significant threat to U.S. efforts to keep oil supply routes and shipping lanes open in the event of a major conflict with the Soviet Union. This Soviet build-up violates U.S.-Soviet agreements made in 1962 and 1970 that no offensive capabilities be introduced by the USSR into Cuba.

The decline of the human intelligence effort in Cuban and Latin America has hampered U.S. capabilities to monitor Cuba's support of revolution and terrorism in the Western hemisphere as well. The U.S. is working at an extreme intelligence disadvantage throughout Latin America. The Cuban Direccion General de Inteligencia (DGI) has provided training and support for numerous Latin America terrorist movements, and substantial evidence exists that it is controlled by the Soviet KGB. In particular, the failure on the part of the Carter Administration to order a revised National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) for Nicaragua, and its denial of Cuban-Panamanian involvement in the revolution, in the face of reports that Cuba was covertly aiding the Sandinistas (and that Panama was serving as a conduit for Cuban arms to the Sandinistas), led to a major intelligence breakdown on Nicaragua. Combined with the psychological impact of the Soviet military build-up in Cuba, the fall of Somoza could lead to increased pressure upon El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala to succumb to Cuban-supported revolutionary movements.

TERRORISM IN IRAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST

U.S. intelligence failures in Iran and the Middle East have contributed to the isolation of Saudi Arabia and the increase of Soviet influence throughout the Persian Gulf. Two major reasons for U.S. ignorance of the impending fall of the Shah of Iran last year were the refusal of the Carter Administration to order the CIA to develop a com-

petitive NIE on Iran, and its overreliance on pro-government sources for domestic political intelligence. Prior to major cuts in U.S. clandestine collection personnel in the mid-1970s, contacts with opposition student groups and religious factions were considered a supplementary source of U.S. intelligence on Iran. Yet these personnel cutbacks, and the deliberate decision on the part of the Administration to restrict U.S. intelligence contacts with the anti-Shah opposition in Iran led to very poor field intelligence reporting. Had the U.S. been able to accurately assess the depth of opposition to the Shah and the role of the PLO and the pro-Soviet Afghani Secret Service (Estekbarat) in the revolt, U.S. policy-makers might have been able to persuade the Shah to handle the rising opposition differently, and the U.S. might still have its Iranian ICBM monitoring sites lost due to the revolution.

Furthermore, the counsel given to the Iranian military during the final weeks of the revolution was based upon misassessments of the political situation inside of Iran. General Robert Huyser was sent to Iran on a mission to warn the Iranian military that the U.S. would not support a military coup because of its judgment that the Bakhtiari government would maintain control over the situation. That counsel was taken, and with the ensuing rise of Khomeini, Iranian revolutionary courts executed hundreds of Iranian military officers.

These intelligence failures largely explain the U.S. inability to determine who was responsible for the U.S. Embassy takeover in Teheran and to undertake covert actions to encourage ethnic separatists and other factions in Iran to initiate a counter-revolt against the Ayatollah Khomeini. The lack of human intelligence in Iran among the radical student factions in large measure explains why it took weeks before U.S. intelligence could confirm that pro-Marxist students, reportedly with international terrorist connections, were behind the embassy takeover. While recent reports have indicated that the possibility of using covert action to topple Khomeini has been considered by the Administration, the lack of established contacts inside Iran has made this option unusable.

Another area in which U.S. intelligence has been inadequate is in Afghanistan. U.S. intelligence consistently misinterpreted the intent of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The Administration only acknowledged in late December that the Soviet military build-up represented a threat to regional security. Yet over the past two years, the Soviets took virtual command of Afghani military operations against the Muslim rebels in central Afghanistan. This conflict presented the U.S. with an excellent opportunity to initiate covert actions to exacerbate the growing divisions between the rebels and the pro-Marxist government in Kabul, but the decline of U.S. intelligence capabilities, in both Afghanistan and Iran, limited that option. The U.S. failure to initiate covert actions or provide assistance to the rebels against the pro-Marxist Amin government enabled Moscow to increase its military presence in Afghanistan, and direct the unexpected coup against Amin with little concern over competition from outside sources.

The U.S. is increasingly unable to ascertain why U.S. policy actions fail or lead to counter-actions. The Muslim reaction to the U.S.-Iranian confrontation is an example of how U.S. intelligence was taken by surprise. Terrorist attacks on U.S. embassies in Libya and Pakistan

(where two Americans were killed), as well as the recent takeover of the Great Mosque in Mecca (which may have been Palestinian-instigated and launched from South Yemen, with Soviet backing) are three good examples of this failure. Moreover, U.S. intelligence failed to ascertain that the Saudis and other moderate Arab governments would not support the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. This, along with the Iranian situation, has led to a definite cooling of U.S.-Saudi relations.

Meanwhile, the Soviets, through the introduction of military advisors and technicians throughout Africa and the Middle East, are taking the initiative in the area of intelligence operations in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. These U.S. failures have led the Administration to belatedly order the CIA and the DIA to improve intelligence collection on "political currents" in these areas. How successful these efforts will be, given the scarcity of U.S. contacts, is highly debatable.

U.S. STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE

America's growing inability to detect changes in the political/military balance also deserves analysis. U.S. strategic intelligence, throughout the 1960s and into the mid-1970s, consistently underestimated both the Soviet strategic build-up and the steady increase of Soviet military spending. In 1973 U.S. intelligence inaccurately predicted that Israel would not be attacked by the Arabs. Recently U.S. intelligence has continued these trends. Some examples include:

- 1) Underestimating North Korean troop strength by 25%, leading to a reversal in President Carter's South Korean troop withdrawal policy;
- 2) Inability to confirm whether a nuclear explosion actually occurred over the Indian Ocean last September, and if so, who did it;
- 3) Inability to anticipate the rapid shift of Soviet support from Somalia to Ethiopia;
- 4) A reported disagreement between U.S. and Israeli intelligence as to the possibility of a major Soviet airlift of military supplies and personnel to South Yemen and Ethiopia during Soviet maneuvers in the middle east last August;
- 5) In 1977 the CIA revised its intelligence estimates on Soviet oil production, concluding that Moscow would be a net oil importer in the 1980s. Yet the Defense Intelligence Agency, and many Western petroleum experts, disagree with these estimates.

The most recent major failure of U.S. intelligence has been in the U.S. assessment of North Yemen's military and political relationship with the Soviet Union. North Yemen is now receiving large quantities of military arms (MIG-21s, T-55 and T-62 tanks) from the Soviet Union. Yet, early last year, U.S. transfers of close to \$400 million of military equipment to North Yemen (via Saudi Arabia) were based on the assessment that North Yemen was moving toward the Western camp. The Soviets have also sent hundreds of military and intelligence personnel into North Yemen to train its army, police and security services. This is the same procedure that the Soviets used to consolidate their influence over Angola, Mozambique and South Yemen.

CAUSES OF THE FAILURES

The failures of American intelligence in the recent past point to serious problems in the organization and purposes

of the U.S. intelligence community, and especially in the CIA. These problems derive from two general causes: the internal reforms of the CIA in the early 1970s and the external exposures and consequent limitations placed on it in the late 1970s in the wake of Congressional investigations, journalistic exposures and the defection of CIA officers. Under the directorship of James R. Schlesinger and William E. Colby efforts were made to modernize and reform the whole purpose and structure of the CIA. Previously, the CIA had been regarded (and appears to have regarded itself) as the instrument responsible for clandestine and covert operations essential to national security. Under Schlesinger and Colby, however, there occurred a shift away from clandestinity and covert action toward a greater capacity for the analysis of information and a greater reliance on technical (e.g., satellite) collection rather than human intelligence. As a result, some 2000 officers of the CIA were forcibly retired—many of them the most experienced and most knowledgeable personnel available to a profession that requires both experience and human qualities that are by nature uncommon. Under President Carter's DCI (Director of Central Intelligence), Admiral Stansfield Turner, these cutbacks continued. Another 820 officers—all of them from 4500-man Deputy Directorate of Operations, which is responsible for covert actions—were discharged, and this number amounted to about 15% of the total personnel of DDO.

These cutbacks and the redirection of the mission of the CIA occurred almost simultaneously with the congressional investigations of the Church and Pike Committees, with the passage of the Hughes-Ryan Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974, and with various media exposures, suppositions, and conspiracy theories that targeted the CIA as the villain in a number of recent mysterious controversies. The effect of these events was twofold. First, the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, seeking to make intelligence more responsible to elected authorities, required the President to approve all covert actions before they were actually undertaken (thus effectively preventing the President from claiming deniability in the event that the action was exposed). The Amendment also increased to six the number of congressional committees involved in intelligence oversight, and in 1978 two more committees were added for a total of eight. In the Senate alone, the number of Senators who now have intelligence oversight responsibilities by virtue of their membership on these committees is 74—three-fourths of the total membership of the chamber. Thus, the Hughes-Ryan Amendment vastly increased the likelihood of leaks of classified information and operations while diminishing the possibility of the government's effectively denying an exposed covert action.

Secondly, the wave of exposures and investigations by the media and Congress contributed to the demoralization of intelligence personnel. The intelligence profession is a thankless one at best, with little visibility, public acknowledgement, or financial reward and frequently with considerable danger. The revelations of the 1970s contributed to a myth that covert action was inherently a brutal, deceptive, and usually criminal activity. However, the demoralization of the intelligence community was not due merely to apparent ingratitude from the public. In 1975 Richard Welch, CIA chief of station in Athens, Greece, was assassinated by unknown gunmen shortly

after the revelation of his name and position in Philip Agee's publication, *Counterspy*. Clearly, intelligence personnel would be reluctant to operate at their maximum efficiency if the chance of being exposed by journalists, unwary congressmen, or disgruntled colleagues persisted. Furthermore, some intelligence services of foreign states may be reluctant to share information or cooperate with the U.S. services. The practical effect of these restrictions became clear in 1978, when the CIA refused a request from its sister Italian service to provide assistance in the terrorist kidnapping of Aldo Moro. Admiral Turner apparently feared that under the Hughes-Ryan restrictions, such assistance could be considered "covert operations" and that leakage of CIA help might result in further political attacks on the agency. Nor were the sources, collaborators, and foreign supporters of U.S. intelligence encouraged by the leaks that could result in their own exposure, professional ruin, imprisonment, or death.

It is in this atmosphere, then, of scandal, ridicule, demoralization, and reluctant cooperation that the recent failures of U.S. intelligence must be assessed. The current debate over the re-chartering of the CIA and reform and redirection of U.S. intelligence has not yet fully appreciated either the causes of these failures or the real needs and purposes of the intelligence function. While the U.S. concerns itself with the relationship of intelligence to civil liberties, the Soviets and their surrogates have continued to use their own intelligence services as destabilizing weapons of political warfare. The KGB and the GRU dominate the intelligence services of Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and other satellite states. They have provided special training for state security services in Somalia, Libya, Mozambique, and other Third World countries. They have given training, weapons, funds, and moral support to terrorist movements in Western Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They maintain extensive facilities in Western states for the clandestine and illegal collection of intelligence through espionage (both human and technical and directed against both governments and private industries), and often abuse Soviet diplomatic privileges in the process. Finally, they have been involved in "disinformation" operations damaging to the U.S. through forgeries and hostile propaganda, and have engaged in punitive actions against anti-Soviet journalists that have resulted in their murder on foreign soil.

The need for an intelligence service that can meet the challenge of the Soviets and their surrogates through clandestine and covert operations is therefore clear, but the debate thus far has concentrated on the need to respect civil liberties and the "right to know." As important as civil liberties are, it has always been axiomatic that they are secondary in importance to national security and the survival of the society, without which there are no rights at all or for anyone. It is therefore to be hoped that the debate on U.S. intelligence in the future will start from the premise that intelligence must be functional to national security, and not that it should be restricted by the obsessive concern with juridical abstractions. Only if the intelligence community is given a mission that responds to the threats of national security can it effectively deal with these threats and in the process become one of the strongest safeguards of freedom.



Insiders Report

Tracking the Issues through Congress

Congress and U.S. Intelligence

The state of the U.S. intelligence community is, in a word, alarming. The operations of the Central Intelligence Agency have been severely curtailed, both by executive order and by attrition, as well as through relentless media and congressional exposure and exploitation of alleged past abuses. Domestically, the nation's intelligence capability is all but gone. Law enforcement intelligence has been rendered impotent or nonexistent.

The remedy for this situation lies with several sources, one of them the Congress of the United States. Congress is currently considering adoption of basic legislative charters for both the CIA and the FBI. The problem is, however, compounded by the probable intent of Congress in this area; it is wise to recall that any such Congressional action will be grounded in the revelations of the Church Committee report of 1976, which provided the curious with a catalogue of alleged past abuses by the intelligence community. Senator Church's pithy characterization of the CIA as a "rogue elephant out of control" will not inspire confidence among those who realize that it is essential to the effective operation of the domestic and foreign intelligence agencies that there be sufficient leeway for them to remain suitably flexible in discharging their functions under the broad Constitutional authority of the executive in this area.

Indeed, it is precisely this which has given rise to apprehension with respect to the proposed legislative charters (the charter for the CIA is still to come, although there are indications that the Bureau charter now before Congress can be taken as a "bellwether" for the community in general). The problem, in the view of many seasoned professional observers, lies in the fact that current usages will, if the proposed charters come to fruition, be "set in concrete" and effectively hamstring these agencies almost beyond hope of remedy; at present, these restrictions could easily be altered by a President or Attorney General with a desire to do so. Thus, one possible Congressional accomplishment in reforming the intelligence community could well become a positive danger to the nation as we are faced with the rising menace of organized terrorism at home and intelligence failures abroad without a countervailing intelligence capability which takes into account the paramount need for flexibility in dealing with the "untidy world" to which former CIA Director Richard Helms has adverted.

One area in which Congress might well legislate constructively would be in amendment of the Freedom of Information Act. At present, the hemorrhaging of secrets under the provisions of the Act has caused a drastic decline in the ability of the intelligence community to recruit and maintain foreign and domestic informants and gather sensitive intelligence data. An exceptionally comprehensive report on the general erosion of intelligence, issued in 1978 by the Subcommittee on Criminal Laws and Procedures of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, has gone largely

unnoticed in the press and elsewhere, although Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), a member of the Judiciary Committee, introduced two bills last month (S. 2086 and S. 2087) to alleviate this and related problems by effecting needed changes in both the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act. The U.S. may also need to enact legislation making it a criminal offense to expose the identity of U.S. intelligence agents overseas.

It is also possible that both the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and the so-called Hughes-Ryan Amendment might be amended to good effect. The former has imposed another layer of judicial restriction in the use of electronic surveillance that increases the likelihood of potential leaks of highly sensitive data. Former U.S. Solicitor General Robert Bork has argued that such restriction may well be an unconstitutional infringement on the power of the executive to conduct such activity in the interests of national security. Moreover, as Bork has also noted, the act brings the judiciary into an area (foreign intelligence) in which it is not competent to judge the national security requirements of the country. The latter requires that covert action overseas be reported to as many as eight committees of Congress, when it can be argued that the House and Senate Intelligence Committees would probably be sufficient (or a single joint committee), if only from the standpoint of maintaining necessary security in this extremely sensitive area.

Specialists believe that the Congress should reinstitute continuing inquiry into the origins, nature, and activities of groups which have as their aim the destruction of the United States government and the subversion of its lawful processes. At this juncture, the House and Senate do not maintain oversight of those revolutionary groups and foreign operatives which are the proper objects of the community's concern. If agencies like the CIA and FBI were able to operate with reasonable flexibility in this area with mandates which allowed them to do the job, there might be at least some argument against such bodies on the ground of duplication, although such argument would overlook the need of Congress to inquire in the area in order to legislate intelligently. The fact is that the House Committee on Internal Security passed out of existence in 1975; and the House Judiciary Committee, which supposedly now has jurisdiction, has done nothing to discharge this function. Further, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, a part of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, has also been abolished. Thus, Congress does not now have the professional staff and expertise to study the operations of those who would destroy the country from within or from without. In the view of many long-time professionals, reestablishment of such bodies would be an invaluable first step in redressing the balance which has, since the Watergate era, tipped disastrously against the national security interests of the United States.

Checklist of Issues coming before Congress

✓ Watch For:

Armed Services Vote. The 10-0 vote (7 abstentions) by the Senate Armed Services Committee approving a report concluding that the SALT II treaty "is not in the national security interests of the United States" is considered a "major victory" by anti-SALT forces on the Hill. The feeling persists on the Hill that previously uncommitted senators will find it increasingly difficult to justify support for renewed action on the treaty on the basis of its strategic merits, given the report's highly critical analysis of the treaty's strategic implications. Moreover, the publicity and national exposure given to the report's critique is just beginning to be felt nationwide. Observers feel that as these arguments become more widely publicized, public support for the treaty will erode even further.

Rhodesian Aid. With the arrival of British Governor Lord Soames in Salisbury, congressional attention is now shifting toward the financing of the Rhodesian peace settlement. While the Administration has assured the British that the U.S. will contribute to an international peace fund for Rhodesia (the contribution could be as high as \$1 billion), both the Administration and the Congress are stressing that U.S. aid must be made part of a broad-based reconstruction effort. Members on both sides of the aisle appear to be opposing any funding proposal that will restrict the U.S. aid effort to solely enable Rhodesian blacks to expropriate land owned by white Rhodesian farmers and landowners.

Central American Security Assistance. A major issue to facing the Congress when it reconvenes after the Christmas recess will be the disposition of the "Special Central Assistance and Caribbean Security Assistance Act." This act, introduced at the request of the Administration, would authorize close to \$100 million in flexible economic support funding for countries in these regions. Approximately \$75 million of that total will be earmarked to assist in the "reconstruction of the Nicaraguan economy." While the Administration believes that the assistance will help insure the Nicaraguan junta from turning to Castro for advice and assistance, many on the Hill are contending we will be subsidizing another future Marxist state.

Defense Budget. Although the Administration hopes that the preview of its FY 1981 defense budget and 5-year defense program will ease the way for the ratification of the SALT II treaty, many uncommitted senators are still not convinced that the budget levels are adequate. Sources on the Hill indicate that a group of fence-sitting senators will pressure the Administration to ask for an FY 1980 supplemental appropriation to have some of the money "up front" as the FY 1981 budget is debated in Congress. A major reason for congressional concern is that the Carter FY 1981 budget used an inflation factor of only 7.67%, and that decreasing inflation estimates were used for the remaining "out-years" of the 5-year plan. Concern still exists, however, that even if a supplemental appropriation is forthcoming, the extra funding will be insufficient in the areas of a new strategic bomber, air defense, quick fix strategic programs to reduce Minuteman vulnerability, ABM research and development and civil defense.

Persian Gulf Basing. Sources on the Hill indicate that Senator Richard Stone (D-Fla.) is ready to once again call on the Administration to seriously considering a proposal to base U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf. The Administration's examination of possible longrange options for increasing U.S. influence in the Gulf includes the option of placing permanent military bases and a new military command in the Gulf area. Stone raised the basing proposal with the Administration early last year, but Egyptian opposition helped stymie the plan. Insiders report that Egyptian opposition to the plan is softening, and that Stone is prepared to bring up the basing proposal with Administration national security advisors.

NATO TNF Decision. The decision of NATO's Council of Ministers to support theater nuclear force (TNF) modernization has largely diffused congressional support for Administration arguments contending that a defeat of SALT II would jeopardize both TNF modernization and the prospects for SALT III. Coming as it does in the midst of substantial uncertainty as to the outcome of SALT II, the NATO decision is seen on the Hill as an indication that the European commitment to counter the Soviet theater nuclear build-up transcended in importance any reservations Europe might have had over the implications of a SALT II defeat in the Senate.

SALT and the MX. Congressional politicking over the MX race-track missile system is expected to become more intense when Congress reconvenes this month. SALT II critics now feel that pro-SALT forces in Congress were tentatively supporting the race-track system solely out of a fear for the fate of the treaty. With SALT now delayed, the support among pro-SALT senators for the race-track system may significantly erode. More important, however, are the concerns being raised by SALT II skeptics, including Senator Henry Jackson, as to the cost and effectiveness of the race-track as compared to a vertically-deployed MX, and the strength of the Administration's MX commitment itself.

Congressional Hearings of Interest.

Senate Banking Committee:

International Finance Subcommittee:

January 15: 10:00 a.m. 5302 DSOB

Hearings to be held on international technology transfers in integrated circuits relating to the electronics industry.

Senate Judiciary Committee:

Dates TBA: 9:30 a.m. 2228 DSOB

Hearings to be held on S. 1612, governing charter for the FBI.

Senate Armed Services Committee:

Manpower and Personnel Subcommittee:

January 1980 Dates: Time and Place TBA

Hearings to Continue on Military Recruiting practices in the armed services.



Suggested Reading

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NEWS

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CIA REFORMS SAID TO LEAVE AGENCY "DEGRADED," U.S. HELPLESS

WASHINGTON, January 9, 1980 -- Despite assurances from the Administration that U.S. "intelligence" operations are adequate, the crisis in Iran and a string of other U.S. foreign policy setbacks indicate that "U.S. intelligence capabilities have been degraded to such an extent" that they are no longer an effective arm of U.S. foreign policy.

That's the assessment of security analysts at The Heritage Foundation, writing on the "Intelligence Gap" in the current issue of the National Security Record newsletter.

They blame the breakdown on the internal reforms within the CIA in the early 1970s and the external exposures and resulting limitations placed on the agency in the late 1970s in the wake of Congressional investigations. These reforms resulted in the forcible retirement of some 2,000 mostly senior officers, and the discharge of another 820 officers from the super-secret Deputy Directorate of Operations, which is responsible for covert actions.

"Throughout the post-World War II era, the United States has relied upon foreign intelligence activities to support U.S. interests overseas. Clandestine collection, counterintelligence and covert operations have all been essential elements of the U.S. intelligence

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effort. Yet today, as at no other time in the post-war era ... (a) growing consensus is emerging that U.S. intelligence capabilities have been degraded to such an extent that the U.S. is increasingly incapable of identifying and recruiting sources overseas, conducting effective counterespionage activities at home, and of using covert actions to anticipate or alter the course of events abroad to benefit the U.S. interests."

In addition to Iran, which caught the U.S. totally off-guard, several other examples of intelligence community failures are cited:

1) "U.S. intelligence consistently misinterpreted the intent of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan." In fact, the Heritage analysts say, it was only in late December (1979) that the Administration finally acknowledged "that the Soviet military build-up represented a threat to regional security. Yet, over the past two years, the Soviets took virtual command of Afghani military operations..."

2) Cancellation of SR-71 reconnaissance flights in 1977 and the "decline in the human espionage effort in Cuba led to a failure to monitor the Soviet military build-up in Cuba and Cuba's support of revolution and terrorism throughout Latin America."

3) In 1973 U.S. intelligence inaccurately predicted that Israel would not be attacked by the Arabs.

4) More recently, underestimating North Korean troop strength by 25 percent led to President Carter having to reverse his previously announced troop withdrawal policy.

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5) The U.S. has been unable to confirm whether a nuclear explosion actually occurred over the Indian Ocean last September, and if so, who was responsible.

6) The U.S. was not able to anticipate the rapid shift of Soviet support from Somalia to Ethiopia.

7) In 1977 the CIA revised its intelligence estimates on Soviet oil production, concluding that Moscow would be a net oil importer through the 1980s. "Yet the Defense Intelligence Agency, and many Western petroleum experts, disagree with these estimates."

"While the U.S. concerns itself with the relationship of intelligence to civil liberties, the Soviets or their surrogates have continued to use their own intelligence services as destabilizing weapons of political warfare," the Heritage analysts write.

They conclude that as important as civil liberties and the public's right to know may be, "it has always been axiomatic that they are secondary in importance to national security and the survival of the society, without which there are no rights at all or for anyone. It is therefore to be hoped that the debate on U.S. intelligence must be functional to national security, and not that it should be restricted by the obsessive concern with juridical abstractions. Only if the intelligence community is given a mission that responds to the threats of national security can it effectively deal with these threats and in the process become one of the strongest safeguards of freedom."

The Heritage Foundation is a non-partisan public policy institute dedicated to individual and economic freedom, limited government, and a strong national defense.

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