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CIA purposely misinforms, ex-agent tells W&L audience

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LEXINGTON — "Truth has no applicability to the covert activities of the CIA or the operations of the United States in places like Grenada," says a former agent who bills himself as the "highest-ranked CIA official to ever openly criticize the agency."

John Stockwell, a former CIA colonel who directed the agency's covert operations in Angola from 1975 to 1976, said the CIA and the National Security Council regularly lied to the United Nations, the U.S. Senate and the news media about the CIA's activities in Angola.

The CIA purposely misinforms the American people about its activities through secrecy and carefully constructed lies, Stockwell said in a speech Thursday night at Washington and Lee University.

"Secrecy is not designed to protect the operation. The victims know they are being attacked," he said. "Secrecy is designed to keep the American people from knowing what is happening."

Stockwell also charged that the CIA and the U.S. government also

extend their false propaganda to the information given out on communist nations. "There is clearly a discrepancy between what our government tells about the other half and the truth."

Stockwell was an agent from 1964 until 1977, when he resigned to write a book analyzing the CIA's covert activities in Angola in the mid-1970s. In it, he argues that the agency should be dismantled "for the good of the United States and the world."

The 1978 bestseller, "In Search of Enemies," resulted in a lawsuit against him by the CIA for revealing government secrets and a court order requiring that any future writings by him about the U.S. government be submitted to the agency for censorship.

Stockwell said Thursday he is a conservative who is frightened by nuclear arms and U.S. foreign policy.

"I believe the United States' militaristic policies — invading countries and killing people — are dangerous in every sense of the word," he said. "What I'm saying is that Ronald Reagan is a radical. I'm a conservative."