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# CIA: Confronting "Undeclared War"

**G**uerrilla action, political upheaval, economic subversion and disinformation are among the many tactics being used against the Free World by the forces of international Communism. In this exclusive interview, America's intelligence chief, CIA Director William J. Casey, assesses how the US is faring in this battle.



**Legion Magazine:** Mr. Casey, what are the critical intelligence problems of the 1980s as you see them?

**Director Casey:** First and foremost is the ever-growing military power of the Soviet Union. Second is the destabilization and subversion of countries around the world by a combination of the Soviet Union and its Cuban, Vietnamese, Ethiopian and Libyan proxies. Third are terrorist activities that are increasingly sponsored by the Communists and radical Arab states like Iran and Libya for foreign policy purposes. Then, there's the deep unrest of all those captive peoples under the Soviet yoke, like the Poles. The Arab states around the Mediterranean and the states having proximity to the Persian Gulf present a hornet's nest of intelligence problems. The list is lengthy.

**Q.** Is all this a scenario for eventual open conflict?

**A.** I'm afraid that too few people in a peaceful place like America understand the real nature of what's going on around the world. The hard fact is, we are confronted with an undeclared war by the forces of international Communism as well as some radical Arab states. Terrorism has reached a stage where the distinction between war and peace is often obscured. The Soviet Union's KGB is waging constant warfare against the US, using techniques of propaganda, disinformation and other so-called "active measures" such as stealing or otherwise improperly acquiring our best technology; destabilizing weak governments; undermining trade and national economies, and providing weapons and training to insurgents who seek to overthrow non-Communist governments. At the same time, the Soviets seek to build an overwhelming military power that can be used to intimidate others and make political gains.

**Q.** What's the main hope for countering these forces around the world?

**A.** The CIA is the one worldwide force that can cope with the tactics practiced in this undeclared war. Other countries have effective intelligence and security agencies. By working closely with them, by sharing information and technological capabilities, we have mounted an effective worldwide counter-force. Hence, the KGB and its auxiliaries—the East Europeans, the Cubans, the Vietnamese, the Nicaraguans—apply increasing amounts of manpower, money and subversive skills in an effort to destroy us and our capabilities.

**Q.** How is this undeclared war going?

**A.** I think we are doing better. Over the years, the Communists were very successful in supporting guerrilla action and destabilizing and overthrowing governments. Communists came into control in Ethiopia, Angola, Nicaragua and, of course, in Cuba and Vietnam. In the past couple of years, however, they've been encountering increasing resistance. People in these countries are less willing to take Communist oppression lying down. They are more aware of what the Communists are really up to, and there is growing resistance to it.

**Q.** Much has been heard about the operations of the KGB and others in stealing our industrial secrets. How damaging is this espionage work?

**A.** Soviet industrial espionage is a serious problem. Through KGB operations, America ends up contributing indirectly to the build-up, the accuracy and precision of Soviet weapons which, in effect, finds us competing with our own technology. This has forced us to make budget-

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busting appropriations to come up with more adequate defense forces. However, we now fully recognize the problem and are doing a better counter-espionage job. Last year well over 100 Soviet agents were arrested, kicked out or defected around the world, most of them engaged in stealing technology.

**Q.** Why do we tolerate all these agents within the US, including those disguised as diplomatic personnel?

**A.** Well, we don't just tolerate them. The FBI is responsible for combatting Soviet espionage inside the US. The Soviets certainly have more agents in this country than we have in theirs. We work very hard to put them out of business and are having a fairly good success rate. Yet, sometimes it is better to watch what they are doing for a while, to see what else is out there, instead of immediately grabbing and deporting them.

**Q.** How successful is the West in prying critical information out of the USSR?

**A.** The reality we face is asymmetry in the availability of information. In our open society anybody can get lots of information. Their society is closed and their data is closely held. That's the nature of the beast and it makes our job a lot tougher. On the other hand, openness in the US is the source of our vitality. Here, people can build, exchange and acquire knowledge without hindrance. The Soviets pay a steep price for their restricted freedom in the form of a deadening internal climate. But I'm sure they won't change their ways, so our task will remain challenging.

**Q.** How serious a threat is terrorism within the US?

**A.** Well, it's a very serious threat worldwide. It is clear that some countries have adopted terrorism as a cheap and inexpensive foreign policy weapon, and use it in assorted ways to create diplomatic upheaval. American diplomatic institutions have already suffered deeply from terrorism—as, for instance, in Lebanon—and I think that we will see more of it abroad and here in America.

**Q.** Is the CIA adequately equipped to deal with all these problems?

**A.** The CIA is a capable, hard-hitting organization. It was developed over 36 years ago by truly dedicated people. It is staffed today by people just as dedicated. There is a whole range of technical and security needs that can be handled only by the CIA—and, along with the military and other intelligence agencies making up the American intelligence community, we do have the people capable of gathering and analyzing the information needed by our policymakers in Washington.

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*William J. Casey, who served in the OSS in WWII, is a former chairman of the Securities & Exchange Commission and the Export-Import Bank. He was named CIA director in 1981.*

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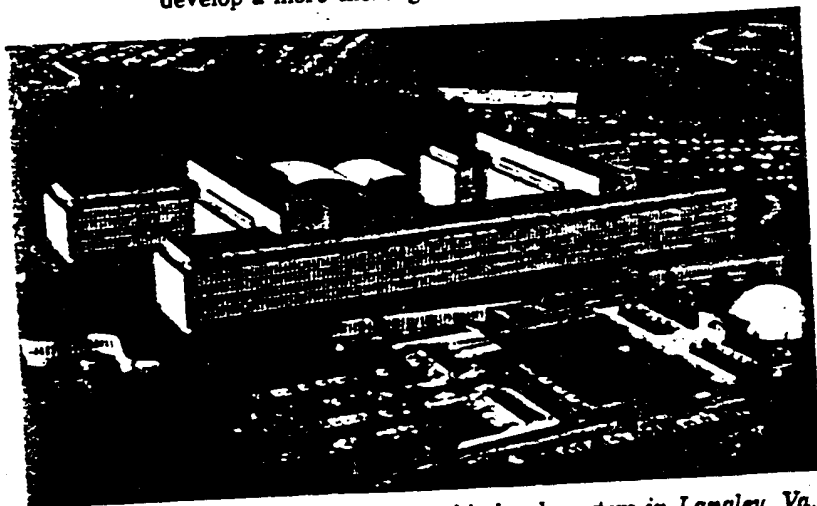
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**Q.** Any particular areas which need strengthening?  
**A.** Of course. Intelligence is by no means a perfect science. In the '70s the intelligence budget was cut some 40 percent, and numbers of people reduced by 50 percent. Now, we're rebuilding our capabilities. Advanced technical systems have given us the ability to get a lot of information that we couldn't before, and we get information faster and in larger quantities. The problem, increasingly, is being able to process the information—to analyze it so that people can understand and use it. To cope with this enormous intake, we've hired many computer and information experts.

In this connection, I might mention that the CIA is not looking for spies; we're looking for patriots, friends and supporters—for people who understand the endless difference between human freedom and totalitarianism and who are willing to put themselves on the line for the things we in America believe in.

**Q.** What roles do you carry out as head of our overall intelligence community?

**A.** I wear three hats. First, I am the President's principal intelligence adviser. I'm also charged with coordinating the intelligence community, which includes CIA, the Department of State, Defense, Treasury, Energy and the FBI; that is, the nation's whole intelligence apparatus, including military intelligence and specialized activities. And thirdly, I head the CIA itself. For the most part, the various components of the intelligence community work together. Having access to all areas of intelligence lets us develop a more thorough assessment of facts.



The CIA operates from this headquarters in Langley, Va.

Then, as a Cabinet officer, I get an insight into policy deliberations. This is very important in determining what is critical and what we must focus on in producing the most relevant intelligence.

**Q.** Do you have any problems in getting support from the White House and Congress?

**A.** No. We have received strong support from both this administration and from Congress. We have had considerable increases in our budget and other resources, which is essential to our rebuilding effort.

**Q.** Why did the CIA lose that support in the '70s?  
**A.** Support was lost in the '70s because there was a lot of misinformation put out about misconduct in intelligence activities. With few exceptions, those allegations turned out to be false. Yet, while the charges would appear on the front pages of newspapers, the corrections or denials would appear on the back pages. These charges also became political issues, and news people and others were tempted to sensationalize them. Now all that has finally died down. We reached a turning point when responsible members of Congress took pains to set the record straight and to develop an oversight process that restored confidence in the way the CIA operates. Then the present administration came in and showed that it valued and supported sound intelligence activities. All this had the effect of rebuilding internal morale, and we've really been on the upswing ever since.

**Q.** Mr. Casey, what about leaks of intelligence on what the CIA is doing, particularly through Freedom of Information Act requests: Is this a problem and, if so, what should be done about it?

**A.** The publicizing of secret and classified information is highly damaging. It's damaging to the tremendous effort that goes into getting people to help us around the world. The Freedom of Information Act makes people abroad wonder whether we can protect their anonymity if they agree to help us. We need relief from that burden so we can regain their confidence and restore the capabilities we had before.

**Q.** What kind of relief?

**A.** A bill is before Congress that would make our operational files exempt from Freedom of Information Act requests. We can now withhold information that is classified, but we are required by the law to laboriously search our files anyway. This means using experienced case officers to make judgments as to the jeopardy we would be putting our operations and people in if we released the information. That's a great waste of talent. At times as many as 4-to-5 percent of our best people are going over our operational files and searching—sometimes because of frivolous requests. If they were not tied up doing this, they would be out on the firing line developing intelligence, our real mission. Also, the fact that our operational files would no longer be subject to search and exposure would be of considerable comfort to those people who would otherwise work with us, but who are worried about their personal safety and whether we in this country can keep secrets.

**Q.** Do the American people have adequate checks against the possibility of CIA misusing its powers, especially in covert operations?

**A.** There's an oversight process that is carefully and diligently exercised by the Congress and it works to assure that the things we undertake are reported to our oversight committees and subject to their scrutiny. I think that's the best protection of all. It's certainly better than hoping to piece information together from old documents on events long past that come from FOIA requests.

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**Q.** Have you had problems with leaks on Capitol Hill?  
Occasionally, but I consider that part of the process. It

**A.** is not something that happens often. And the record shows that such leaks usually are unintentional.

**Q.** Since the CIA can only operate abroad, does this make it more difficult to counter terrorism and espionage *within* the US?

**A.** There is very close and effective cooperation between the CIA and FBI. We pick up a lot of information abroad. We get advance notice about who is coming in and why they are coming. We pass this data on to the FBI and they take over from there. The FBI, like every organization, has problems but it's doing a good job. It has increased the number of agents, its resources and its technical capabilities to deal with the rising threat of hostile intelligence and terrorist threats. It isn't only the Soviets who steal our secrets, by the way. The East bloc countries do a lot of it for them. The FBI has to handle all such problems in this country.

**Q.** We repeatedly hear that the Russian people, including many of that nation's officials, are fed up with Communism. Should we be doing anything to encourage more defections?

**A.** Sure we should. The Soviets have lost agents through defection and others have been expelled—more lately than in a very long time. I think to some extent that has been caused by cooperation and effective work among the intelligence services of the western world.

**Q.** Does Andropov's death and Chernenko's appointment portend any real change in Soviet behavior?

**A.** Only that the older leadership is still not prepared to see power go to the next generation. Also, you must recognize that the Communists rule by a committee or group system. Who's on top seems to have made little difference since the days of Stalin.

**Q.** What do you consider the primary weakness of the Soviet system?

**A.** The rigidity and ineffectiveness of their bureaucratic control system and the stifling effect that has on the Russian people and their economic and social systems. This is overlaid on intense demographic problems—a large and rapidly growing percentage of non-Slavic Soviet peoples do not fully identify with the Soviet state or the ruling elite.

*"Communists rule by a committee system. Who's on top [has] made little difference since Stalin."*

**Q.** Do you see any real hope of Communist Russia ever abandoning its goals of world domination, or finally getting together with us and trying to achieve some kind of peaceful settlement of our differences?

**A.** It would be very difficult to identify any time when that might happen. Of course, you hope and pursue whatever possibilities open up. We hope their sanity will return one day and that they will see the folly of simply building up huge armaments and turn, instead, to joining us in building a better world. □

CIA Director Casey during interview with Legion Magazine's editor-in-chief.



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