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Is there a way to stop CIA leaks?

President Reagan delivered an important speech July 8 about terrorism. In general terms, he outlined what the United States would do about such crises in the future.

However, I'm sorry to announce that the U.S. government can do nothing about terrorism and, therefore, will do nothing until President Reagan deals effectively with what should be regarded as White House Priority Number One: a secure and leakproof CIA.

Is it already too late in the day to hope for such a miracle? Or is it impossible ever to have an intelligence organization in the most open society in the world, one which would be secure and leakproof against its enemies abroad and at home?

Only in America is it possible to publish regularly a magazine, purchasable at newsstands, which specializes in disclosing names and activities of people it identifies as CIA agents and with consequent risk to their lives.

Until President Reagan can be sure that whatever counterterrorist strategy he and his advisers select for future execution will not end up on the front page of *The Washington Post*, nothing is going to happen to diminish the terrorist power now deployed so successfully by the



Radical Entente: Syria — not Nicaragua, Mr. President — Iran, Libya, North Korea, and Cuba. However ingenious the counterterrorist strategy and tactics may be, unless they are kept secret, the United States will remain powerless to protect American or other travelers against terrorist ideologues.

And let me say here that I have no intention of engaging in any *Washington Post* bashing. If some CIA officer, in violation of his oath, wants to leak secrets — and how else could the *Post* know about the CIA operations except through a CIA source

who talked to somebody? — and the media feels the story ought to be told, there is precious little that can be done about it, as we all know from the "Pentagon Papers" affair.

It may very well be that there is little at the present time to prevent *The Washington Post* or any other medium from uncovering any new CIA strategy against counterterrorism and publishing it on Page 1. I

am ready to believe that *The Washington Post* knows a lot more CIA secrets than, for good reason, it doesn't print.

In the July 8 *Time*, four former CIA directors — Richard Helms, William Colby, James Schlesinger, and Stansfield Turner — offered their ideas about U.S. options for countering terrorism.

Mr. Helms was the only one of the four men to raise the question about CIA internal security. He said, "We also need improved cooperation among free-world intelligence services. As long as we have a leaky Congress and a leaky oversight process, friendly services are simply not going to share with us."

On May 12, *The Washington Post* published a Page 1 report that members of a CIA-trained counterterrorist squad were responsible for a March 8 car bombing in a Beirut suburb. The atrocity killed more than 80 Shi'ite Moslems, blood-brothers of those who later hijacked TWA Flight 847.

While the *Post* didn't say that the

CIA had ordered the bombing, it did say that the CIA had "an indirect connection" with it. It was good of the *Post* to publish the CIA disclaimer of any connection with the bombing. But who in the Middle East, let alone Beirut, would believe it?

Now there are several possible sources from whom the *Post* could have learned about the CIA squad. It could be:

- An anonymous phone-caller sponsored by the Soviet KGB or any of its surrogate services. There are some people who think that, because CIA counter-espionage for a decade has been its weakest service, that the U.S. intelligence agency has been deeply penetrated. Is there more than one Kim Philby in the CIA? (General Walter Bedell Smith at a Senate hearing to confirm his appointment by President Truman in 1950 as CIA director was asked whether he thought the CIA had been penetrated by the Soviets. He replied that he worked on the assumption that it had.)

- A CIA officer who opposes counterterrorist training within the CIA or such training by an agency subsidiary.

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• A member of the counterterrorist squad itself, a "plant," who had successfully passed CIA counterintelligence security checks. After all, "rewards" or cash bribes can work both ways. Libya's Qadafi can match the United States in such matters, dollar for dollar. And, anyway, how do you subvert a suicide bomber?

• One of the members of either the House or Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Oversight, all of whom, according to law, must be briefed regularly by the CIA on its covert activities, or one of the committee's staffers. However, knowledgeable people I have talked to disagree with opinions such as Mr. Helms's and believe that the committees and their staffs, at least in the past, have been protective of CIA secrets.

• A *Post* staff member who works for the CIA and is able to feed the newspaper these exclusive stories.

• Officials of other departments of government, privy to CIA plans.

There are other ways — and I'm only using the *Post* because its story may have had unintended consequences — by which the paper could have discovered the alleged connection of the CIA with the Beirut car-bombing.

Regardless how the story was obtained, the point is that the CIA simply is too leaky to be entrusted with the kind of mission President Reagan has in mind, one which demands 100 percent secrecy. Or put another way, the CIA has for too long been the victim of media leaks about which its executives seemingly can do nothing. Think of all the books and articles published in the past decade by former CIA officers exposing the agency's dastardly deeds in Vietnam, Africa, Latin America, and in the United States itself.

CIA usefulness, therefore, in counterterrorist enterprises is minimal. In the light of the *Post* story, can you imagine CIA staff recruiting problems as it seeks "secret" operatives for future, if any, counterterrorist programs?

If President Reagan hopes to stop state-sponsored terrorism, he will have to establish an entirely different agency of government, one whose existence, new assignment, and composition will not be publicly announced either in the *Federal Register* or in *The Washington Post*.

I don't think the CIA can any longer guarantee its own security. Does anyone think it can?



Perhaps the imaginative and resourceful CIA Director William Casey, who lives in an intelligence world he never made, ought to be assigned to run, let's call it SUBMAG, for "submerged agency." Let him recruit his own handpicked staff, responsible to him and to President Reagan alone, and not to the unfortunate CIA "old boy" network which ought to have been retired four years ago. Things couldn't be any worse. SUBMAG might be an improvement.