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Casey rejected Grenada report, former CIA analyst says

Around the Americas

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WASHINGTON — The former CIA analyst who charged that Director William Casey altered a secret report on Mexico now says that Casey also rejected a report on Cuban troop strength in Grenada at the time of the U.S.-led invasion.



Casey

Former CIA agent John Horton, writing for the February issue of Foreign Service journal, blames the Reagan administration for a string of intelligence failures, among them the Grenada invasion itself and the mining of Nicaraguan harbors.

Both the CIA and the Pentagon declined comment on Horton's allegations. But administration sources familiar with CIA procedure denied the validity of his claims that officials alter intelligence information to conform to policy.

Horton, a CIA operations officer from 1948 to 1975, served in 1983-84 as the chief Latin American officer for the agency's National Intelligence Council, responsible for preparing foreign intelligence estimates.

Horton left the CIA last year, claiming that Casey had altered one of his reports to suggest that strife in Central America could create turmoil in Mexico.

In his Journal article, *The Real Intelligence Failure*, Horton charged that Casey disapproved a Grenada report he prepared shortly after the Oct. 25, 1983, invasion

because it did not give a high enough estimate of the number of Cubans on the island and did not support administration claims that Grenada's Cuban-built airport had a military purpose.

The CIA had assigned Horton and other analysts to calculate the number of Cubans in Grenada to reconcile differing U.S. and Cuban estimates. The United States claimed there were more than 1,000 Cubans on the island and Cuba counted 786, mostly construction workers.

Cuba's figure turned out to be correct, and Horton said his estimate not only supported the Cuban claim, but contradicted the U.S. contention that many Cubans were hiding in Grenada's hills.

"The Sunday after the invasion," Horton wrote, "members of the intelligence community found themselves sitting around a table in Washington, assigned with the task of arriving at a meaningful number [of Cuban troops]. We . . . finally concluded that no one remained in the hills."

"Some officials," however, found "a serious fault," he said. One person "with some responsibility . . . although not himself an intelligence officer" read the report and said "I think it stinks." Knowing him to be close to CIA Director William Casey, I went to see Casey as soon as I could. He was less abrupt, merely finding it 'unimaginative.'

"I can only suppose that the assessment was 'unimaginative' because of what it did not say," Horton wrote. "For example, we could have said that the Cuban construction workers were actually combat troops in disguise, or that the arms found in Grenada were destined to be used to overthrow friendly governments elsewhere in the Caribbean, or

that the airfield was not for tourism but for Soviet reconnaissance aircraft."

Horton said the "need for security and the quite justified obsession with leaks" may have led policymakers to limit participation in intelligence debate, thereby result-

ing in bad policies. He said the decision to mine Nicaraguan ports last year was made by senior policymakers without consulting professional intelligence officers who might have advised against it.

One administration source familiar with the CIA criticized

Horton's description of the agency's internal workings, saying the former analyst had portrayed as conflict "the normal tension of the give-and-take between analysts and policymakers."

Congressional sources briefed by the CIA on the Horton resignation said Casey revised the Mexico assessment not to fit policy, but to give an early warning of possible trouble there as a result of Central America's conflicts.