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History of undercover efforts date back to Gen. Washington

By Beth Weiner

When news of the CIA's involvement in the mining of Nicaraguan ports are made public, there was an uproar among American government leaders and citizens.

And months later, when it was revealed the CIA had written a "how-to-do-it guerilla warfare manual" for Nicaraguan rebels, there were numerous investigations because of the storm of protest.

Yet, the CIA is the only U.S. agency authorized to operate covert action programs, and while it is not America's largest intelligence agency, it is the most prominent, according to Bill Nelson, former deputy director of operations at the CIA.

But, intelligence operations in the United States date back to the American revolution when Continental Army Gen. George Washington had secret agents spy on the British. Washington even went one step beyond and had planted false battle plans in British army camps.

American intelligence plans were haphazard though for the next 170 years. But Japan's surprise attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor in 1941 demonstrated the importance of gathering effective intelligence information.

And six months after the attack, the Office of Strategic Service, which was the CIA's predecessor, began under the direction of Brig. Gen. William Donovan.

The OSS worked with European resistance groups analyzing Nazi troop strength. Even though it was successful in its sabotage operation, the OSS was eliminated after World War II.

"The OSS did not fit the bill, but government officials realized the importance of a permanent peacetime intelligence agency," Nelson said. "We did not want a repeat of Pearl Harbor."

In 1947 the National Security Act was passed, creating the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, and the National Security

Council. The council serves as the President's chief advisory panel on national security and has jurisdiction over the CIA.

Part of the CIA's function is to advise the National Security Council on intelligence activities, and this information is essential in protecting U.S. security.

The director of the CIA is responsible for protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure, Nelson said. Yet, it is that provision which has been used numerous times by the CIA when its officials have withheld information from congressional and public inquiries.

At the CIA's disposal though, is sophisticated equipment such as electronic satellites, radar, photo intelligence and secret electronic monitoring of communications.

Since World War II, this field of technical intelligence collection has blossomed with state-of-the-art devices, and today there are dozens of technical intelligence systems.

Nelson said the CIA also gathers information through photographic intelligence and through acoustic intelligence. These methods of technical intelligence gathering have come a long way from the days when this information was collected by hand-held cameras or cameras attached to U-2 spy planes.

Although the CIA has about 18,000 employees, it is not the largest intelligence community. The National Security Agency has 20,000 employees and support from at least 40,000 members of the armed forces overseas. Its annual budget is over \$1 billion, and it is under the direction of the Secretary of Defense.

NSA's main duties are to monitor and intercept international communications, decode foreign information, and maintain the security of U.S. codes.

Even though each branch of the armed services has its own intelligence arm, the Defense Intelligence Agency, established in 1961, coordinates and works to

eliminate duplication of the services' intelligence efforts. The DIA reports to the Secretary of Defense through the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research is one of the smallest intelligence communities with only 300 employees and a budget under \$14 million. It supplies the Secretary of State intelligence information from U.S. foreign service posts and the intelligence community.

The National Reconnaissance Office, established in 1961, is under the Air Force's control, but its existence is not acknowledged by the U.S. government. Yet, its budget is in the billions of dollars and its personnel are not "subject to personal scrutiny," Nelson said.

Another, and perhaps more well-known member of the U.S. intelligence community, is the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In addition to interstate law enforcement, the FBI conducts counterintelligence activities in the 50 states.

"The climate for the intelligence community has improved under Reagan," Nelson said. In an executive order issued during his first term, he declared, "All reasonable and lawful means must be used to ensure that the U.S. will receive the best intelligence available."

"We all are part of a team working to protect our nation and its citizens," Nelson said.