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# A U.S. intelligence vacuum!

**T**he terrorist bombing of the U.S. Marine headquarters in Beirut and the unexpectedly large Cuban presence that American forces found in Grenada have raised major questions about the performance of our intelligence agencies.

The intelligence questions, according to Reagan administration officials and members of Congress, revolve around two immediate concerns: whether better intelligence information might have helped prevent the attack on the Marines in Beirut on Oct. 23 and whether the American troops that invaded Grenada two days later were sufficiently informed about the strength of Cuban forces on the island.

The officials said that fundamental questions also had been raised about the mission and methods of the nation's intelligence agencies, including the issue of whether U.S. spying had become too dependent on sophisticated electronic surveillance equipment instead of human agents.

Military officers who commanded the invasion of Grenada complain about an intelligence vacuum that they say left assault forces unprepared for the stiff resistance they encountered from Cuban troops.

In Lebanon, U.S. officials report that intelligence tended to lack the specific information that would enable the authorities to block assassination plots or other terrorist activities. Three days before a terrorist drove the truck filled with tons of explosives into the Marine headquarters in Beirut, killing 240 American servicemen, the Central Intelligence Agency reported that a pro-Iranian Moslem splinter group appeared to be planning an attack against the Marines. The report was widely distributed among senior government officials, including Marine leaders.

Defenders of the CIA cite the report as evidence that the agency provided at least some warning before the bombing, even if it did not give the time, target or type of attack. Gen. Paul X. Kelley, the Marine commandant, disputed that

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suggestion, telling members of the House Armed Services Committee that no one had given the Marines the kind of detailed intelligence they needed to prevent a suicide bombing attack. "I'm not talking about those broad, vague, general

statements that they hide behind," Gen. Kelley said, in an apparent reference to the Oct. 20 intelligence report. "I'm talking about specificity, about a truck."

Gen. Kelley, of course, protests a bit too much. "Did he want the license plate number as well?" one intelligence official asked. Rather than denying any responsibility for lax security, Gen. Kelley would have done well to remain silent until a thorough investigation had been conducted. If the security was indeed thorough, why was it that a host of new security precautions were implemented the day after the bombing?

With regard to Grenada, Defense Department officials said they were surprised by both the number of Cuban combat forces and the extent of Soviet and Cuban influence on the island. Intelligence officials acknowledged that detailed information on both subjects was unavailable, but said that planning for the invasion had moved so rapidly that there was little time to prepare the tactical intelligence normally required for a military assault. They also said that the military services, not the CIA, were responsible for the collection of tactical intelligence.

Administration officials say the CIA had little information about political developments in Grenada. As a result, they said, Washington was caught by surprise when Prime Minister Maurice Bishop was ousted in the October coup.

In both Grenada and Lebanon, intelligence officials said, the information that was lacking was of the kind best obtained by human agents rather than satellites, reconnaissance aircraft or other electronic equipment. It was, we must remember, during the Carter administration — and the CIA

directorship of Stansfield Turner, that many of our most experienced agents were released from service. "Human agents," the Carter administration told us, were no longer necessary in the new technological age. Now we can see how wrong that assessment was.

In Grenada, the CIA had no permanent presence and the State Department maintained no permanent diplomatic presence. As a result, the United States had few reliable sources of information.

The U.S. intelligence capability has been permitted to decline dramatically. In 1981, an analysis of the intelligence-gathering role of the CIA concluded that, "The American intelligence community has routinely failed to predict major political and military developments before such developments become irreversible and before they become blatantly obvious, even to the general public."

What the report called "massive and virtually inexplicable intelligence failures that occurred during the last 15 years" include failure to predict the massive Soviet buildup of nuclear missiles; failure to predict the major improvements in accuracy of Soviet ICBMs in the late 1970s; consistent gross misstatement of Soviet global objectives; general failure to explain the characteristics of Soviet conventional weapons systems and vessels, for example, the Soviet T-64 and T-72 tanks and the new Russian guided-missile cruisers; and the entire situation in Iran.

One serious defect in U.S. intelligence, critics charge, is the lack of competitive analysis and any process for quality review. Former Defense Intelligence Agency Director Daniel Graham has proposed that analysis and estimates should be carried out by competing intelligence bureaucracies with each having equal access to the president and the chief intelligence officer of the United States, who would no longer be the director of the CIA.

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