

SALT LAKE CITY DESERET NEWS (UT)
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Plug this sieve at the CIA

How secret can a spy agency be when more than 50 people on Capitol Hill know all its activities?

Granted, some of the Central Intelligence Agency's activities of the past decade have deservedly raised some eyebrows in the United States: skull-duggery in the election of Marxist Salvador Allende in Chile; efforts to assassinate Fidel Castro; shadowy links to the deaths of South Vietnamese leaders; defiance of a White House order to destroy stocks of deadly poisons and weapons used in counter-intelligence work; illegally opening and copying mail to U.S. citizens.

But the pendulum has now swung so far in the other direction that the CIA is becoming impaired as a necessary intelligence-gathering operation. In a world in which terrorism and war are so rampant, that's a dangerous situation.

Howard Baker, the Senate majority leader, has a thoughtful suggestion: combine the Senate and House intelli-

gence committees and allow it to hire only a "very, very small" staff. That would considerably cut down the number of people with access to the nation's deepest secrets, but would still permit effective oversight.

Currently, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has 15 regular members and two ex-officio members. The House side has 14 members, two ex-officio members. Staffs for the two committees include more than 20 persons. With so many involved, someone's bound to have political or philosophical differences — and leak information on secret plans.

The CIA has had its share of gaffes. But it also has been an effective shield in protecting the nation. With the world now an armed camp, it's simply too dangerous not to know what potential enemies are doing and what weapons they're developing.

Sen. Baker's recommendation ought to be speedily implemented.