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Carter's Man for the CIA

IN HIS SECOND attempt to fill the sensitive post of director of Central Intelligence, President Carter seems to have come up with a good choice in Adm. Stansfield Turner, but perhaps to the detriment of the Navy.

Turner, after a brilliant career that made him commander of allied forces in southern Europe at age 53, had appeared to be headed in a couple of years for the Navy's top job, chief of naval operations.

And since he is a highly intelligent and innovative officer, he could have performed valuable services as the head of the Navy, which tends to be one of the most tradition-bound military branches.

However, after the collapse of his nomination of Theodore Sorensen as CIA chief, Carter did not have the luxury of waiting for a Navy berth to open up for Turner. He had to find a man quickly who was qualified to lead the CIA and who would be approved by the Senate Intelligence Committee.

As Carter calculated, Turner is being welcomed by the so-called

intelligence community, which has ways of sinking an unwanted nominee, and by the Senate. In fact the only opposition has come from those who object to a "military man" in the post.

Such opposition is well-meaning but silly. It presupposes that career officers are as alike as oranges, that Turner comes equipped with a "military mind" and that he will interpret intelligence and advise the President the way the Pentagon wants.

Fortunately, Turner appears to be an independent thinker capable of furnishing Carter with objective intelligence. His background as a Rhodes Scholar, defense systems analyst and president of the Naval War College makes him a good bet to manage the CIA successfully.

Carter, however, is doing his Annapolis classmate no favor. When Turner learns exactly what is involved in controlling CIA abuses, illegalities and "dirty tricks" and in separating the probable from the self-serving in intelligence, he may long for his former admiral's barge in Naples Bay.