

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 42

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT
11 December 1978

Analysis

Why the CIA Is Under Fire

President Carter complains he's being hampered by intelligence failures. Result: a probable comeback for the old-fashioned spy.

Why was the Central Intelligence Agency caught by surprise by the crisis now rocking Iran?

And: Why has U.S. intelligence failed to forewarn the White House of other critical political developments in recent months?

The President himself is demanding answers to these questions—and he is addressing his demand principally to an Annapolis classmate whom he drafted to manage the nation's troubled intelligence services.

Adm. Stansfield Turner, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has received a handwritten "Dear Stan" note in which Carter says bluntly that "I am dissatisfied with the quality of political intelligence."

The note also went to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and White House National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who share responsibility for alerting the President to potential crises overseas.

Carter's complaint was triggered by the CIA's optimistic assessments of the Iranian crisis. A mid-August report by the agency concluded that "Iran is not in a revolutionary or even prerevolutionary situation."

The President is disturbed by other recent episodes. In one, the CIA failed to alert him to an imminent pro-Communist coup in Afghanistan. In another, the CIA gave no advance warning of a large-scale Rhodesian incursion into Zambia at a time when Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith was in Washington negotiating with the Carter administration.

Poor morale. One fundamental explanation cited for the intelligence failures that resulted in Carter's demand for an in-house inquiry: The CIA is suffering from the demoralizing effects of four years of scandals, investigations and reorganizations. The demoralization is especially acute among operatives engaged in clandestine activities overseas. These operatives have taken the brunt of the criticism and, despite his denials, they feel



CIA Director Stansfield Turner, Carter's Annapolis classmate, is key figure in new controversy.

technological spying, such as satellite reconnaissance.

President Carter tended to lend weight to this criticism at a November 30 news conference with the assertion: "I have been concerned that the trend that was established 15 years ago to get intelligence from electronic means might have been overemphasized."

Turner's preoccupation with running a "clean" espionage agency—a pledge he gave to Congress—also is blamed for inhibiting the initiative of American spies. A former overseas operative says that senior officers are loath to risk dismissal by exercising too much initiative or participating in an unsuccessful operation.

The CIA has worked in Iran under exceptional handicaps.

There was an understanding with the Shah—a tacit one, if not explicit—that intelligence officers and diplomats from the United States would not contact dissident groups or engage in any independent intelligence-gathering operations.

Washington, as a result, was largely dependent on information provided by the Shah's personal intelligence service, Savak, which itself miscalculated the scope and nature of the violent upheaval that threatens survival of the monarchy.

Administration policymakers express dismay over the failure of CIA analysts to question the erroneous information they were receiving from Teheran, especially given the fact that other intelligence organizations, such as the British intelligence service, the French intelligence service, and private busi-

ness intelligence agencies, personally is in an especially vulnerable position. He conducted a bruising but unsuccessful battle to secure control over every element of the American intelligence community.

Also, he introduced a sweeping reform, ostensibly to insure maximum efficiency in the collection and analysis of information by a half dozen agencies. He assumed overall

responsibility for coordinating the collection and analysis of foreign intelligence and also for managing the budget for all intelligence activities.

When policymakers over the past year complained of serious shortcomings in the "product" that they were getting from Turner's organization, critics say that he rebuffed the complaints with the argument that the President was satisfied.

At his news conference, Carter praised the work of the intelligence community but indicated clear dissatisfaction with Turner's performance in political intelligence.

Turner's apologists say the CIA is simply being made a scapegoat by frustrated policymakers. Scapegoat or not, the fact is that the White House repeatedly has complained of CIA failures since the early 1960s.

Long list. President Kennedy privately blamed the CIA for disastrous miscalculations that led to the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger treated the agency's assessments with contempt. And former President Nixon charged on French television on November 28 that the CIA for 11 years underestimated Russia's military buildup.

Whatever the outcome of this latest inquest, a ranking Carter administration official says that this is clear.

The U.S. must revitalize the role of the old-fashioned spy, which has been undermined by four years of scandal, organizational turmoil and preoccupation with technology.

This analysis was written by Asso-