



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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15 February 1980

Mr. Thomas Vail  
Publisher and Editor  
The Plain Dealer  
1801 Superior Avenue  
Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Dear Mr. Vail:

Admiral Turner has just completed the enclosed article for the opposite-editorial page of The Plain Dealer as you suggested. It updates many of the same points he made in Cleveland in November in the context of the President's remarks about intelligence in his State of the Union speech. We hope it is what you had in mind.

We greatly appreciate your kind offer and your support. It was a pleasure meeting you. Please call me if you feel I can help you or The Plain Dealer in any way.

Sincerely,



Herbert E. Hetu  
Director of Public Affairs

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Enclosure

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SEEKING A BALANCE IN INTELLIGENCE

by Admiral Stansfield Turner  
Director of Central Intelligence

15 February 1980

"We need clear and quick passage of a new charter to define the legal authority and accountability of our intelligence agencies. We will guarantee the abuses do not recur, but we must tighten our controls on sensitive intelligence information and we need to remove unwarranted restraints on America's ability to collect intelligence."

President Carter's call in his State of the Union address to strengthen intelligence capabilities would have been unthinkable not so long ago. It represents the completion of a cycle begun in the mid-1970's, and is important recognition that the controls and oversight imposed on intelligence activities since that time are working. The time has now come to remove the restraints which encumber effective intelligence work and to seek a better balance between necessary controls and the freedom which intelligence agencies need to operate in the world as it is today.

From 1974 to 1976, beginning with the Rockefeller Commission, and followed by the Church and the Pike Committees, American intelligence activities were investigated exhaustively. Without

going into the problems which were reported - they have been well publicized - or their genesis, both the Congress and the President saw the need for better controls and oversight.

Executive Orders were issued by President Ford (February 1976), and later by President Carter (January 1978), making intelligence authorities and prohibitions specific for the first time. The Intelligence Oversight Board was established to which anyone could bring allegations of wrongdoing. It would serve as the President's watchdog, looking into the legality and propriety of intelligence activities. The National Security Council was made responsible to determine which questions intelligence would try to answer, and to review proposals for sensitive clandestine activities. Finally, the budget and actual tasking of intelligence assets was consolidated under the Director of Central Intelligence.

At the same time, the Senate and House of Representatives each established a permanent intelligence committee to act as a proxy for the people in overseeing intelligence activities on a continuing basis.

These measures have worked. Both the Administration and the Congress have worked earnestly to rebuild mutual trust and to take any extra steps which were needed to guarantee that the new oversight procedures functioned effectively. Nonetheless,

I think all would agree that the determination of the President to make intelligence truly responsive to the oversight needs of the Congress has been crucial to the progress which has been made. Over the past three years, the White House and the Select Intelligence Committees of the Congress have closely overseen intelligence operations. Appreciation of the problems involved in doing sound intelligence work has gone hand in hand with the firm application of the high standards by which all intelligence initiatives must be judged.

The genuine success of this renaissance in how American intelligence will be accomplished now permits the President to ask for the removal of some unwarranted restraints on intelligence activity. This is as much a vindication of the correctness of the steps which have been taken and the important progress which has been made, as it is a recognition that the pendulum has swung too far. Excessive controls limit intelligence collection and adversely affect our relationships with foreign intelligence services.

For example, the Hughes-Ryan Amendment requires as many as eight Congressional committees to be briefed on every covert action. Reducing that to just the two special intelligence committees (both created after the Hughes-Ryan Amendment was enacted) would diminish the risk to human life of leaks without reducing our accountability to the

Congress. The Freedom of Information Act requires the detailed review of all CIA files to satisfy FOIA requests, including those which contain information from our most sensitive sources. Limiting that review primarily to information about US persons and finished intelligence would reassure important sources overseas who are becoming more reluctant to cooperate with us that there is no danger their identities will become publicly known. The discovery process in courts of law can require us to reveal more sensitive, classified information in open court to prosecute an alleged espionage case than was compromised in the first place by the accused. Often, rather than taking that risk, the Government will choose not to prosecute. This form of "graymail" could be prevented if special rules and procedures were established governing the use of classified information in espionage and other criminal cases. Finally, the absence of legislation which would specifically prohibit the unauthorized disclosure of the identities of undercover U.S. intelligence officers and secret agents, informants, and sources has hampered our ability to recruit new sources of intelligence.

Intelligence reform has taken place. American intelligence services operate under the informed control of the elected representatives of the people in both the Executive and Legislative Branches. No one proposes that be changed. However, today, we are moving closer

to the enactment of permanent charters which will formally legislate the authority and the limits of this country's intelligence activity. The moment is right not only to assure ourselves that the safeguards to civil liberties and Constitutional rights are firmly in place, but that we have balanced these important guarantees against the practical imperative of maintaining the best intelligence arm of which we are capable. A strong CIA is more important to the national security of this country today than ever before.