



Notes from the Director No. 49

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QUESTIONS ABOUT SECURITY LEAKS

I continue to be asked about security leaks. Because the damage being done to the country's intelligence capabilities and security by the continuing flow of leaks is a matter of concern to each of us, I would like to address some of the recurring questions I receive.

One of these is: "Who leaks? Is it us? The Defense Department? State? The Congress?" In my opinion, there is no evidence that any particular organization leaks more than any other. Perhaps at one time, or on one subject, a particular department or agency is most likely the guilty party, but there is no evidence that one organization is more guilty than others over the long run.

Leaks can be broken into two categories—those which result from *carelessness* and those which are *deliberate*.

Carelessness. One form of carelessness is failure to comply with the prescribed rules for handling classified material. Shortcuts such as "talking around a problem" or "doubletalking" on an unclassified telephone, failure to keep classified material under required control, or not ensuring that everyone privy to a conversation has the requisite clearances all can contribute to leaks. Even though such breaches of procedure may have only a small probability of leading to an actual leak, cumulatively they are the source of many of our problems. Another form of carelessness is being entrapped by the media. The standard ploy is for a member of the media to pretend that he knows the whole of some story and then ask you about some detail of it. What you disclose may seem to be marginal and incomplete but good journalists play this game repeatedly until they have pieced together what should be highly classified material. Many individuals are entrapped because they want to feel important by showing that they are knowledgeable on a subject. The irony is that if the newsman did not believe they were knowledgeable to begin with he probably would not have asked the question. Others feel compelled to "set the record straight." In either case, the individual proves nothing by answering except that he can't be trusted to keep classified information.

Deliberateness. Espionage is, of course, the most pernicious type of deliberate, unauthorized disclosure. Beyond that, there are individuals who deliberately leak classified information to influence events or policy formulation. Sometimes they are giving official background briefings and say more than is authorized. Sometimes they feel the only way to further some program or to kill it is to bring the pressure of the media to bear. They achieve this, then, by leaking classified information to the public.