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DEPUTY DIRECTOR RICHARD KERR

'I don't see us getting into industrial espionage'

Richard Kerr began his career with the Central Intelligence Agency 31 years ago. A Soviet specialist, he is the agency's deputy director, overseeing its analysis and operations. Kerr spoke with U.S. News Assistant Managing Editor Brian Duffy.

How will the Director of Central Intelligence redirect the CIA?

DCIs have had a major impact on the reputation of the agency. Whether fairly or not, Bill Casey left the agency in real trouble. Congress distrusted it and there was a real perception that the organization lacked integrity. Bill Webster rebuilt that confidence because of the force of his own personal integrity. My perception is that Bob Gates will be seen as coming to the agency at a time when the world and the role of intelligence is in flux. And he will end up being a spokesman for a community that is perceived as having a new agenda—but no less a demanding one.

Is U.S. intelligence able to keep up with such a rapidly changing world?

The problems of intelligence are more demanding of detailed information and more demanding of analysis involving that information. Terrorism is a good example. You work terrorism at a very fine grain of analysis that is nearly an investigative level, the way you might think of the FBI involved in an investigative problem. This puts

Deputy director. Like Gates, Kerr was an analyst.

different demands on our analysts. It requires a different kind of product because you are less interested in writing a research paper about it than you are in doing something about it. And that puts you then back into using information, whether it's with law enforcement officials or foreign governments, and to try to do something about what you've uncovered.

What about economic intelligence?

We have done a fair amount in terms of competitiveness issues, where

countries are using in an either illegal way or in an unfair way practices that disadvantage us. Where you're talking about governments and industry working together to disadvantage another government or another industry in a competitive arrangement, we will continue to work that. I don't see us getting into what we'd call industrial espionage. We aren't going to go out and steal secrets of companies.

How vital is human intelligence?

It will be important for the new DCI. It's been important for the last one. You just don't go out and suddenly change your capability to collect human intelligence, nor do you necessarily want to do that. First of all, it's a very expensive way—and a dangerous way—to collect information. What you really are after are pieces of information that you can get no other way.

What are the biggest mysteries out there?

Well, there are some long-term problems like the Soviet Union's domestic stability. I think there are, unfortunately, some other areas that are more dramatic that will shock the system more directly, rather than being evolutionary. Take North Korea, where significant U.S. forces are involved, where there is a leadership that is isolated but also a leader that is at or close to the end of his career, just in terms of longevity and age, and a very large military capability facing not only United States forces but also South Korean forces. The more long-term issues of terrorism, narcotics, the issue of economic competitiveness—those are issues that we work but without the same drama involved in them.