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The Director
Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D.C. 20505

Pro Leg

13 January 1978

Honorable Jack Brooks, Chairman
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to your request for the views and comments of the Central Intelligence Agency on H.R. 4173 and H.R. 6051, bills that would amend the charter for the CIA and place limitations on foreign intelligence activities conducted by the Government. At the time I received your request earlier this year, I deferred providing substantive comments on these bills, in light of the ongoing review of our intelligence charter in the Executive Branch and with the Congress. Although the critical and complex considerations involved in this review remain under active consideration, I would like to apprise you of my interest in this legislation and offer some very general views on these matters.

It is my firm belief that the Government must retain its ability to collect, analyze and disseminate foreign intelligence to policy makers. This capability is an absolutely essential element of the process whereby national defense and foreign relations policies are formulated and implemented. To do this, we must be able to collect foreign intelligence in a clandestine manner, not only during wartime but more importantly, during peacetime. In large part the very capability to gather foreign intelligence exists to prevent the country from finding itself drawn into a situation in which international conflict would be unavoidable.

It is also important to bear in mind that the National Foreign Intelligence Program supports a wide variety of essential Government functions relating to foreign military, political and economic matters, such as arms limitation verification and world energy resources. The Government's needs in these and other areas, where vital information is often not available openly, require the maintenance of a continued capability to engage in covert collection activities. The existence of a "central" intelligence authority--the Central Intelligence Agency--is, in my view, essential to the proper and efficient functioning of this mechanism.

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I anticipate that the broad range of issues relating to the National Foreign Intelligence Program and legislative oversight, including the basic issues addressed by these bills, will be considered in some detail by the Executive Branch and the Congress during the second session of the 95th Congress. In the meantime, I hope the thoughts I have included in this letter will assist in consideration of any legislation relating to foreign intelligence with which your Committee might be concerned. I appreciate having had the opportunity to provide my views on these very important matters.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised there is no objection to the submission of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Yours sincerely,

STANSFIELD TURNER

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