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Notes from the Director

No. 29

1 September 1978

PROTECTING OUR SECRETS

I have recently published a Director's Note on why we have a policy of greater openness to the public wherever possible. I stressed in that note that this policy does not in any way relax our policy of keeping our secrets secret. I want to reemphasize that point because it is critical to our continued success. There are three areas where I would like to dispel possible misunderstandings on what must be kept secret:

1. Because we are being more open, some people believe that any employee may decide what information should be revealed. The rules have not changed. Classification authority rests where it always has. Individuals are no more free than before to declassify and release classified information. With the exception of the DDCI and myself, release to the public is made through the Office of Public Affairs, the FOIA office and a few other authorized offices, not by individuals. It is important also to remember that contact with members of the media other than for social purposes is controlled by [redacted] which fixes the responsibility and provides the guidance for such contacts. Because of the sensitivity of our work, contact with members of the media must be through and with the knowledge of the Office of Public Affairs. Breaches of this policy are serious matters.

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2. Since Watergate and Ellsberg, there has been a tendency to misunderstand the role of "whistle blowing" leading to the assumption by some that whistle blowing necessitates "going public." None of us wants excesses or errors to go unreported, but legitimate alternatives to blowing one's whistle in public have been devised. Any conscientious employee who truly wants to correct rather than destroy, and who cares about the Agency and the credibility of the United States Government will exhaust these alternatives before going public:

   a. I continue to urge you to write to me directly and personally, in confidence, and anonymously if you prefer.

   b. Report what you believe to be errors to the Inspector General. This provides a mechanism for full and impartial examination of the problem and subsequent review by me.

   c. You have direct access to the President's Intelligence Oversight Board if you believe you will not receive a suitable hearing within the Agency. It can be reached at the Old Executive Office Building.

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In short, while we all have the right to dissent we must also recognize our obligation to dissent in a responsible manner. The responsible "whistle blower" will exhaust all established channels for expressing dissent before turning to the last resort of "going public."

3. There is often a feeling that all breaches of security occur in some other component of the government. Congress thinks that the leaks come from the Executive Branch; the Executive Branch blames Congress; those in one Executive Department believe all leaks come from a different department, etc. It is time that we appreciate the basic fact that leaks and the vulnerability to espionage can and do occur everywhere. Much that must be done to improve security lies within our ability to control; for example:

- Do you *know* that the person to whom you are passing sensitive information has the correct clearances? Beyond that, do they need to know this information?
- Do you double talk on the telephone?
- Do you improperly take classified materials out of our buildings? Spot checks say yes.
- Do you Xerox controlled materials?
- Do you put more detail on sources and methods in written materials than is necessary?
- In discussing some support activity do you give away the nature of a classified operation being supported?

This problem of tightening our own internal security is as high on my list of concerns today as any other. We cannot be complacent. I ask your thoughtful and diligent cooperation. Security is the responsibility of each one of us.

STANSFIELD TURNER
Director

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