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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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19 February 1986

Tom W. Huntington
Managing Editor
SUNDAY INDEPENDENT
90 East Market St.
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania 18701-3599

Dear Mr. Huntington:

I appreciate you giving CIA an opportunity to respond to the strongly worded letter from your reader. You correctly assume that CIA does not have the answers when it comes to debates on U.S. foreign policy. The White House, State Department, and Defense Department are responsible for determining the U.S. posture toward other countries and for deciding how to pursue the policy goals they establish.

Ninety percent of CIA's job involves the collection of information on foreign nations and on problems, such as terrorism, that will help the formulators of U.S. foreign policy make informed decisions. We also have the responsibility to protect our country by conducting counterintelligence activities abroad. (The FBI has similar responsibilities in the U.S.) The other ten percent of our mission stems from the demand by each President since Franklin Roosevelt for the flexibility of coping with problems abroad without surrendering or engaging in overt military action. Since the CIA's formation in 1947, the responsibility for fulfilling this need has been placed on the Agency. All decisions to exercise these options are made by the President and are promptly conveyed to Congress. If Congress does not concur in the President's decision, the legislators can deny funds for such activity. They have done so on occasion.

CIA's ability to serve the policymaking community depends entirely on the sensitive sources and methods through which we collect information or conduct other activities in response to Presidential requirements. We are charged by law with protecting these unique instruments from public disclosure. Consequently, we are rarely able to discuss intelligence issues in public or to respond to allegations of CIA activities, however erroneous these charges may be. These and other issues are dealt with by the President's Intelligence Oversight Board, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and our four oversight committees in the Congress.

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Perhaps the White House or the State Department can provide you with information on the ethics of U.S. policy and some background on policy toward Central America that will balance your reader's vehement accusations.

Sincerely,

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George V. Lauder
Director, Public Affairs

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