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Intelligence agencies mesh in the field, Lehman says

By Ed Rogers
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Navy Secretary John F. Lehman Jr. scoffs at the idea that there is so much rivalry between the military services that their intelligence agencies will not share information with each other.

"Rubbish!" Mr. Lehman said yesterday when asked during an interview by John McLaughlin on NBC's "One on One" if the services do share information.

"You mean one will tell another?" Mr. McLaughlin asked.

"Absolutely," Mr. Lehman replied.

"The place where inter-service rivalry is intense is in the Washington think tanks and trendy armchair strategy circles, and in the Washington staff," Mr. Lehman said.

"When you get out to the field and you operate in any theater, you see our military forces operating together," he said. "They want to keep the bureaucrats the hell out of their business and share information."

Mr. Lehman also denounced as "folly" a proposal of former CIA Director Stansfield Turner that the four armed services intelligence agencies be abolished and combined with the Defense Intelligence Agency.

"Stan represents a continuation of the trendy orthodoxy that has afflicted our defense establishment for the last 30 years ... that the answer to every problem ... is centralize everything," Mr. Lehman said.

"It would be the height of folly to do that," he said. "Each of the services need to have their own, not duplicating what the DIA does but serving the unique operational day to day requirements."

The Navy needs instant intelligence involving the individual ships it has at sea all over the world rather than the "national intelligence" that the DIA handles, and the same applies to the Army and Air Force, he said.

Mr. Lehman was also asked about Mr. Turner's suggestion that the Joint Chiefs of Staff be made subordinate to a single chief of staff who would speak for the uniformed services.

"First of all, this is an old, old idea that's been kicking around in town for 50 years, [that] we need a super el supremo in uniform," Mr. Lehman said. "We have organized in this country in a different fashion.

"It is the president who is supposed to be making the decisions here in Washington on military affairs with the secretary of Defense.... The chiefs exist to provide those civilians with the best possible recommendation, advice and planning, not a monolithic, unified military position, take it or leave it."

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