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ADDRESS TO THE

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY

THE HONORABLE RICHARD HELMS

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

APRIL 14, 1971

Approved For Release 2001/12/05 : CIA-RDP91-00901R000500160006-3

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GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Gentlemen:

I welcome this opportunity to speak to you today about the place of an intelligence service in a democratic government.

In doing so, I recognize that there is a paradox which I hope can be dispelled:

On the one hand, I can assure you that the quality of foreign intelligence available to the United States Government in 1971 is better than it has ever been before.

On the other hand, at a time when it seems to me to be self-evident that our government must be kept fully informed on foreign developments, there is a persistent and growing body of criticism which questions the need and the propriety for a democratic society to have a Central Intelligence Agency.

I am not referring to the occasional criticism of CIA's performance—the question of whether we gave advance warning of this coup or that revolt, or how accurately we forecast the outcome of an election or a military operation. By necessity, intelligence organizations do not publish the extent of their knowledge, and we neither confirm nor deny challenges of this nature. We answer to those we serve in the government.

What I *am* referring to are the assertions that the Central Intelligence Agency is an "invisible government,"—a law unto itself, engaged in provocative covert activities repugnant to a democratic society, and subject to no controls.

This is an outgrowth, I suppose, of an inherent American distaste for the peacetime gathering of intelligence. Our mission, in the eyes of many thoughtful Americans, may appear to be in conflict with some of the tradi-

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tions and ideals of our free society. It is difficult for me to agree with this view, but I respect it. It is quite another matter when some of our critics—taking advantage of the traditional silence of those engaged in intelligence—say things that are either vicious, or just plain silly.

There is the arrant nonsense, for example, that the Central Intelligence Agency is somehow involved in the world drug traffic. We are not. As fathers, we are as concerned about the lives of our children and grandchildren as are all of you. As an Agency, in fact, we are heavily engaged in tracing the foreign roots of the drug traffic for the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. We hope we are helping with a solution; we know we are not contributing to the problem.

As a general rule we are silent, because we must maintain the security of our intelligence operations, but we also recognize that the people of the United States have a legitimate interest in every arm of their government. There is, fortunately, enough fact in the open record, and in the pertinent legislation, to meet that public interest.

I propose, therefore, to discuss with you the legislative charter of the CIA, the unique functions of a *central* intelligence organization, and finally—in order to reconcile our security requirements with the democratic society we serve—the role of intelligence in policy formulation, and the controls, checks, and balances under which we operate.

American intelligence did not begin with the National Security Act of 1947, which established the CIA. George Washington personally directed his espionage networks during the Revolutionary War. President Polk had a showdown with the Congress in 1846 about accounting for the funds he used "to employ individuals for the purpose of obtaining information." In the Civil War, the North hired the Pinkerton Agency to expand its intelligence services. The Department of State and our armed forces all have had long experience in the collection of information.

Why, then, a Central Intelligence Agency? The proximate cause cited by President Truman and the 80th Congress in 1947 was the experience of Pearl Harbor, when, in the words of President Truman:

> ". . . if there had been something like coordination of information in the government, it would have been more difficult, if not impossi-

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ble, for the Japanese to succeed in the sneak attack. . . . In those days, the military did not know everything the State Department knew, and the diplomats did not have access to all the Army and Navy knew. The Army and Navy, in fact, had only a very informal arrangement to keep each other informed as to their plans."

The Central Intelligence Agency, therefore, was created not to replace, but to coordinate the existing intelligence elements of the United States Government.

Our charter, the National Security Act of 1947, provides that in the interest of national security the Central Intelligence Agency will advise the National Security Council on intelligence activities of the government, make recommendations to the National Security Council for the coordination of such activities, correlate and evaluate foreign intelligence, perform additional services of common concern, and "such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct."

This latter language was designed to enable us to conduct such foreign activities as the national government may find it convenient to assign to what can best be described as a "secret service." These activities have always been secondary to the production of intelligence, and under direct control by the Executive Branch. Obviously I can not go into any detail with you on such matters, and I do not intend to.

And may I emphasize at this point that the statute specifically forbids the Central Intelligence Agency to have any police, subpoena, or law-enforcement powers, or any domestic security functions. I can assure you that except for the normal responsibilities for protecting the physical security of our own personnel, our facilities, and our classified information, we do not have any such powers and functions; we have never sought any; we do not exercise any. In short, we do not target on American citizens.

In matters directly affecting the security of the United States, the President and his National Security Council want what we call "national" intelligence—evaluations which reflect the considered and agreed judgment of all of the intelligence components of the United States Government. The production and dissemination of this national intelligence is the responsi-

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bility and the primary function of the Central Intelligence Agency. We can produce these agreed evaluations, of course, only by consulting and coordinating the views of the entire intelligence community.

There is nothing arcane or mysterious about this term, "the intelligence community." It is simply a name for all of the intelligence assets at the disposal of the United States—the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the intelligence components of the various armed services, the National Security Agency, the intelligence elements of the Department of State, and—when appropriate—those of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Atomic Energy Commission. They are all represented on the United States Intelligence Board. This board is chaired by the Director of Central Intelligence, not as the head of CIA, but as the principal intelligence adviser to the President and the National Security Council.

The United States Intelligence Board coordinates the assets of the United States for foreign intelligence collection, and sees to it that there are neither gaps nor unnecessary duplication in filling the information requirements of the nation's policymakers.

Just what are these national requirements for foreign intelligence?

There are the obvious ones, of course, in the era of thermonuclear deterrence: What is the scope of the strategic threat to U.S. security? What are current Soviet intentions? How soon will Communist China have an intercontinental ballistic missile?

America's intelligence assets, however, do not exist solely because of the Soviet and Chinese threat, or against the contingency of a new global conflict. The United States, as a world power, either is involved or may with little warning find itself involved in a wide range and variety of problems which require a broad and detailed base of foreign intelligence for the policymakers.

What, for instance, caused the fighting between Honduras and El Salvador, and what can be done to ease the situation?

What are the implications of impending British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf for the world's petroleum supplies?

Where are the pitfalls for the United States in the confrontation between black African nationalism and so-called White Southern Africa?

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Or, for that matter, to give you an extreme example, how deep is the water alongside the docks in Djibouti? This question is not as farfetched as it may sound. If France should one day grant independence to French Somaliland—now formally the Territory of the Afars and Issas—the area would almost certainly be a source of contention between Ethiopia, which looks to the United States for support, and Somalia, which is highly dependent on the Soviet Union. What ships could be used to land a UN peace-keeping force—or unload relief shipments? Thus information on Djibouti could suddenly become necessary to the United States Government in an effort to *prevent* a new international crisis.

A mass of detailed knowledge is required, of course, for the planning of military operations, but I would like to stress that accurate intelligence is equally essential to the planning and implementation of actions taken to *forestall* conflict.

President Nixon put it this way in March 1969, when he visited CIA Headquarters:

> "I look upon this organization . . . as one of the great instruments of our government for the preservation of peace, for the avoidance of war, and for the development of a society in which this kind of activity would not be as necessary, if necessary at all."

The ancient Romans said: "If you wish peace, prepare for war"—or, for that matter, "forewarned, forearmed." Certainly a potential aggressor is deterred if he finds that timely intelligence has enabled his prospective victim to take countermeasures. And when it comes to waging peace, it would be unthinkable to conclude a Strategic Arms Limitation agreement with the Soviet Union without the means for monitoring compliance.

The potential benefits of an arms limitation agreement are self-evident in terms of reduced threat, eased tension, and economy—but only if they can be achieved without endangering national security. That, in turn, requires that the agreement should be honored by each side, and the Soviets have traditionally rejected international on-site inspection. The United States, then, can safely undertake such an agreement, however desirable, only if it has adequate intelligence assets to assure itself that the Soviets are living up to their part.

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If the two countries should agree that no new types of intercontinental missiles will be deployed, it would be incumbent on U.S. intelligence to verify that the Soviet Union is abiding by the bargain. If it should be agreed that there will be no further expansion of defenses against ballistic missiles, we must have the means of detecting new developments which might convert one of the regular Soviet air defense missile systems into an ABM network. We can be sure, of course, that if the Russians should decide to exceed agreed limitations, they will make that attempt with the greatest possible secrecy and concealment. U.S. intelligence, therefore, will have a major and vital role in any international agreement to limit strategic arms.

Every year at budget time, there is a debate over what portion of our national wealth we must assign to defense and survival—what weapons must we buy, and how many?

The United States and the Soviet Union both have a wide variety of choices among systems to be developed, and these choices interact. The key to choice is knowledge—knowledge of the accuracy, reliability, and numbers of Soviet ICBMs, knowledge of Soviet progress in advanced radars for ABMs, knowledge, if you will, of Soviet knowledge of our own progress.

Whatever the semantics of first strike, mutual deterrence, assured destruction capability, or equivalent megatonnage, the answers must come from an accurate measurement of Soviet offense against our defense, Soviet defense against our offensive capabilities.

If good intelligence can narrow down the choices, it can save the U.S. taxpayers many times its cost. But this prospect—however desirable—is secondary to enabling the policymaker to arrive at informed decisions on the defense budget—or the instructions to the U.S. delegation at the SALT talks.

Intelligence collection, then, is essential to the maintenance of our defenses, but let me repeat once more my conviction that intelligence at the same time makes a major contribution to the much more attractive proposition of living in peace.

I have tried to give you some idea of the subject matter of intelligence requirements, but I must attach equal importance to the nature of the intelligence provided to the government.

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I have already said that it must be a comprehensive appreciation of the situation, based on all available information, reflecting the coordinated end-product of the entire intelligence community.

It must also be rigorous in analysis, concentrated in depth, and above all, as objective as we can make it.

It is precisely in these respects that the Central Intelligence Agency makes its unique contribution.

First, all of the Departments of Government which have components in the U.S. intelligence community have responsibilities for the formulation of policy; CIA has none.

And second, CIA is the only one whose primary mission is to collect, evaluate, and produce foreign intelligence.

Objectivity puts me on familiar ground as an old wire service hand, but it is even more important to an intelligence organization serving the policy-maker. Without objectivity, there is no credibility, and an intelligence organization without credibility is of little use to those it serves.

We not only have no stake in policy debates, but we can not and must not take sides. The role of intelligence in policy formulation is limited to providing facts—the agreed facts—and the whole known range of facts—relevant to the problem under consideration. Our role extends to the estimative function—the projection of likely developments from the facts—but *not* to advocacy, or recommendations for one course of action or another.

As the President's principal intelligence officer, I am an adviser to the National Security Council, not a member, and when there is debate over alternative policy options, I do not and must not line up with either side.

If I should take sides and recommend one solution, the other side is going to suspect—if not believe—that the intelligence presentation has been stacked to support my position, and the credibility of CIA goes out the window.

Another unique attribute of the Central Intelligence Agency is the depth of professional expertise it can bring to bear on the finished intelligence product.

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The *London Economist* a few years ago commented:

> "Modern intelligence has to do with the painstaking collection and analysis of fact, the exercise of judgment, and clear and quick presentation. It is not simply what serious journalists would always produce if they had time; it is something more rigorous, continuous, and above all operational—that is to say, related to something that somebody wants to do or may be forced to do."

This is a good statement of the kindred aims of the intelligence services and the information media, but in a sense we are the reverse of a newspaper. The newspaper uses a relatively few collectors and analysts to serve a mass audience; we use a great many to handcraft a special kind of report for a very few.

Even in this day of the Information Explosion, we read everything that comes into Washington—Department of State cables, Department of Defense traffic, our own reports, and the American and foreign information media. Then we bring to bear on that information every last bit of expert analysis at the service of the United States Government.

From the time this Agency was created, we have had to deal with the fact that some of our most important intelligence targets lie in totalitarian countries where collection is impeded by the security defenses of a police state—for example, Communist China.

In the face of such limitations, the analytical process can often extract meaningful conclusions from a volume of fragmentary information. To do so requires ingenious minds and much painstaking work. On Communist China, for instance, we have assembled a panel of experts in a broad field of specialties to devote full time to study, analysis and reporting.

On this analytical team the economist does not concern himself with Brazilian inflation one day and the Gross National Product of Nigeria the next, but concentrates on the *Chinese* economy—just as the nuclear physicist concentrates on the progress China is making in nuclear weapons. With their support, the Old China Hand on the panel need not spread himself thin to master economics and weaponry, but can focus on what the Chinese—being Chinese—may do next.

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The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 affords a good example of how this across-the-board analysis—comprehensive in its scope and intensive in its concentration—serves the policymaker.

In the early Sixties, thousands of Cubans fled their country. Many brought valuable information. Many, in good faith, brought misinformation. Some purposefully told stories intended to provoke U.S. action against Castro. And a few were Castro's agents, planted to mislead us.

It was obvious at the time—from shipping intelligence alone—that the Soviets were engaged in a substantial military aid program in Cuba, but the crucial question was whether there were any strategic offensive weapons on the island that threatened the continental United States.

The intelligence community established a joint interrogation center in Florida to sift and winnow and evaluate these thousands of reports centrally. It was a mammoth undertaking, but where possible we checked every weapon report against U-2 photography of Cuba, and against other intelligence sources.

One report, for example, claimed there were underground submarine pens at Matanzas. Our analysts had the facts to disprove this, given the geological structure of the shoreline and the crucial inshore depths in the bay.

Another report alleged that light bombers were being stored in a particular cave. We have a comprehensive speleological survey of Cuba, which showed that this particular cave curved sharply a few yards inside its entrance—too sharply to admit a vehicle, let alone an aircraft. We also had the photography to show that there had been no work to alter the shape of that cave.

A merchant seaman gave us a detailed description of what he thought might be a rounded concrete dome covering missiles—complete with range and bearing from the pier where his ship had docked. A map of Havana and a recent city directory established that it was a relatively new movie theater.

The watch for missiles, however, was complicated by the fact that there were defensive surface-to-air missiles in Cuba, and to the un-

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trained observer, one missile looks pretty much like another. In fact, some of these "missile reports" we checked turned out to be torpedoes, fuel tanks, and even industrial pipe and mooring buoys.

Our intelligence files in Washington, however—thanks to U-2 photography of the Soviet Union and to a number of well-placed and courageous Russians who helped us—included a wealth of information on Soviet missile systems. We had descriptions or photographs of the missiles, their transporters and other associated equipment, and characteristic sites in the Soviet Union. We knew what to look for.

Guided by this background, the interrogators were able to sort out from the flood of reports the ones which established the arrival of MRBM and IRBM equipment in Cuba. We were then able to locate the sites under construction by reconnaissance, and tell President Kennedy the exact scope of the threat.

There remained the question—for the policymakers—of what to do. This required a determination—among other essentials—of whether the Soviets would be able to strike at the United States with their weapons in Cuba in the event of a U.S. ultimatum.

Again thanks to all our collection sources, and to the central analytical process, we were able to inform the President precisely how long it would take to make the missile sites in Cuba operational. The rest of the Cuban missile crisis is history.

The intelligence analysts who participate in reaching these conclusions, of course, run the gamut from some who have just begun an intelligence career to others who have devoted a lifetime of study to their specialty. To strike a more typical mean, one of the experts who enabled us to give President Johnson a correct appreciation of the Middle Eastern situation in May, 1967—just before the start of the June War—held a doctorate in Near Eastern studies, had lived for several years in Arab villages, and at the time had spent 12 years with CIA.

I do not wish to imply that we require a Ph.D. of everybody we hire, but in general we recruit our principal substantive analysts from the graduate schools or in the field, with some years of area study or overseas background already under their belts.

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About half of our substantive analysts have graduate degrees. Almost one in three has his doctorate. We have capabilities in 113 foreign languages and dialects. We can call on the expertise of anthropologists, chemists, metallurgists, medical doctors, psychiatrists, botanists, geologists, engineers of every variety, statisticians, mathematicians, archaeologists, and foresters. Our people have academic degrees in 298 major fields of specialization from accounting to zoology.

And as catholic and competent as our "in-house" capability may be, we do not stop there. We make copious use of consultants, from the established "think-tanks" to selected individuals outside government whose help we seek on specific problems. To the extent that security considerations permit, in fact, we encourage our substantive analysts to participate—identifed as CIA employees—in professional conferences, and to write for publication, so that they will remain in touch with the great centers of study and knowledge in this country, and benefits thereby.

Ironically, our efforts to obtain foreign intelligence in this country have generated some of the more virulent criticism of the Central Intelligence Agency. It is a fact that we have, as I said, no domestic security role, but if there is a chance that a private American citizen traveling abroad has acquired foreign information that can be useful to the American policymaker, we are certainly going to try to interview him. If there is a competent young graduate student who is interested in working for the United States Government, we may well try to hire him.

The trouble is that to those who insist on seeing us as a pernicious and pervasive secret government, our words, "interview" and "hire" translate into suborn, subvert, and seduce, or something worse. We use no compulsion. If a possible source of information does not want to talk to us, we go away quietly. If some student groups object to our recruiting on campus, we fall back to the nearest Federal Office Building. Similarly, we welcome the opportunity to place research contracts with the universities, but again, these are strictly voluntary.

And so I come to the fundamental question of reconciling the security needs of an intelligence service with the basic principles of our democratic society. At the root of the problem is secrecy, because it is axio-

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matic that an intelligence service—whatever type of government it serves—must wrap itself in as much secrecy as possible in order to operate effectively.

George Washington on July 26, 1777, wrote to Colonel Elias Dayton, his intelligence chief for New Jersey:

> "The necessity of procuring good intelligence is apparent and need not be further urged—all that remains for me to add is that you keep the whole matter as secret as possible. For upon Secrecy, Success depends in most Enterprizes of the kind, and for want of it, they are generally defeated, however well planned and promising."

Nations have vital secrets they are determined to keep secret. They surround them with the greatest possible security, and they play rough in preserving those defenses. Accordingly, the intelligence service which is assigned to obtain this information must begin by looking to its own security.

If, at the outset of our operation, the opposition can identify the agents involved, or the means we propose to use, the enterprise is doomed from the start.

If, at the conclusion, we disclose how much we know, the opposition is handed on a platter highly damaging indications of how and where we obtained the information, in what way his security is vulnerable, and who may have helped us. He can seal off the breach in his defenses, roll up the agents, and shut off the flow of information.

If any significant portion of our secret organization is exposed, it gives the opposition a starting point to work against us. That is why we seek to preserve a secrecy which, I should note, is honored without question in many thoroughly democratic countries.

In Great Britain and other European nations it would be unheard of for the head of the intelligence services to talk to a non-governmental group as I am talking to you today. In London, in fact, the location of the intelligence service headquarters and the identity of its chief have long been respected as state secrets by the British public, press, and officialdom.

In contrast, here in the United States the area of intelligence over which we can maintain the traditional secrecy has been steadily reduced.

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We have made it our practice not to answer criticism. Former Senator Saltonstall summed it up pretty well when he said that in an open society like ours, it is impossible to inform the public without informing our enemies.

I cannot, then, give you an easy answer to the objections raised by those who consider intelligence work incompatible with democratic principles. The nation must to a degree take it on faith that we too are honorable men devoted to her service. I can assure you that we are, but I am precluded from demonstrating it to the public.

I *can* assure you that what I have asked you to take on faith, the elected officials of the United States Government watch over extensively, intensively, and continuously.

Starting with the Executive Branch, the Central Intelligence Agency operates under the constant supervision and direction of the National Security Council. No significant foreign program of any kind is undertaken without the prior approval of an NSC subcommittee which includes representatives of the President, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense.

In addition, we report periodically and in detail on the whole range of foreign intelligence activities to the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, a group of men who have distinguished themselves in government, industry, education, and the professions. This board, originally created in 1956 under the chairmanship of Dr. James Killian of M.I.T., has been headed by General John E. Hull, Mr. Clark Clifford, General Maxwell D. Taylor, and currently by retired Admiral George W. Anderson.

Our budget is gone over line for line by the Office of Management and Budget—and by the appropriate committees of the Congress as well.

There are, in fact, four committees of the Congress to which we have reported regularly—not just on our foreign intelligence product but on our operations, our plans, and our organization—ever since CIA was created in 1947. Periodic calls for a "Congressional watchdog committee" may have suggested to you that no such mechanism exists. On the contrary, there are elements of the Appropriations and Armed Services committees in both the Senate and the House which—like the President's Board—are

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told more about our activities and our operations than is known to most of the personnel in our highly compartmented Agency. But whether we are to be supervised by these committees or under some other arrangement is for Congress itself to decide.

In short, the Central Intelligence Agency is not and can not be its own master. It is the servant of the United States Government, undertaking what that government asks it to do, under the directives and controls the government has established. We make no foreign policy.

All in all, I think, President Truman and the 80th Congress recognized that the CIA was to be both an important implement of the government, and a legitimate object of public concern. They sought to recognize the inherent contradiction between intelligence methods and democratic principles by establishing elaborate controls.

The same objectivity which makes us useful to our government and our country leaves us uncomfortably aware of our ambiguous place in it. We may chafe under the criticism we do not answer, but we understand as well as anyone the difficulties and the contradictions of conducting foreign intelligence operations on behalf of a free society.

We are, after all, a part of this democracy, and we believe in it. We would not want to see our work distort its values and its principles. We propose to adapt intelligence to American society, not vice versa.

We believe, and I say this solemnly, that our work is necessary to permit this country to grow on in a fearsome world and to find its way into a better and more peaceful one.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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