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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

March 10, 1976

STAT

Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters
Deputy Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, DC 20505

Dear General Walters:

I didn't know whether you had already seen the enclosed clipping from The Burlington Free Press. It was prominently situated on the front page of that newspaper.

I'm sorry that I didn't have a chance to hear your speech, but I understand from my friends who were there that it was well received. Certainly, if the article is an accurate representation of what you had to say, I can see why your speech was so well accepted.

As always, you have handled yourself with your customary professionalism and expertise, and I congratulate you for it.

Sincerely,

PATRICK J. LEAHY

Enclosure

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# CIA Official Defends Agency Operations

By FREDERICK W. STETSON
Free Press Staff Writer

Despite an unparalleled "bombardment" of public criticism, the Central Intelligence Agency can perform its mission and meet Congress's demands for review of its activities, the CIA deputy director said Monday.

In remarks to the Burlington Rotary Club, Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters defended the agency against its critics and said the CIA could justify its budget "in greatest detail" to the Ford Administration and the Congress.

"We ourselves can live with any kind of oversight the Congress wishes," he said, speaking to Rotarians and their guests from other service clubs at the Ramada Inn in South Burlington.

While he generally refrained from strong criticism of the media's coverage of CIA activities, Walters criticized one columnist's suggestion that President Ford's proposals for overview of the nation's intelligence gathering community were misguided.

Tom Wicker of The New York Times said the Ford Plan would give greater protection to CIA officials who abused their statutory powers while providing for the prosecution of those who disclosed the abuses.

Walters described the notion as an "Alice in Wonderland — black-is-white-white-is-black" interpretation. He added, however, that it is "just impossible" to ensure completely against further CIA abuse, although there will be efforts to "minimize."

The 59-year-old intelligence official said the CIA staff is operating with a sense of "reassurance," even though it has been subjected to a "bombardment, I think, without parallel in American history."

Walters drew upon a Russian proverb to describe the attitude of the CIA staff in the face of this criticism. The proverb says, "If you fear wolves do not go out into the forests." And, then the deputy director added, "We have a lot of people who do not fear wolves."

In presenting what he said was "our side" of the controversy that has swirled around the agency for the past several months, Walters said the CIA's covert operations have been overemphasized.

"This part of our activities has gotten all out of proportion in peoples' minds," he said.

Walters did not discuss, nor was he questioned on, the agency's assassination plots against foreign political leaders reported by the Senate Intelligence Committee headed by Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho.

However, he downplayed the scope of all covert operations, saying they account for 5 to 6 per cent of the agency's budget, and to his knowledge, no member of the CIA staff has been indicted in the past 27 years.

Walters didn't provide dollar figures on the CIA's budget but he said less than 1 cent of all federal tax dollars are spent on intellige gathering by all agencies.

About 50 per cent of the CIA's operati involve "overt" gathering of intelligence information from public sources such as fore newspapers and other publications, he said.

Another large share of the CIA's time is sp conducting "technological" intellige gathering, presumably through radio broad monitoring and interception or decoding other broadcast signals.

Walters emphasized that strong intellige is essential to the nation's protection aga unexpected enemy actions, especially at a ti of international terrorism, nucl proliferation, Soviet weapons build ups expansionary actions into nations such Angola.

"We have to be better informed than at time in our history," he said. "Knowledg power."

Despite United States efforts to achiev relaxation of relations with Russia and Ch Walters said accurate predictions of th countries' military, technical and polit changes are needed.

And, he said he's also mindful of anot Russian proverb which says, "When you m friends with the bear do not let go of your ax

He depicted intelligence operations a "force for peace" and said, "We recove from a naval Pearl Harbor; could we rec from a nuclear Pearl Harbor?

"We cannot afford to be surprised. His will not forgive us if we are."

Burlington Free Press
Tuesday, February 24, 1976

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