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Concentrated Intelligence Unwise

WASHINGTON — Lately, most of the principal intelligence agencies have been placed under Navy leadership. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA), the Defense Mapping Agency (which provides cartography and geodesy essential to global targeting) — all now have admirals as their directors. Also, congressional committees are now talking about an intelligence reorganization, including an "intelligence czar."

It is unwise, in fact dangerous, to permit the Navy to dominate the intelligence community. It would be equally unwise to put all intelligence under Army or Air Force domination.

It is understandable that President Carter would turn to a Naval Academy classmate, Adm. Stanfield Turner, to head the CIA. After all, it has been the weak link in the intelligence community during the past decade. In the National Intelligence Estimates, subsequent events have proven the CIA's estimates on Russian military strength to have been too low. The CIA has admitted this and has upgraded its estimates on Soviet military capability. During this period, the estimates of the Defense Intelligence Agency and of the intelligence sections of the Armed Services have proven much more accurate.

But now to put the intelligence agencies of the military services under Navy leadership, in addition to the CIA, may let the pendulum swing too far. It creates the possibility for a dominant authority, a President, a secretary of state or a secretary of defense, to say, as in the past, "This is my decision, now give me an intelligence estimate to support it."

This concern was intensified recently when it was reported that President Carter was justified in reducing U.S. ground forces in Ko-

rea, because he had consulted Russia and Red China and each had assured him that they would not encourage or support North Korea's Kim Il Sung in any offensive adventures.

Do we not remember that Dr. Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's principal national security assistant, was assured by the Reds at the Paris peace negotiations that North Vietnam would not attack South Vietnam after U.S. forces were removed?

Do we not now know that North Vietnam was, at that very time, secretly moving supplies and troops into forward positions from which it launched such an attack immediately after U.S. troops were withdrawn?

As a matter of fact, each time we have been caught by surprise, as in the 1973 Arab attack on Israel, was when one agency, or individual, in that case, Dr. Kissinger, dominated the intelligence community.

The lesson from all this is to make sure that all segments of the intelligence community are free, and in fact encouraged, to submit their views on the National Intelligence Estimates. It is upon the validity of those estimates that the President must rely to make fundamental decisions on such critical matters as defense budgets, arms sales and arms limitations agreements.

Dissent in the intelligence community must be encouraged, not suppressed. Any dissenting views must also be available to the Congress and our people. The wisdom of this policy was demonstrated in the recent case of the "beam weapon" controversy, as it was in divulging the massive Russian civil defense effort.

President Carter, I understand, wisely has assured the Congress that no international commitments will be kept secret from that body.