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Tough Problems For The CIA

The tide has turned. For so long labeled "top secret," our nation's intelligence activities have, in the wake of the Cuban invasion fiasco, become the special target of presidential and congressional attention. In addition to the new self-examination which these agencies may be expected to have undertaken, there are steps toward additional outside control of the Civilian Intelligence Agency and other kindred groups that have been, or are being, launched:

(1) The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has launched a study of the U. S. part in the Cuban uprising, with particular attention being given to the CIA.

(2) President Kennedy has named a four-man group to make a long-range survey into our intelligence programs and other secret aspects of the national defense effort. Key figure in this study is General Maxwell D. Taylor, former chief of staff of the Army, who will function as a one-man "task force" on a full time basis while the other three give him aid and advice. This survey should require two months.

(3) The President has revived the permanent advisory board charged with keeping tabs on U. S. intelligence activities. He has named seven highly regarded civilians and ex-military men to serve on this body, which was formed in 1956 but had since become inactive; it has now been raised to what is known in the terminology of the new Administration as a "super-agency."

(4) Despite all this investigative activity,

there is still a powerful movement under way in Congress for the formation of a "watchdog" joint committee—this is the same proposal that has failed to gain headway in the past though brought up regularly during the relatively brief history of the CIA.

Add to all these the select congressional subcommittees that serve as liaison groups between the CIA and the legislators, and it would seem that our cloak and dagger people are going to have to spend more time now answering questions and giving briefings than in carrying out their assigned duties.

Senator Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.), pinpointed the issue aptly when he said the CIA needs "more scrutinizing and less publicizing." The question now is whether all this investigating and surveying and studying that is now under way or about to begin can be carried forward without hamstringing the CIA and other intelligence programs.

At least it can be said that there has been remarkably little pressure for dissolution of the intelligence effort; if anything, the Cuban fiasco seems to have heightened public awareness as to the need for such a many-faceted program. The basic problem is the same one that this nation, as a democracy, has always faced in carrying out any security measures that require secrecy—how to reconcile the right of the people to know about and to control the operations of government, with the obligation of that government to protect its people from aggression and subversion.