21 August 1972

NOTE FOR JMM and GLC:

I was unaware that LRH's letter to Harper and Row and their rebuttal had been made public until I saw the attached today. I would have thought that this would have dampened any further efforts to go public with "facts" ala the current Aspin draft. I wish there was some way we could get through on this, because the Aspin letter in its present form will get at least equal treatment. The most unfortunate consequence is that we are tarnishing our professionalism, which is one of the most important traits of the Agency because it is what we are supposed to be all about.

As a matter of fact, the current draft of the Aspin letter itself can be reasonably cited in support of what I understand to be one of McCoy's main contentions, i.e., the Agency is limited in what it can do since for pragmatic reasons it must work with those associated with narcotics. The Director's first letter to Aspin promised a "thorough investigation" of the new evidence, etc. Without question this "thorough investigation" would be conducted with the standard brand of the Agency's professional excellence. Yet, look what we got. A denial by individuals charged by McCoy as being implicated in the drug traffic. Where is the corroborating evidence? Where are the references to Agency's vast resources for getting information? In a nutshell, where is the "hard intelligence" and where is their evidence that we have made a thorough effort to get it? Failing this effort, doesn't this prove McCoy's point that the pragmatics of the situation are controlling even to the point of impairing CIA's judgment on what constitutes a "thorough investigation." I assume that you share my belief that the attached Post story hurt the Agency and if anything gave further credibility to McCoy. The Aspin letter will hurt us even more because it will hit us where our professionalism should be showing.

Under the circumstances, I still believe the best course is a general letter from the Director to Aspin which omits all facts of the investigation and concludes that based upon an "interim" or final investigation the allegations have been found to be completely groundless. An investigation report on the matter should be prepared for the Director, be appropriately classified as one would expect a thorough report to be, and an offer could be made to review some or all of the hard facts with Aspin personally, or perhaps make them available under secure conditions through our House oversight committee.

LLM

On SE Asia Drugs Hit by CIA

By Tim O'Brien
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Central Intelligence Agency has sent Harper and Row, Inc., a detailed critique of a book the firm is about to release, saying the work will do a "disservice" to the fight against narcotics traffic in Southeast Asia.

The New York publishing house, however, has decided to go ahead with publication of "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia" by Alfred W. McCoy. The firm informed the CIA that "it is our sincere opinion that Mr. McCoy's scholarship remains unshaken and we do not see any reason for making changes in the text."

The book is highly critical of the CIA's efforts to suppress opium production and smuggling in Southeast Asia.

On July 5, CIA General Counsel Lawrence R. Houston wrote to Harper and Row, asking "to see the text" of the book. "In the light of the pernicious nature of the drug traffic, allegations concerning involvement of the U.S. government therein or the participation of American citizens should be made only if based on hard evidence," Houston wrote. "It is our belief that no reputable publishing house would wish to publish such allegations without being assured that the support evidence was valid."

"This, of course, in no way affects the right of a publisher to decide what to publish. I find it difficult to believe, however, that a responsible publisher would wish to be associated with an attack on our government involving the vicious international drug traffic without at least trying to ascertain the facts," he wrote.

Author McCoy, when told that Harper and Row planned to release galley proofs to the CIA, protested. He argued in a letter to B. Brook Thomas, the firm's vice president and general counsel, that "submitting the manuscript to the CIA for prior review is to agree to take the first step toward abandoning the First Amendment protection against prior censorship."

McCoy cited "extralegal actions" taken by the CIA to obstruct the book's publications. He said, "Visits by the CIA to Harper and Row, the telephone calls, and the letters are extralegal attempts by the CIA to harass and intimidate me and my publisher."

Thomas replied in a July 18 letter: "However, we [illegible] very much to publish (the book). But we want even more to live up to the traditions and responsibilities of a great publishing house as we see them. If we are forced to make a choice between the two, there can be no doubt what that choice must be."

McCoy, under "strong protest," agreed to give the CIA an advance copy of his book. He did so, he said yesterday, "for pragmatic reasons," partly because of the firm's decision not to publish the work if it were not first reviewed by the CIA.

Acknowledging receipt of the manuscript, CIA counsel Houston wrote Harper and Row on July 21: "It is not our intention to ask you to make changes in Mr. McCoy's book even if we believe some of the statements might be harmful to the government. It is possible that we might find some statement which is currently and properly classified in the interest of national security. If so, we will consult with you, but we believe this is highly unlikely. Our primary interest is in the validity of the evidence with which Mr. McCoy supports his allegations."

A CIA agent hand-delivered the agency's formal critique of the book in a letter dated July 28.

"Mr. McCoy supports his theme by citing a large number of allegations, assertions and interpretations," the 11-page criticism said. "From an examination of these, it is plain that Mr. McCoy has limited his citations to those supporting his thesis, and he appears to have ignored available information which might contradict it."

"Mr. McCoy's charges against the CIA, both directly and by innuendo, have been repeated by editorial writers throughout the nation and could create an accepted myth that the CIA has been involved in the drug traffic. The truth is that CIA has never been involved in the drug traffic and is actively engaged in fighting against it. We believe that the effect of Mr. McCoy's book is to do a disservice to this fight and to dishearten the many sincere people in CIA who are at least as concerned about this menace as Mr. McCoy."

In his book, McCoy argues that "American diplomats and secret agents have been involved in the narcotics traffic at three levels: [illegible] complicity by allying with groups engaged in drug trafficking; abetting trafficking by covering up for Southeast Asian traffickers; and active engagement "in the transport of opium and heroin."

The CIA critique covered several, although not all, of the illustrations used by McCoy to substantiate his three charges. For example, McCoy said that Air America —"which is really a CIA charter airline"—has been actively involved in the transport of opium products out of Laos. His sources, he said, include former Laotian chief of staff Ouane Rattikone (himself a suspected drug smuggler), Laotian air force commander Gen. Thao Ma, a USAID officer in Laos, and McCoy's own interviews with officials in Laotian villages.

The CIA critique said: "We believe the statement Mr. Paul Velte, Managing Director of Air America, made on 2 June 1972 in response to these allegations, labeling them as 'utterly and absolutely false,' clearly expresses the company and CIA views on this matter."

"General Ouane categorically denied that Air America was in any way involved in such traffic."

McCoy said yesterday that "there are over 200 pages of material on American operations in the Golden Triangle area. Out of all that, this is all they (the CIA) could come up with. They're only criticizing about 2 per cent of my total information."

"The most remarkable thing about the CIA's critique is that the agency actually admitted that one of its own mercenary army commanders, Laotian Gen. Chao La, was running a heroin lab in northwestern Thailand. Although the CIA said it destroyed his laboratory in mid-1971, it had [illegible] since 1965 with the agency's full knowledge," he said.

Elisabeth Jakab, the editor handling the manuscript, said yesterday that "the industry has been very cautious on things like this ever since the Clifford Irving story broke."

A source at Harper and Row said the CIA wrote the publishing firm that it could "prove beyond doubt" that McCoy's facts were wrong. "They just didn't do it," the source said.

On Friday, the firm wrote the CIA, responding to each of the agency's criticisms. The "best service we can render the author, the CIA and the general public is to publish the book as expeditiously as possible, and that is what we intend to do." The book is scheduled for release on Aug. 17.

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