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Battlefield ruins at Cuba's "Bay of Pigs" (1961) raised questions of how far CIA should be allowed to go in making policy.

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THE SHOW USUALLY STARTS LIKE THIS: There's this super-agent type, see, and he's playing a recording. From it comes an impersonal voice explaining the need to "zork" someone in some faraway part of the world. The job is going to be difficult, the voice warns coldly, and if anyone is caught, the whole story will be denied. Then— whoosh!—the recording disintegrates in a puff of instant air pollution, and a battery of secret agents is off on another hour of derring-do.

Exciting? Suspenseful? A real spy swashbuckler? *Mission Impossible* may be all of these, but it's also fiction, pure fiction. Any resemblance to real people or places or government institutions, living or dead, is, as they say, coincidental.

Some discrepancies between fiction and fact:

Fiction: Spies are superhuman men and women who frequently hide behind rubber masks, false mustaches, and similar disguises.

Fact: Most intelligence workers are fairly ordinary men and women—scholars, language specialists, and other well-trained people. They usually live very ordinary lives—without benefit of disguises.

Fiction: The main job of most spies is to handle difficult and delicate assignments which take them on exciting journeys to mysterious places.

Fact: The main job of most intelligence specialists involves a day-by-day sifting through printed material—newspapers, magazines, government documents, transcripts of radio broadcasts. This is done in an effort to spot social, political, and military trends and movements in foreign countries. This job is difficult and sometimes delicate, but it usually takes workers no farther than a nearby office.

Still, the agents on *Mission Impossible* do have one thing

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in common with their real-life counterparts. Both do much of their work in secret. The reason for the secrecy is obvious: information that reaches the public also reaches potential enemies.

Most American secret agents work for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). That's the agency charged with gathering information about possible enemies abroad. Few outsiders know what goes on within the plain-looking eight-story building that houses the CIA's headquarters in Langley, Va. For that matter, few know what goes on in CIA offices anywhere in the world.

President Dwight Eisenhower once summed up the secret nature of CIA work: "Its successes cannot be advertised. Its failures cannot be explained. Its heroes are undecorated and unsung, often even among their own fraternity."

What does the CIA actually do? One explanation of its scope and purpose is to be found in a pamphlet put out by the agency itself: "In international affairs, intelligence is knowledge and foreknowledge—fact and estimate. In peace, it is that knowledge of the world about us and our neighbors. In war, it is knowledge of the enemy without which there is

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