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9 June 1953

TO: Chairman, CIA Career Service Board  
FROM: Chairman, CIA Honor Awards Board  
SUBJECT: Letter of Commendation

1. PROBLEM. To create an honor which can be awarded to a person in CIA in recognition of meritorious or valorous service of a stature less than that which is necessary to qualify him for one of the awards presently available.
2. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM.
  - a. Through the Honor Awards Board, Agency personnel may be nominated for the National Security Medal or the Medal of Freedom.
  - b. Both of these medals are national in character and may be administered or awarded by groups other than CIA. Responsibility for award of the National Security Medal is at present covertly delegated to the DCI although overtly to the Executive Secretary, National Security Council.
  - c. The National Security Medal is the only honor award which is administered by the Agency and for which any person associated with the national intelligence effort may be considered in recognition of meritorious or valorous service.
  - d. The Medal of Freedom is available only to civilian personnel in recognition of service performed outside the continental limits of the United States. In the case of CIA personnel it is awarded by the Secretary of Defense.

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- e. The Incentive Awards Committee administers the presentation of a "Certificate of Award" which is signed by the Director and presented to accompany monetary awards in excess of one hundred dollars to those individuals who make suggestions of major import.

3. DISCUSSION.

- a. Criteria for the award of the National Security Medal prescribe that it be used only to recognize exceptionally meritorious or valorous acts. The Medal of Freedom also is limited in its use. Thus, the Agency has no formal means of granting honor awards for meritorious service or valorous acts which are deserving of recognition but are of a stature less than that which would merit the National Security Medal or the Medal of Freedom.
- b. The "Certificate of Award" administered by the Incentive Awards Committee is only issued in recognition of suggestions by CIA personnel which meet criteria for cash incentive awards related to efficiency and are not, therefore, honor awards within the framework of the Honor Awards Program.

4. CONCLUSION.

- a. In addition to the National Security Medal and the Medal of Freedom, there is need for the establishment of a CIA honor award to be issued by the Director in recognition of meritorious service or for acts of valor.
- b. Such an award should be administered by the Honor Awards Board and subject to similar but more liberal standards than those applied by the Board in connection with the award of the National Security Medal or the Medal of Freedom.

- 2 -

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5. RECOMMENDATION. It is recommended that a "Letter of Commendation" for the signature of the Director of Central Intelligence be established, such an honor award to be administered by the CIA Honor Awards Board as a third level of recognition for acts of merit or valor.

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Chairman, CIA Honor Awards Board

- 3 -

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