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24 January 1973

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Grievance Procedure

FROM : The Junior Officers' Study Group*

1. After several months of study, during which we interviewed over 100 CIA personnel, we have concluded that CIA grievance procedures need to be substantially improved. The problem is not so much the willingness of Agency management to accommodate legitimate grievances as the inhibitions created by the Agency's structure and traditions. In our annex, we have included the results of our informal study, including some of the more provocative individual comments. The purpose of this memorandum is to discuss some of our findings and to make positive suggestions for improvement.

2. CIA management tends to assume that, since few individual grievances are brought to its attention, very few exist. This is not so. Most of the people we interviewed believe that it would be damaging to take grievances beyond their normal chain of command. The assumption is widespread that complaining inhibits one's career, and few employees wish to be known as malcontents.

3. An Agency-wide grievance procedure should be responsive to problems that cannot be solved by an office hierarchy. For example, an employee who complains about his supervisor seldom receives much satisfaction within his office. Moreover, employees often need independent advisors to talk with before deciding whether or not to file a formal complaint. Unfortunately, the Office of Personnel and the Office of the Inspector General are widely regarded as representatives of management rather than of the employees.

4. In our survey, we asked many questions about the role of the IG in investigating and settling grievances. We found that few employees are aware of the IG's function, and that those who are have little confidence in its ability to resolve their concerns. Employees seem ambivalent toward the periodic surveys of CIA components

* An informal group of junior officers from various components who meet to discuss problems of general concern. Those who put together this



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-- pleased that they are carried out, often disappointed in their inability to get at fundamental management or morale problems, and annoyed at the inaccessibility of the finished reports. Many feel that all employees of an office should see the IG's entire report.

5. We believe that CIA management should encourage employees to air their grievances as a positive move designed to improve management and morale. It would require a selling job, because most employees seem to be suspicious about the juridical neutrality and the effectiveness of those who now are responsible for listening to such grievances.

6. The following are some specific suggestions aimed at solving at least a few of these problems:

a) Consider the IG office as a representative of Agency employees, not just of management.

b) Help the IG office to improve its rapport with younger people by adding some officers under the rank of GS-15.

c) Empower the IG to take a more active role in seeking out and dealing with personnel issues.

d) Grant the IG responsibility to expedite individual reassignments from one career service to another. ✓

e) Make more of an effort to examine the morale of employees in the offices that are surveyed, and publish the findings whenever possible.

f) Publish a pamphlet or Agency bulletin discussing the role of the IG, the results of some previous grievances, and the various people qualified to give advice to employees about such problems.

g) Consider establishing a special grievance board -- made up of all ages, grades, and components -- to listen to grievances and to make binding recommendations.

h) Take a look at the Macomber Report in the State Department as an example of how other government agencies are handling grievance procedure.

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ANNEX

RESULTS OF THE IG QUESTIONNAIRE

(including some of the more provocative comments)

Total number of respondents: 100 (Not all respondents answered all questions.)

1. What is your impression of the Office of the Inspector General?

Good knowledge or impression: (15)

"Appears to be a group of efficiency experts interested in the function of the various components rather than in individual problems."

"They are serious in their approach to their responsibilities."

"Useful as a crying towel."

No knowledge or vague impression: (56)

"A last resort . . . Not very effective."

"Well meaning but largely ineffective."

"The place where one is supposed to take grievances but where nothing ever happens."

"Inspectors take lots of trips and do component surveys."

"Too remote in the minds of most personnel."

Bad impression: (29)

"Tool of management."

"Cannot think of anything it has done."

"Made up of high level men they don't know what to do with."

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2. If you had a serious grievance, where would you take it? (91 replies)

Up the chain of command (usually beginning with immediate supervisor, although some said they would by-pass their supervisor and go higher initially): (86)

Don't know: (5)

3. If you received no satisfaction there, what would you do? (90 replies)

Go to the next highest officer: (17)

Go to the IG: (33) (Many said they would go to the IG only as a last resort.)

"Except in a dire situation I would not contemplate going to the IG."

Forget the grievance, give up: (20)

Quit the agency: (10)

Other: (12)

4.a. If you took a grievance to the IG, do you think it would affect your career adversely? (85 replies)

Yes: (54)

No: (13)

Maybe or probably (18)

"I expect that a supervisor and/or other management officials who sit on promotion boards would find it hard to remain objective if they knew you had been to the IG."

"The IG is supposed to keep complaints in confidence, although it doesn't always do so."

"The CIA structure is not particularly interested in people rocking the boat."

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"I think a visit to the IG would leave you a marked man, even if you prevailed in every respect."

"Most people are not going to risk screwing up a career in an effort which will probably be futile anyway."

"There is a strong chance that it would influence my career in a negative manner. I have seen one example of this in a previous office."

4.b. Would you anticipate any meaningful follow-up? (72 replies)

Yes: (34)

"The IG might attempt to follow it up, but the local management might obstruct any recommendations by the IG."

No: (27)

"'Sympathy' perhaps; results, no."

"Since even the most flagrant cases of mismanagement are ignored, one can have little hope of justice."

"They are the Director's representatives, not ours."

"I would expect a series of referrals to regulations."

Maybe: (11)

5.a. Have you ever had a grievance that you wanted to take outside of the normal chain-of-command? (85 replies)

Yes: (22)

No: (63)

5.b. Did you ever do so? (22 "yes" replies to above)

Yes: (7)

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"Yes, and received a stern warning from a senior supervisor."

"One grievance, but I had to change offices, my job title, and go through another chain-of-command."

No: (15)

"The problems that might arise are not worth it."

6.a. Is the IG an appropriate channel for hearing and acting on grievances? (75 replies)

Yes: (37)

"It should be, but I know of few cases where an IG survey actually corrected a situation."

"Yes, it is the appropriate channel, but you really do try to avoid this channel because, once it is known you have seen the IG, things may become difficult on your job."

"Yes, but the system seems haphazardly conceived. Most employees are unaware of procedures and are reluctant due to possible consequences vis-a-vis career."

"The normal management chain should take care of and satisfy legitimate grievances. For those cases which are not solved, the IG is appropriate."

No: (28)

"So long as many people don't even know of the existence of a grievance system and, more importantly, that those who do are afraid to use it for fear of being branded a trouble-maker, it is not an appropriate channel."

"No, because it lacks power to enforce its decisions upon the component at fault."

"No, because most clerical problems could be solved with proper management and restructuring of the system, and management is nil in this Agency."

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(Question 6.a. continued)

"There are no definitions of what items they might deem of enough importance to listen to."

Don't know: (10)

6.b. Can grievance procedures be improved? (selected suggestions were as follows):

"The IG should be more available and accessible."

"Grievances should be placed before an informal group composed of non-establishment types, able to cut across red tape and act anonymously."

"People should feel freer to go to the IG."

"Perhaps by setting up an independent grievance board made up of outsiders."

"It needs a leader and officials with rank and clout."

"Get rid of unspoken rule that one doesn't make waves."

"There ought to be a channel closer to the officer, perhaps one board for each directorate."

"Publicize IG activities."

"I would prefer a grievance board composed at least partially of my peers. Bureaucrats who have played the game for years are likely to be out of touch with problems and grievance of the troops."

"It is useful to top echelons as a means of siphoning off employee dissatisfactions, but has no use to employee complaintants."

"Action in this outfit remains highly personalistic -- 'Who you know' is critical. I think there is some profit in looking to an accessible ombudsman as bridging the gap between the personalized and bureaucratized treatment of grievances."

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(Question 6.b. continued)

"How about an ombudsman?"

7: If your component has been surveyed by the IG staff during the last few years, can you comment on that process? (54 replies)

Never heard results: (14)

Waste of time, made no difference: (10)

"Only the branch chief was interviewed."

"Analysts would relay their problems and suggestions and would never get any results."

"I got the impression the interviewer was more interested in hearing about what was right in the office rather than what was wrong; his questions certainly weren't incisive. I never saw the final report; I have no idea what it suggested; I have seen no changes around this office that were attributed to the IG survey."

"Overall impression was good . . . some change since the IG survey."

"No interest in or intention of listening to complaints or comments on personnel management procedures."

"In both cases the surveys were conducted by officers in their 50's at the GS-15 level. If most of the inspectors are in this category, I wonder how responsive they are to complaints and/or suggestions made by the 20 and 30 year old employees . . ."

"They ask good questions but lack clout."

"I am not sure that they received candid opinions from all hands, but I believe that any major problems would have surfaced."

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(Question 7 continued)

"It was an exercise in futility."

"When the final report was published, it turns out that things are generally good, no real problems, etc. We in fact had some real problems at the time, and I'm not convinced that they were ever addressed."

"They seemed to have a closed mind to the problems faced by women in the Agency, especially in the DDP. No suggestions were given regarding future developments or changes which might help one develop a meaningful career within the system."

"Results of the survey brought about obvious changes which were, for the most part, favorable."

"The review is mechanical and is shown only to the upper management."

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