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INSIDE THE BELTWAY

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Polygraph 'em

Journalists are often the equals of Doubting Thomas in the face of "official statements." The latest cynical aside following a line delivered by an official spokesman is: "Give him a polygraph!"

The use of polygraphs, denounced by Secretary of State George Shultz, also has become an issue for various activists to ride piggyback. Free the Eagle has joined the Federation for American Afghan Action, for example, in calling for "a public lie-detector test for CIA Deputy Director John

McMahon" on the matter of covert Afghan aid. According to John Houston of Free the Eagle, a "polygraph test for McMahon is necessary to determine if the disastrous covert aid is deliberate policy or sheer incompetence."

Mr. McMahon, often mentioned as a successor to William Casey as director of the CIA, has been a target of the two groups for some time. The current polygraph flap offers them yet another opportunity to bring their charges to the fore.

— John Elvin