

CIA Unhappy Over Africa; Director Cites Neglect

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Langley, Va. — Past United States neglect of southern Africa is just one problem. CIA Director Stansfield Turner says he is facing as he tries to reshape his battered agency to meet today's changing world.

In an interview with the Bulletin in his offices here, Turner chose his words carefully but left no doubt of his unhappiness over the intelligence system's failure to forecast adequately the racial and political turmoil now gripping the lower half of the African continent.

He said "a good deal" of the seven months he has been CIA chief has been spent "on things south of the Sahara." He added that "as recently as the Nixon-Ford Administrations there wasn't much attention on that."

"It happens to have come to a head here with Rhodesia, nuclear testing facilities in South Africa, (independence for) Namibia, a war in Katanga," said Turner.

Implicit in his comments was the view that U.S. inattention to that area has helped the Soviet Union gain footholds among black regimes in Zambia, Mozambique, Mali, Angola, Uganda and Somalia.

Asked directly if the CIA hadn't failed in its task in Africa, Turner replied:

"I don't want to be critical of my predecessors because, you know, with hindsight you could probably say 'yes'. But then I ask myself: 'What am I neglecting today?' You know, what are you going to ask my successor someday?"

"I mean, the answer to your question is 'yes'. It would be nice if people had forecast where the action was going to shift, but I'm very reluctant to criticize for not forecasting it exactly Yes. We should have tried to forecast the trends in the world."

Turner said that in the "last five to ten years" — a period roughly corresponding to the Republican Nixon Administration — a broad new range of intelligence problems has arisen, involving economic questions and the flexing of political muscle by emerging nations.

With these new problems, he said, the CIA's concern with the Soviet Union must continue "to dominate

your intelligence process." The ever-present danger of nuclear weapons, he said, requires the agency to maintain its current monitoring of the Russians at the same time it is spreading its forces around the globe to deal with the southern Africa nations and the OPECs (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries).

Covert operations — the type of secret adventure that has damaged the agency's reputation — cannot be used as successfully in today's world, Turner said, where economics has become a major concern.

"Covert actions fit in less today," he said. "You're not going to shape another nation's economy through some kind of covert action. Twenty-five years ago, we were the dominant economic power of the world. Today, an outfit like OPEC can dominate one facet of our economics."

"And our relations with a number of other countries — Japan, Western Europe — are very critical to our economics. We can't just push them around. So economic intelligence is of greater importance."

The lessened dominance of the U.S. over global economics, Turner said, has been accompanied by a similar decrease in its military dominance.

"Twenty-five years ago, we could've whipped anybody with one hand tied behind our back," he said. "Today, you've got to be clever; you've got to be smart."

Turner said a political complication for the United States has been the emergence of new nations in once-colonialized areas. These nations, each with a United Nations vote equal to that of the United States, often vote in opposition to American positions.

"We compete in the political sphere of winning public opinion," he said.

"You know, you didn't use to care if you won the votes in the United Nations — you sort of had them in the first place. You had enough on the Western side that you didn't worry. But now you've got a hundred and something — forty — nations, or whatever."

It is among these very nations that the CIA's reputation is low. The agency's involvement in Vietnam, its complicity in the overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile and its history of tampering with the affairs of other nations is well known.

While trying to overcome all this, Turner appears reasonably confident

the CIA can do what is necessary to keep the United States fully informed about Soviet intentions and capabilities. To accomplish this, he said, he has "lots" of agents abroad.

"I really can't tell you," he said, when asked how many "lots" represented.

Turner said the United States and Russia are militarily close to "parity," and scoffed at a report by a group of hawks, known as "Team B," that said military trends favor a Russia that is bent on achieving clear superiority. The Team B group reviewed critically the CIA's annual national intelligence estimate at the request of the outgoing Ford Administration.

"I read the 'B Team' very carefully, but I always thought from what I read the 'B Team' was so scared the Russians were coming that they were un-uly apprehensive," said Turner.

Turner said the Soviets emphasize "military prowess" because it is their only real strength. They have a "flawed" ideology, he said, and an "economic problem of not being able to feed their own people."

"I see them well behind us economically and not likely to close the gap," he stated. "I see them behind us politically, not being true members of the world community but rather striving to set up a Soviet empire. So if I'm a Soviet, I say: 'What strength have I got to play in my hand?' And it's the military strength."

In effect, Turner said Russia is destined to remain in second place behind the United States as long as American military strength is sufficient to deter war.

Asked if the Soviets could achieve world empire without a war, Turner said:

"No — as long as we don't give them a standing invitation, that we don't become too militarily weak that it becomes too attractive for them. We've got to continue to deter military conflict at all levels by that level of military preparedness that's adequate to push the cost to them up too high. That's the essence of deterrence. I don't see any reason why we can't do that."

Turner said his agency's analysis has persuaded him that the "military balance" is not "shifting against us." And he stressed that the CIA's role is chiefly that of analysis, rather than covert action.