

# opinion

Guest column

## The CIA: More than espionage

BY PAUL W. BLACKSTOCK

The recent spate of publicity in the news media concerning charges that the Central Intelligence Agency engaged in political surveillance or domestic espionage activities during the Nixon administrations has led to the mistaken idea that intelligence is the same thing as espionage, and the CIA is the only organization in the business, whereas there are other important agencies such as the Defense Department's Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) which are members of what is called the Intelligence Community.

The same publicity has also inevitably tarred the image of intelligence in general and obscured its vital role in the defense of the national interests of the United States—national security—and providing a sound basis for the limitation of armaments and the avoidance of thermonuclear war, certainly no mean accomplishments in a world that has been threatened with nuclear holocaust for the last two decades.

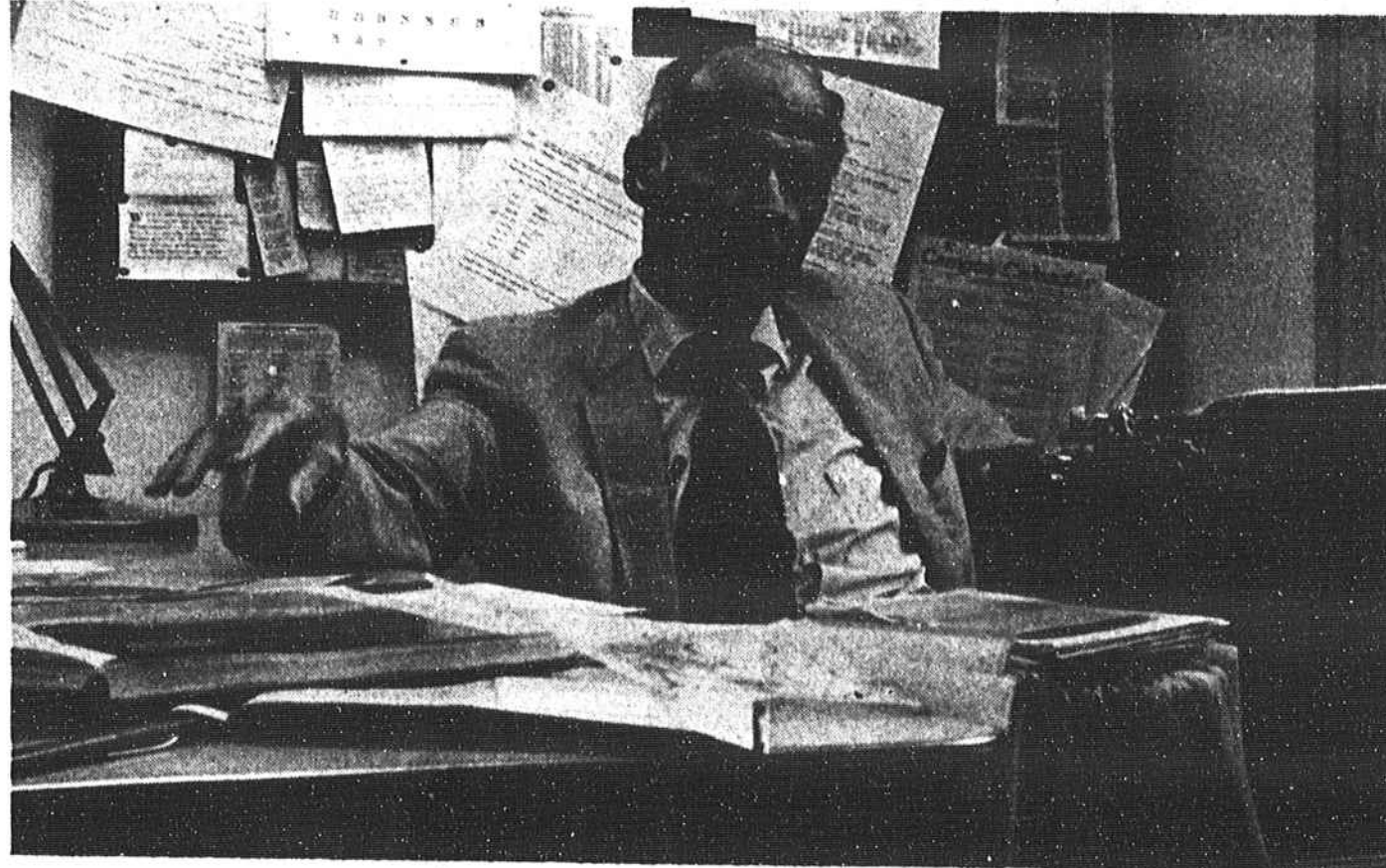
In order to put the news of the day in balanced perspective the public has a right and a need to know what intelligence is, the role of the CIA and the "intelligence community" in national decision-making in foreign policy and military affairs, and the relatively minor role played by espionage in these areas.

In the first place the fog of mystery needs to be stripped from the term "intelligence" itself. Intelligence simply means evaluated or processed information, and almost every adult has at one time or another acted as his own one-man intelligence agency. For example, before making an important investment, such as buying a house, the careful buyer will collect as much information about the house as he can from different sources—the real estate agent, the tax assessor, etc.—and compare sometimes conflicting reports to determine its fair price.

In much the same way the government collects information needed for making important decisions affecting foreign policy and national security or defense. The information is collected, evaluated and disseminated or sent forward to top level decision-makers such as the secretary of defense, the secretary of state and ultimately the president himself, all of whom receive daily oral briefings on important events of

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Dr. Paul W. Blackstock thinks recent publicity about the CIA has given the public

a distorted opinion about the role of espionage in intelligence gathering.

the day as well as daily printed reports of the most important intelligence items. In order to protect both their substance and the sources from which they are drawn the reports are classified. The normal channel of

classified documents such as war plans.

This kind of clandestine activity is called espionage, and government efforts to block it are counterespionage. Actually only about 5 per cent of today's intelligence is

are also very expensive, requiring sophisticated technical equipment and highly trained experts.

Since it would be pointless for government to duplicate the news media, it specifies certain types of information, called intelligence requirements and divides up collection responsibilities among the various agencies within the intelligence community.

The State Department, for example, is responsible for producing political intelligence concerning foreign governments and their policies, especially as they affect the United States, a responsibility of the department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. The Defense Department's Intelligence Agency (DIA), assisted by the service agencies of the Army, Navy and Air Force, produces military intelligence of strategic importance concerning foreign military forces, their strength, location, combat effectiveness and capabilities.

The CIA analyzes information

concerning all these fields and thus, as its name implies, occupies a central position in the intelligence community. From time to time the FBI, which has exclusive responsibility for domestic counterespionage, contributes important information to the complex mosaic of the total intelligence picture, as does what was formerly the Atomic Energy Commission in its special field.

To summarize, the primary function of the intelligence community is to provide the president and other top-level policy-makers with the best information available to experts throughout the government. The process is essentially one of research, evaluation and analysis using both open and classified materials or sources.

But in both foreign and military affairs, strategic decisions should take into account not only past and present "facts bearing on the situation," but also careful estimates of the capabilities and intention of other major powers, whether friendly or hostile. The production of such national intelligence estimates, as they are called, is a second major function of the intelligence community, with the responsibility for their presentation and dissemination resting with the CIA.

But there is another function of intelligence which is frequently overlooked even in the professional literature of the craft, namely its role in deterrence. The balance of terror which hangs over the world has been aptly described as a quasi-stable equilibrium based on the existence of U.S. and Soviet strategic weapons systems which can inflict unacceptable damage on either power if the other strikes first in a so-called "surprise" attack. The word "surprise" is in quotation marks since the intelligence systems on both sides are so efficient and alert that such an attack is virtually excluded.

In any case, a first strike would be irrational unless either side achieved a sudden, spectacular scientific breakthrough in either offensive or defensive weapons systems. This contingency is most unlikely as long as research and development are roughly parallel on both sides and both sides

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dissemination is through a central, coordinating agency, the CIA, to the National Security Council (NSC). In his role as head of the NSC, Henry Kissinger, who is also the secretary of state, normally briefs the president.

The news media which include the daily newspapers, the press and television news services, also collect and disseminate an enormous amount of information of vital importance to policy makers. However, compared to the news media the Government is in a privileged position because through the Intelligence Community it has special sources at its disposal.

Some of these sources are private or official, some are secret and others are too expensive for any agency except a government to afford. All governments have ambassadors, military attaches and other trained representatives abroad who send in daily classified reports.

In addition all governments have intelligence officers stationed in their embassies abroad who recruit espionage agents or "spies" to collect information secretly by such clandestine and illegal means as wire-tapping, house-breaking or breaking into files and making copies of highly

collected by clandestine methods, but sensational spy stories and motion pictures of the James Bond variety have created the false impression that all intelligence consists of cloak-and-dagger escapades. On the domestic scene partisan political espionage such as the Watergate break-in and related incidents reinforce this mistaken notion.

Only major powers such as the U.S. and the USSR can afford to employ reconnaissance satellites which circle the globe and collect extremely timely and valuable information. Reconnaissance planes and satellites carry complex photographic and electronic equipment called "technical sensors" of which the most familiar are radar, sonar and radio telemetry devices.

It is estimated that the U.S. alone spends about \$4 billion annually on space satellites—the lion's share of the intelligence budget—operated out of the National Reconnaissance Office of the Air Force.

Finally, most governments intercept radio and other communications and break coded messages as an important source of intelligence. These operations, which are the responsibility of the top secret National Security Agency of the Defense Department

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