
The Intelligence Community's Case Against Turner

By Benjamin F. Schemmer

THE AMERICAN intelligence community has been suffering from a prolonged, critical illness. Now CIA Director Stansfield Turner may be administering the *coup de grace*.

Stansfield Turner became director of central intelligence with broad, bipartisan congressional support. At the time of his appointment, it generally was thought that the reforms of American intelligence begun under President Ford would receive even more impetus from President Carter. Carter's 1976 campaign themes of excellence and reform, and his sensitivity to the Third World, aroused expectations of even greater progress.

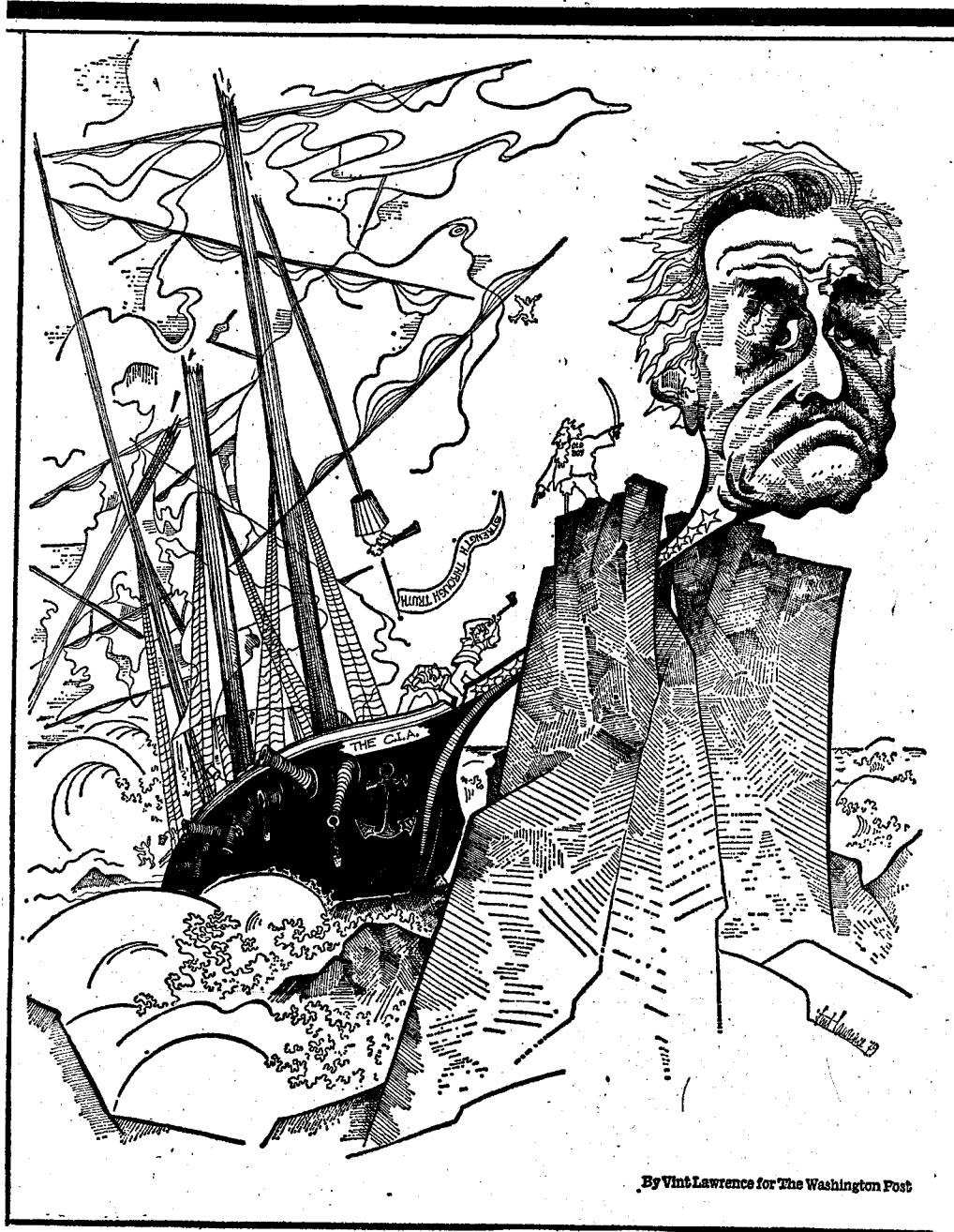
In only two years, Turner and the Carter administration have dashed those hopes. Turner has emerged as concerned mainly with advancing his own authority and acquiring influence with the president. His preference for technology over people, his willingness to politicize intelligence and his single-minded focus on centralizing control of the intelligence budget and collection activities have destroyed morale within the CIA, led hundreds of key CIA personnel to resign and prompted far more to "retire in place."

Turner has gravely damaged the quality of the intelligence community's product. Administration sources admit that more than 250 CIA professionals put in their retirement or resignation papers in the first pay period of 1979. The departures of concern now do not involve the "cold warriors," special or "black" operations executives and counterintelligence officers affected by Turner's 1977 Halloween purge of 820 surplus CIA personnel (a purge which William Colby had planned to be even more drastic.) The men who are leaving now are career professionals — the intellectual cadre, the very brain of American intelligence.

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By Vint Lawrence for The Washington Post

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Recent losses include such experts as Sayre Stevens, deputy director of the National Foreign Assessments Center; Vince Heyman, chief of CIA's Operations Center; Dick Christenson, chief of CIA's Office of Regional and Political Analysis; John Blake, the deputy director for administration; Ernie Oney, the agency's chief Iranian analyst, and Anthony Lapham, CIA's general counsel. Several national intelligence officers for key regions like the Middle East have resigned or are now seeking other jobs.

Retirement incentives and limitations on future employability resulting from the new Ethics in Government Act have helped stimulate resignations. But CIA's mass exodus reflects the despair of intelligence professionals that Turner and the Carter administration ever will provide effective leadership and reform. Several of the departing officials told Turner candidly that they were leaving because of his pervasive interference in intelligence reporting — in areas where he had no expertise, yet overrode expert opinion with his own judgment.

Those departing now are civil servants who quietly fought the pressures from a decade of CIA directors to give the Rostows, Kissingers and Brzezinski intelligence analysis tailored to their policies of the moment on Vietnam, SALT, Angola and Iran.

CIA's professionals stuck it out through investigation after investigation, and director after director who twisted their reporting to produce "intelligence to please." They kept silent as post-mortem after post-mortem blamed "intelligence" for policymakers' unwillingness to hear the facts in crisis after crisis. By guilt through association, they shared the blame for the excesses of other CIA branches in special operations, drug experimentation and U.S. "internal security."

But Stansfield Turner's mismanagement of American intelligence has proved more than they could take.

Lots of Data, Little Analysis

TURNER has ignored analytic personnel needs to buy more technical collection assets — in spite of the fact that the intelligence community has long lacked the analysts needed to process its existing "take."

He has systematically hamstrung or ignored human intelligence sources

and resources. Human intelligence doesn't mean a cadre of clandestine operators, "hit men" or CIA burglars; simply put, it is intelligence produced by people, not machines — information based on personal contacts and observations, and even such mundane but vital work as a careful reading of the local and regional press.

We now have little real human intelligence capability in Turkey, a country that is economically and politically fragile, yet whose importance to NATO and the Mideast is pivotal and whose array of U.S. technical collection systems will play a crucial role in verifying Russia's compliance with a new strategic arms limitation agreement. Human intelligence resources in Italy may be at an all-time low. There is little human intelligence effort fo-

cused on either friendly or hostile OPEC countries. Indonesia, the Philippines and Japan equally lack human intelligence reporting that focuses on internal stability or economic trends that could signal shifts in political alignments or popular support.

Admittedly, Turner initially received scant encouragement from National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski to improve Third World intelligence. Brzezinski may be even less sensitive than Turner to Third World issues and has shown little interest in improving the depth or quality of analysis provided to the president on them. Their priorities are reflected in the fact that of the entire U.S. intelligence community — perhaps 60,000 to 70,000 people in all — only 5 to 10 percent are involved in production and analysis. Not counting collection processors, the community has less than 25 to 50 analysts covering all of Africa, and perhaps only half that many for all of South America.

Thus, Turner has continued past CIA inclinations to focus its reporting on the Soviet Union disproportionately to America's need for intelligence on other parts of the world. Yet even in the Soviet arena, where there is a wealth of information and where hundreds of people are busy developing new order-of-battle data on the location, strength and equipment of Soviet forces, CIA has only three or four analysts looking at how all of the Soviet and Warsaw Pact ground forces in eastern Europe and the western U.S.S.R. might be employed. The result is a glut of signal and photo intelli-

gence, but a paucity of badly needed insight on Soviet strategy, tactics and capabilities.

There are simply too few analysts in the intelligence community to produce the quality and depth of insight this country needs. If one defines "analyst" to exclude those who supervise, manage, coordinate or sort intelligence collection, or who administer the community's management needs, there are probably no more than 3,000 to 5,000 analysts spread throughout CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the National Security Agency (NSA).

Of the roughly \$5 billion the United States is spending on direct intelligence activities in fiscal 1979, roughly 90 percent is going to hardware. Billions more are spent in the Defense Department for "intelligence related" activities and the integration of tactical collection efforts with "national means" — where the emphasis is also on hardware and technical collection.

In fairness to Turner, this is not a new problem. Since the early 1960s, one intelligence post-mortem after another has noted that the National Reconnaissance Office and NSA collect far more intelligence than can be processed effectively. Yet no amount of pictures or "intercepts" can speak for themselves. Ultimately, it is human intelligence, and intelligent analysis, which provides the pivotal insight into motives and intentions and trends and

risks. Turner is the first director who has had the authority to redress the imbalance. But black boxes are easier to understand than people, and control over them means control over dollars and power in the bureaucracy. As a result, it is black boxes, not people, who are Stansfield Turner's priorities.

Intelligence to Please

TURNER'S predecessor, George Bush, was regarded by CIA's professionals as a "weak" director who could neither protect intelligence from Henry Kissinger nor obtain for his own analysts information on Kissinger's personal diplomacy. But Bush won respect for trying to protect the CIA from politicization. Stansfield Turner has impressed CIA's professionals as a willing agent who has tailored analysis to support predetermined National Security Council and other administration policies.

When Energy Secretary James

Schlesinger needed an "oil crisis" to dramatize President Carter's energy goals in 1977 and 1978, Turner helped

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him create one — by skewing the estimates of demand and production, understating uncertainty and using the most pessimistic projections of Soviet demand.

His constant intervention in the production of National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 11-14 on the Warsaw Pact tended to downplay the importance of Soviet improvements in ground forces and tactical aviation that might have challenged the value of the administration's improvements in NATO forces. Yet he put few analysts to work on what our NATO allies really are doing, and as a result the United States has less intelligence on some of our allies' ammunition stocks than on Soviet inventories.

It is hard to overstate the impact of Turner's failure to seek real improvements in the quality of the intelligence product, and his constant interference in the analytic process. No previous director has spent as much time "fine tuning" major national intelligence estimates or reports.

Knowing Brzezinski to be pro-shah, Turner kept "honing" the 1978 NIE on Iran until it simply was overtaken by events, arriving on U.S. policymakers' desks on the edge of the shah's downfall. His willingness last year to hold up a study of Soviet arms sales (embarrassing to the architects of Carter's policy of unilateral restraints on conventional arms transfers) still rankles

CIA staffers — who knew that the Carter policy was based on a superficial and largely erroneous comparison of worldwide arms sales.

By contrast, Turner contributed nothing to the Army's superb analysis, later reinforced by the DIA, which leaked a few months ago to the Army Times and showed a North Korean force buildup totally inconsistent with Carter's decision to withdraw U.S. ground forces from that dangerous peninsula. (The CIA spent months simply verifying the Army/DIA figures.) Nor has his impact on a more recent analysis of the Middle East balance drawn praise from CIA officials.

The American intelligence community needs a manager as director of central intelligence, not a prophet. But Turner gives his own judgments and intuition more credit than he gives his analysts. To paraphrase the blunt remarks of one official who told Turner off as he left the CIA, "You're intelligent, but you confuse that with being informed, and you interfere in everything, whether you have anything to contribute or not."

Centralize and Control

SOON AFTER he was confirmed as director, Turner generated an intelligence reorganization plan which would have elevated his status to cabinet rank, made him the sole channel of authorized intelligence reporting to the president and the NSC, obtained control over most of the Defense Department's intelligence assets, given him full power over intelligence tasking and collection, and put in his hands far stronger and more centralized budget authority.

Fortunately, the reorganization finally approved by Carter showed more balance and restraint — but it hardly was an organizational triumph. Any list of its features still has a monotonous emphasis on Turner. The question of centralized vs. decentralized control is as old as civilization; the question relevant today is: which will provide the best intelligence? Turner opted for centralization, power and more committees — when what America needed was better intelligence.

Moreover, Turner has taken advantage of Defense Secretary Harold Brown's reorganization of defense intelligence to increase his authority over defense-managed systems — other than the tactical intelligence-related systems program — and the Defense Department's analytic capabilities (a control that President Ford had

firmly denied the CIA). And had it not been for last-minute fiscal 1980 budget cuts, he would have succeeded in co-locating the DIA at Langley with CIA — thus eliminating the risk of a second opinion. His ploy was that co-locating DIA and CIA would cut costs by sharing computers, printing facilities and the like; in reality, the move would have delayed a much-needed DIA consolidation by two years.

The list of "new" committees is hauntingly familiar, and does little to filter Turner's control. The old "Forty

Committee" is now the Operations Advisory Group. The president's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board has been disbanded. While scarcely a source of consistent wisdom and intellectual courage, that board at least was an outside body of distinguished citizens beholden to no one — including the CIA director or the president. It has been replaced by an "echo" which is even weaker, a "Review Panel" which lacks the strength of a bipartisan mix of leading academics and figures from the private sector. Its members — William Leonhard, Klaus E. Knorr and retired Army Gen. Bruce Palmer Jr. — are estimable men, but with scant intelligence experience and thus little ability to challenge Turner or probe into his priorities.

There is a "new" Intelligence Oversight Board in the White House to keep the intelligence community honest; however, its mission is still unclear, and one wonders whether such a board could have much impact on any abuses committed by a strong administration policy official like Henry Kissinger. Most of the other committees are familiar variations on old themes. For example, there is an NSC Policy Review Committee, headed by Brzezinski, but its end effect may be to give influential officials like Brzezinski more ability to put a policy cast over the allocation of intelligence resources, without the independent review which outside, experienced intelligence officials provided through the old Board of National Estimates in focusing on the final product.

And the former U.S. Intelligence Board has been replaced by the National Foreign Intelligence Board as the senior management group within the community — though again the role of the director of central intelligence has been strengthened, as Turner controls most of the budget

review and collection authority.

Collection management committees and staffs are restructured under a new National Intelligence Collection Tasking Staff. In theory, it provides centralized control and coordination — but intelligence professionals have not been impressed by its progress in getting organized, and the group now adds little but new layers of review on existing processes without improving the basis for deciding collection priorities or resource allocation.

What is missing from the intelligence community's reorganization and mix of new and old committees is *substance*. The new organization does not give the analyst or professional better assurance that he will have the resources to do his work well, or that he can be independent and objective. There is no decoupling of policy and intelligence, nor is there any new initiative to fuse intelligence and the broad range of equally important non-intelligence reporting from the State Department, the defense attachés and others. Dissemination of intelligence is still too limited: It leaks better than it gets distributed.

In fact, interagency coordination is so bad that in January, when Ambassador William Sullivan sent a critical EXDIS message from Tehran reporting on a meeting in which the shah finally indicated that his departure was imminent, neither Brzezinski nor Turner got the message to the agency's Iranian analysts or to appropriate defense intelligence personnel. Even Defense Secretary Harold Brown had to order one of his staff to obtain a copy of the message (apparently covertly) because he was not privy to it either.

More recently, the fact that Russia had tested its SS18 missile with up to 14 warheads appeared in the closely held, highly classified National Intelligence Daily only after it became clear that Richard Burt was about to break the story in *The New York Times*.

Management Malaise

CENTRALIZATION has not led to greater efficiency, because Turner and his entourage have managed to shake things up without shaking them down.

Turner's now largely departed

"Gang of Eleven" naval staff officers (as they were unaffectionately known to CIA insiders) did a great deal to enhance Turner's powers in the intelligence community, but their main heritage was to leave an impression that Turner had sought to create his personal "Savak." They did almost nothing to enhance the quality of intelligence reporting and analysis. On the contrary, they disrupted the effort already under way and replaced it with a largely ineffective systems analysis staff charmingly called "PAID" (Product/Performance Assessment Improvement Division).

Turner's nominee to manage CIA's analytic effort, Robert Bowie, has done nothing since coming to Langley to change his reputation at Harvard for ineffectiveness. Yet Turner has resisted advice from inside and outside the intelligence family to fire him.

The CIA has had so many directors since Watergate that some fear it might suffer more from a new boss than from a bad one. But Stansfield Turner has become so serious a liability that he must go. The remaining analysts and managers won't take much more of Turner, and the lack of intelligence on Iran, Korea and Arab concern over the consistency of U.S. Mideast and Persian Gulf policy have given the nation brutal, recent lessons that it needs better intelligence than Turner can produce.

While Turner has made some widely respected appointments, like John Koehler to head the community's Resource Management Staff and John McMahon as deputy director for operations, most of Turner's personal coterie should go with him. The president must clear this deck to regain the broad community support he needs to obtain effective intelligence.

The administration must make a new beginning by emphasizing the untainted quality of the intelligence product, providing the human resources the intelligence community needs and replacing centralization with coordination. All three are lacking under Stansfield Turner, and American intelligence is dying because of it.