

PM

Veterans of CIA Bureaucracy Take Their

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In novels, movies and miniseries, swash-buckling spies come out of the cold to capture the public imagination, but yesterday in a sedate Senate chamber the tables were turned.

It was hither to faceless career analysts with impressive academic credentials—the grifts of the permanent bureaucracy—who stripped away the CIA veil of secrecy to air embarrassing secrets and make serious charges against the operatives of the intelligence agency.

In a sense, it was the revenge of the bureaucracy that highlighted the Senate intelligence committee's hearing yesterday on President Bush's nomination of Robert M. Gates to head the CIA.

The committee heard testimony from veteran analysts about manipulation of intelligence analyses and agency personnel, about suppression and slanting of intelligence data, all done to support the ideological agenda of William J. Casey, the late CIA director. In the process, it was alleged, President Ronald Reagan received "misleading and false information" that had "devastating consequences" on U.S. policy initiatives.

The senators were told that nearly all intelligence issues connected to covert action were politicized inside the CIA during the Reagan era of the 1980s. These included operational commitments Casey made regarding Iran, Nicaragua and Afghanistan.

"All those issues were politicized," former top CIA analyst Melvin A. Goodman, a scholarly sounding man in a dignified dark pinstripe suit, told the committee. "The second area concerned Casey's other major concern, his world view of the Soviet Union. That is, the Soviet Union as the source of all U.S. problems. Casey seized on every opportunity to exaggerate the Soviet threat."

Goodman, a Soviet expert now with the National War College, was one of four witnesses to testify yesterday. He struck a note of quiet, pithy defense for the professional views of the career civil servant.

"I have spent my entire professional life in government service," he said in a low-key, almost professorial tone, "and I am proud of that fact. I've spent nearly 30 years in the United States Army, in the State Department, the CIA and the Department of Defense. I learned the culture and the craft of intelligence from people I respect, admired and . . . I take the intelligence business very seriously, both its ethical dimensions and its analytical dimensions."

As he told it, it was the career analysts as

opposed to the covert operators who best fulfilled the motto of the CIA: "Seek Ye the Truth." That motto, he added, "goes right to the heart of the professional ethic of the intelligence officer. Now, I have no idea what you may think of the work we do, but I want to assure you that our standards are high, and we believe that our only unique contribution is in terms of independent analysis, done without fear or favor."

But yesterday's hearing also demonstrated another truth about the murky world of secret intelligence operatives and analysts: that the "truth" is easier to assert than to determine.

The senators heard as well from another analyst who testified in support of Gates by offering a rebuttal to Goodman's critical views about the perversion and corruption of intelligence data. Graham E. Fuller, former vice chairman of the CIA's National Intelligence Council, while acknowledging Casey's "strongly felt" ideological Cold War beliefs and saluting the professionalism of analysts like Goodman, also disparaged much of their analysis as being inclined "towards, yes, a highly benign vision of Soviet intentions and goals."

Fuller, who has been credited as providing material that led Reagan National Security Council operatives to argue that there were Iranian moderates in Iran with

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whom the United States could deal, said he grew "unhappy with the product that I received" from many Soviet-Third World analysts. "It was liberal versus conservative bias," he said. "Not a healthy situation, I scarcely need add."

The problem for the senators, and for the American people watching the hearings on television, is how to sift through these directly conflicting claims and arrive at a consensus on whether Gates should be confirmed as the person to lead the U.S. intelligence community into the 1990s.

These hearings come at a critical moment for the CIA and for American policymakers. In the past, Congress focused on CIA involvement in assassinations and coups during the Cold War era. Lawmakers attempted to rein in the covert operators. Congressional oversight was, supposedly, strengthened; so were legal requirements for presidents to report to Congress through formal "findings" of the need for U.S. covert operations.

But the Gates hearings have focused not on the CIA's old "dirty tricks" department but on its analytical branch because that is where Gates has his roots. That is also where the agency is expected to concentrate its energies in the future.

Now, in a time both of military reductions and new economic constraints, the United

States needs to depend on the kinds of sound economic and political assessments that will help it forge policies to deal with different complex problems—among them, rising ethnic and racial turbulence and the prospect of internal chaos within the borders of the old Soviet empire.

In that new world, the intelligence analysts will play ever important roles. It is the paradox of the current confirmation hearings that while Gates is a veteran analyst, he is now being accused of having skewed analysis to suit the ideological views of covert operators who have presided over the CIA.

To a Fuller, the serious charges against Gates of politicization of intelligence reports are unfounded. "While I know and respect Mel Goodman as a very knowledgeable and experienced Soviet analyst," he said yesterday, "in all frankness I do not readily recognize the Bob Gates described in his testimony."

To a Goodman, Gates should not be confirmed because of his record as Casey's deputy during the Reagan years. "Gates's role in this activity was to corrupt the process and the ethics of intelligence on all of these issues," he charged. . . . He pandered to Casey's agenda. . . . Gates's other contribution was to ignore and suppress signs of Soviet strategic retreat, including the collapse of the Soviet Union itself."