

C.I.A. Apparently Plans Cut in Some Covert Roles

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WASHINGTON, April 1— Under its new director the Central Intelligence Agency is apparently planning to curtail some of its old activities, notably clandestine military operations, and undertake some new ones. These include action against political terrorism and the international drug traffic.

Since James R. Schlesinger took over as director on Feb. 2 more than 1,000 employes of the C.I.A. have received dismissal notices. Mr. Schlesinger also has authority from President Nixon to apply what one official calls "a great deal of persuasive influence" to reduce manpower as well in the military intelligence services. These are the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, which Mr. Schlesinger oversees but does not operate.

In the last two years the intelligence establishment as a whole has been reduced by something like 25 per cent, according to reliable estimates.

In 1971 there were more than 150,000 people in the mili-

tary and diplomatic intelligence services and the C.I.A. There are now fewer than 125,000, according to the estimates—perhaps no more than 115,000. Since November, 1971, the various agencies have been under orders in a memorandum from the President to reduce duplication of facilities and functions and make more economical use of their resources, especially in collecting information.

Intelligence information these days is gathered more by machines than by men—by satellites and computers rather than by spies meeting informers in bars and alleys.

Each intelligence agency seems to want its own machines and some systems have reportedly been made deliberately incompatible so that each agency keeps its own.

For that reason and others it is said here that President Nixon's 1971 memorandum has as yet had no measurable effect on the operations of the

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intelligence community.

The man principally responsible for drafting the President's memorandum was Mr. Schlesinger and he has now been given the authority to put it into effect. He got the job because as assistant director of the Office of Management and Budget and later as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission he earned a reputation for efficiency and effectiveness.

Apparently Mr. Schlesinger is expected to do in the intelligence community what other recent Presidential appointees have been instructed to do in more open departments—that is, to make the Federal bureaucracy more responsive to the Administration.

This objective has led to charges from some old hands at the C.I.A. that the agency

is being "poulticed" by the Nixon Administration. Mr. Schlesinger met this charge, when his C.I.A. appointment was up for confirmation in the Senate, by assuring the Senate Armed Services Committee that he believed absolutely in maintaining the integrity and independence of intelligence estimates.

People who know President Nixon's attitude say he wants his intelligence information straight even when it is unpalatable. However, the White House does want to see less money spent on intelligence, and a better intelligence product provided.

By a better product the White House apparently means among other things a product that answers the questions that senior policy makers are interested in and gives the answers in brief and readable form.

"You can't drop a 90-page C.I.A. analysis on a high official's desk and say 'You've got to read this,'" one such official said recently.

That Discouraging Thud

"The thud it makes when it falls on your desk is enough to discourage you from opening it," another said.

Apparently C.I.A. memorandums under the Schlesinger regime will number more like three pages than 90 and will have a telephone number to call if the recipient wants further information.

While seeking greater economy and efficiency the intelligence community is reassessing its tasks.

There appears to be a tendency to cut back on C.I.A. paramilitary operations—operations such as the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 and the clandestine war still being waged in Laos, operations that have sometimes brought the agency as much censure as praise.

In his second Inaugural Address, President Nixon said, "The time has passed when America will make every other nation's conflict our own, or make every other nation's future our responsibility, or presume to tell the people of other nations how to manage their own affairs."

That statement seemed to imply less intervention in other people's affairs, whether by intelligence agencies or otherwise.

In any event, operations such as the one in Laos, where the C.I.A. has long given support and leadership to the anti-Communist military forces, are on such a scale that they cannot be conducted secretly, and thus may not be thought suitable for an undercover agency.

'Dirty Tricks' Wane

Operations on a smaller

scale—sometimes called “dirty tricks”—reflect the atmosphere of the nineteen-fifties, the cold war period, and seem to be regarded now as obsolescent.

Also with the reduction of international tensions and suspicions, which is the aim of President Nixon's dealings with the Soviet Union and China, the intelligence community may not need to pay so much attention to the military abilities of the major powers.

However, there may be new tasks for the intelligence community in an era of negotiation.

For example, the protocol to the Soviet-American agreement on the limitation of strategic offensive weapons provides in Article 12 that “for the purpose of providing assurance of compliance with provisions of this treaty, each party shall use national technical means of verification.”

In plain language, that means that the Soviet Union and the United States may each use its own photographic satellites and other intelligence-collecting devices to see whether the other side is abiding by the treaty. This is the “open skies” policy proposed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower at the Geneva summit conference in 1955 and rejected at that time by the Russians.

There are also other new problems to attract the interest of the intelligence agencies. One is the narcotics traffic. Intelligence is a major ingredient in controlling it.

Another is political terrorism, a form of warfare that cannot be dealt with by ordinary diplomatic means or conventional military forces.

The interest of the C.I.A. in these problems does not mean that the agency will no longer have an arm that can perform paramilitary functions. It also does not mean that the C.I.A.—to use a term heard here—will not “invest” funds in the affairs of third countries on occasion.