

## Despite Its Being in the Telephone Book

# CIA Is an Unlisted Number When Congress Dials

By Flora Lewis

SO FAR as I've found in a lot of traveling, the United States is the only country in the world which lists its central intelligence agency in the telephone book, and enables anyone to call up and speak to the director's office.

But an extraordinary exchange on the floor of the Senate recently made clear how little else the people who put up the money for intelligence know about how it's spent. The debate took place on the day the military appropriations bill was finally passed so it attracted little attention, but it was revealing.

It was provoked by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) who offered an amendment providing that not more than \$4 billion in the defense budget could go for the intelligence services, including the CIA, the National Security Agency and the intelligence branches of the various armed services. Symington's point was not only to set a limit, but to set a precedent.

CONGRESS does appropriate all the money that goes to intelligence, but it doesn't know how much, or even when and how. That's because it is hidden in the defense budget, with the result that Congress doesn't really know just what it is appropriating any military money for because it never knows which items have been selected for padding to hide extra funds for intelligence.

Evidently, Symington believes that the actual amount spent is a little over \$4 billion, instead of the \$6 billion reported in the press, because he wasn't trying to cut intelligence funds except for CIA payments to Thai soldiers in Laos. He is one of the nine senators entitled to go to meetings of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the CIA, supposedly the confidential watchdog over the agency. As he pointed out though, there hasn't been a full meeting all this year.

What he wanted to do was to establish that Congress does have some rights to monitor the intelligence empire which it created by law, and he was driven to the attempt because of exasperation at President Nixon's recent intelligence reorganization. It was an-

nounced to the public as an upgrading of CIA Director Richard Helms and a better method to avoid waste and establish political control.

Senator Symington and many other well-informed CIA watchers in Washington, are convinced that Helms has been kicked upstairs. The result, they believe, will be an increase in military influence over intelligence—which has been recognized as a danger throughout the history of intelligence because it tends to become self-serving, the doctor diagnosing himself according to the therapy he likes.

There is also a concern that the reorganization, which makes the President's National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger top dog over intelligence, will centralize the system so much that it will become a tool for White House aims, not an outside source of technical expertise.

Responsible political control over the intelligence community's actions, as distinct from its factual and analytical reports, is necessary and desirable. But despite the public impression, in the last few years the CIA has been the most honest source of information for Congress on sensitive issues such as Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, while the Pentagon, State and White House have dealt in obfuscations. Whatever his Department of Dirty Tricks might be doing, Helms has been more straightforward with his secret session testimony on what is really happening in these unhappy places than the people who do have to explain and justify their funding to Congress.

BUT, as the Senate debate showed, that isn't saying very much. Sen. Allen Ellender (D-La.), who heads the CIA subcommittee, pointed out that 20 years ago only two senators and two congressmen were allowed to know what the CIA was spending, and now there are five on each side of the Capitol.

He implied that they also knew what the CIA was spending its money for. Sen. Wil-

liam Fulbright (D-Ark.), had the wit to ask if that mean Ellender knew, before the CIA set up its secret army in Laos, that this was the purpose of the appropriation. Ellender said, "It was not, I did not know anything about it . . . it never dawned on me to ask about it."

Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), had the humor to point out that there has been a lot in the press about the CIA Laotian army in the past couple of years, and asked whether Ellender has now inquired about it. Ellender said, "I have not inquired." Cranston pointed out that since nobody else in Congress has Ellender's right to check the CIA, that meant nobody in Congress knows. Ellender replied, "Probably not."

Symington's amendment was defeated. But at least the record is now clear. A recent Newsweek article quoted a former CIA official as saying, "There is no federal agency of our government whose activities receive closer scrutiny and 'control' than the CIA."

"The reverse of that statement is true," said Symington, "and it is shameful for the American people to be misled." The record proves him right.

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