

CIA opens the mail

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) apparently has ignored all legal and constitutional safeguards due United States citizens in the opening of mail passing through the ports of New Orleans and New York.

The disclosure by a former CIA employee appearing before the House Civil Rights Subcommittee, is the latest evidence that the agency has overstepped its authority and purpose.

The super secret intelligence gathering agency has been caught in dead-serious projects shocking to an American mentality that places the greatest possible value on personal freedom. This is the case in the monitoring of mail and disclosures that the agency has involved itself in the overthrow of foreign governments.

In all cases, the activities of the CIA underscore the need for closer supervision by Congress and the

White House.

There can be legitimate, legal reasons for opening mail.

Chief Postal Inspector William Cotter testified before the subcommittee on civil rights that government agencies obtained 431 court orders during the past two years to open mail.

The mail was opened during the course of wide-ranging investigations into narcotics, medical fraud, food stamp fraud, land fraud and nation security matters.

In these instances, the various agencies presumably proceeded legally. The CIA apparently did not trouble itself with the civil rights of individuals whose mail was opened.

Just as bad, an ex-CIA agent told the House subcommittee that two postmasters general knew about the wholesale surveillance and cooperated in the operation.