

For Smarter Intelligence:

By Stansfield Turner

THAT ALDRICH Ames operated as a mole inside the CIA for nine years has revived the idea that the best way to reform the CIA may be to abolish it. Its component parts would either be dismantled or transferred to other elements of the government, and the agency as we've known it for more than four decades would be shut down.

There is, though, an alternative between abolition and maintaining the status quo: Divide the CIA in two.

The division would be between the CIA's two separate, but closely related, organizations—the analytic branch and the spying branch.

At this point, I should acknowledge that nine years ago, in my book "Secrecy and Democracy," I advocated exactly the opposite. My reasoning then was that the closer the connection between spies and analysts, the more likely that the spies would collect information that the analysts needed. I now believe that because the spying branch has dominated the CIA for so long, continued propinquity will only perpetuate that dominance. CIA Director R. James Woolsey in a speech last Monday seemed to confirm my concern when he labeled the spying branch an elitist fraternity.

Information on foreign affairs comes to our government in myriad ways, some secret and some not. It is important that some agency do analysis based on the totality of that information without bias as to source. Today, military analysis leans heavily on military sources, the State Department's on political reporting and the CIA's on human intelligence collected by its spying branch.

But melding the CIA's analytic branch into the State Department's or the military's would not only mean the end of the CIA. It would also mean that no analytic organization would be free from the pressure of policymakers. It is difficult to think that even the most conscientious admiral or general could ignore the impact his analysis might have on military programs, if only because of long cultural association. From my observation, this was much less a problem with the State Department but it did exist.

On the other hand, the separation of CIA roles would have the opposite effect—it would force the CIA's spying branch to stand in direct competition with the National Security Agency (NSA), which collects electronic

THE WASHINGTON POST

Page

Separate Spies From

SUNDAY, JULY 24, 1994 C3

Analysts

intercept information, and the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), which gathers photographic information.

And this would make the CIA's spies face up to today's seminal trend in the collection of human intelligence—the role of technology. It would also help them face up to the agency's mission in the post-Cold War era—and, unhappily, the era of the traitor, Aldrich Ames.

In the last 20 years, the role of the technical systems—the electronic eavesdroppers and photographers—has so burgeoned that

Stansfield Turner, a retired admiral and director of central intelligence from 1977 to 1981, is a professor at the University of Maryland's graduate School of Public Affairs.

the role of human intelligence has been heavily affected. It would, for instance, be irresponsible to risk a human agent's life to purloin information that could be obtained from a satellite photograph at virtually no risk.

This means that human intelligence has become a gap-filler rather than a primary source. Human intelligence can be very important in this different role, but we should be careful about accepting the truism that human intelligence has a unique contribution to make in discerning the intentions of other people. In fact, *all* systems for collecting intelligence discern intentions. Some exam-



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROB SHEPPERSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

pies:

- In 1979, satellite photography detected Soviet tanks and troops massing on the border of Afghanistan. We were confident enough that this was indicative of an intent to invade that President Carter warned the Soviets against doing so.

- In 1986, satellite photography of the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon disclosed a mock-up of the defenses in front of our embassy in Beirut, along with evidence that trucks had been practicing maneuvering through those defenses. A short time later the embassy was attacked by a truck bomb. Unfortunately the photo interpreters failed to recognize what they had until after the fact. But what the terrorists intended had been clearly visible in advance.

- In 1986, electronic intercepts determined that the Libyan government was communicating with its embassy in West Berlin about a forthcoming bombing of a discotheque. We used that evidence to try to ward off the

bombing, but were unable to locate the right discotheque in time. A few days after the bombing, Ronald Reagan ordered air attacks on Libya.

It would have been nice to know for sure that the Soviets were going to invade Afghanistan; that there really was going to be a bombing of our embassy in Beirut—and when it was planned; and which German discotheque was targeted.

Advocates of human intelligence would contend that having an agent in the enemy camp is the best way to learn about such matters. Yet if there were a choice between an agent's report and an electronic intercept that gave the order to commence the invasion or do the bombing, most intelligence officers would prefer the intercept as being of more certain veracity. More than that, the claim that human agents could have pinpointed events like the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait are simply exaggerations of what is remotely possible.

Human agents are often useful in providing details about military equipment, the

plans of terrorists or tomorrow's negotiating position of a foreign country's emissary. It is very unlikely, though, that we will penetrate the upper echelons of any moderately sophisticated government. So the argument for enhanced human intelligence is generally juxtaposing what you can obtain from technical systems and what you cannot obtain from human ones. Today we'd love to have an agent inside the upper echelons of the North Korean political apparatus. The odds of pen-

etrating such a secretive and ruthless government, however, are very slim.

We need only look at the Ames case to learn something of the quality of our human spying against major powers. For most of his career, Ames was out recruiting foreign agents to give us information. When he was working the other side of the street for the Soviets, he consistently engaged in tell-tale behavior—including lavish spending. If he was this careless as our spy, the likelihood that he recruited anyone of value is slim. Furthermore, how do we know whether he was an aberration or a norm?

Beyond that, between Ames and a traitor who preceded him, Lee Howard, nearly all of our operations in Moscow for the past 10 years or so were compromised. We've also had indications from intelligence files in East Germany that many of our agents there were really working for Stasi; and there has been evidence that many of the people we had in Castro's camp were on his payroll too. Overall, then, the Ames affair gives us a rather dismal appraisal of both our counterintelligence and our human intelligence capabilities today.

To be sure, not all the CIA's problems are on the spying side. Analysts have missed a lot of important events in the last several decades: the fall of the shah; the collapse of autocratic regimes in South Korea and the Philippines; the nature of the quagmire in Lebanon, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Whether these shortcomings were a result of not having collected the right information, or of having failed to properly assess the information we had, is difficult to know. In my view it is more likely to be the latter, as many of the signs in all of these cases were visible on the open horizon.

The intelligence community, meanwhile, is still coming to terms with the end of the Cold War—and its effect on intelligence gathering. In an era when we are on friendly terms with all but a handful of nations, it can be very embarrassing to be caught with your human agent's hands in your friend's cookie jar. Witness how disturbed the American public was at the revelation that the Russians were operating Aldrich Ames as an agent in our camp. We have reached a point

at which chiefs of intelligence and even chiefs of state will weigh very carefully whether the information to be obtained is worth the risk of disturbing a friendly relationship. We will certainly no longer conduct fishing expeditions with human agents; we will have to know precisely what we are looking for.

Which raises still another problem with human spying: that it is extremely difficult to target human agents very specifically. Put another way, if you want information about missile systems, you need a physicist to do your recruiting. The probability that you will have the right expertise on the scene and that there will be some expert on the other side who is willing to be recruited into treason is likely to be low.

The secret to collecting good intelligence today, then, is to meld the technical and human systems so as to play to the strengths that are most appropriate for a particular problem. The clues that one system obtains

may be just what is needed to zero in on another. This means that it is preferable to have the CIA human spying element stand in a cluster with the NSA and the NRO. (There would be a parallel cluster of the CIA's analytic branch, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research and the various analytic organizations of the Department of Defense.) The cluster of collection agencies would be directed by the same individual, reporting directly to the director of central intelligence.

An arrangement in which the three principal collection agencies would be grouped together under single management would require a major change in the organization of our intelligence community. The director of central intelligence (DCI) theoretically has authority to coordinate all collection efforts today, but as a practical matter the NSA and NRO are driven by the secretary of defense, who appoints the key personnel. This is an appropriate time to change that arrangement since it is very clear that our intelligence must focus more than ever on national interests, not just military ones. Only the DCI can represent those interests.

There is a final benefit of splitting CIA analysis from spying—namely in the field of counterintelligence, uncovering spies in our midst, like Aldrich Ames. The Ames case should remind us that we deliberately expose our spying officers to individuals who may tempt them.

This is not to say that analysts are never tempted and cannot be suborned, but that the probabilities are higher with spies. This argues for promoting a special culture in the CIA's spy organization.

The people around Ames, it appears,

failed to pay sufficient attention to indicators that there was something unusual going on in his life (the Jaguar, purchasing a \$500,000 house for cash). It is never easy to report such indicators. It can be dangerous, or at the least embarrassing, and there is little to be gained for the individual.

We need to encourage that kind of alertness in analytic as well as spying organizations, but it is more needed in the latter. And it is easier to inculcate in a small organization than a large one. For instance, there needs to be some person to whom an individual can report suspicions with assurance of anonymity. Developing that kind of confidence in a large bureaucracy is not easy.

Under present laws and regulations it is impossible to go very far in these directions because we have constructed barriers against intruding into the privacy of individuals. Privacy is certainly worth respecting. But if we feel the needs of secrecy in intelligence override privacy, we should start by intruding into a separate CIA spy organization, but not into the analytic one. Splitting the agency in two may make it possible to establish a satisfactory counterintelligence culture in the area where it is most needed.

The Ames tragedy should spur us into reshaping our intelligence process and at the same time into careful examination of the fundamental premises and techniques of that process. Simply dismembering the CIA will not do it. The name on the door may change, but the phoenix will just rise from the ashes.