

Carter Criticizes Quality of U.S.

By Robert C. Toth
Los Angeles Times

President Carter, declaring himself "not satisfied" with U.S. political intelligence that failed to warn of the turmoil in Iran, has ordered his three top national security aides to improve the quality of intelligence and its analysis reaching his desk "as soon as possible."

Beyond the immediate case of Iran, the larger issue behind the president's unprecedented criticism is whether the intelligence failure was isolated or was a dangerous example of the sad

state of the Central Intelligence Agency today.

The latter, if true, would have implications critical to U.S. national security. The CIA reportedly has been demoralized by scandal, personnel firings, and five directors in as many years.

Carter's handwritten directive, dated Nov. 11, went to Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance, national security affairs adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, and central intelligence director Stansfield Turner. But implicitly, its criticism was aimed mainly at Turner who, as CIA director, has primary responsi-

bility, as well as the money and manpower, for political intelligence collection and analysis.

It was a top-secret, 23-page CIA assessment of the Iranian situation in mid-August that explained the sanguine attitude of the U.S. government — now so embarrassing to the White House — toward events in that key oil-producing nation until two weeks ago.

Among the CIA's conclusions, made well after the rioting had begun there, was that "Iran is not in a revolutionary or even pre-revolutionary situation."

Intelligence Abroad

"Those who are in opposition, both violent and nonviolent, do not have the capability to be more than troublesome," the CIA document said. "There is dissatisfaction with the shah's tight control of the political process, but this does not threaten the government," was another conclusion.

(Official sources described the mid-August CIA assessment as a draft national intelligence estimate that was circulated within the government but not given final approval. No official national intelligence estimate on Iran has been published in recent months, the sources said.)

These assessments were obviously 180 degrees wrong. Criticism in hindsight may seem unfair, but there were at least several scholars and private business consultants who in August and even earlier warned of the impending chaos in Iran.

"In February, it was clear things were getting out of hand," one such consultant said in an interview this week. "The upper classes were taking money out of the country. But our embassy there insisted there would be no trouble.

"In August, it was far worse," he said. See INTELLIGENCE, A7, Col. 1

Saturday, November 25, 1978

THE WASHINGTON POST

INTELLIGENCE, From A1

continued. "Senior civil servants told me openly the shah must go, and were saying it in groups, not just singly. But our people were just taking handouts from the Iranian court and listening only to the SAVAK (Iranian secret police)," the consultant complained.

These warnings are said to have reached Brzezinski's ears, but he either chose to accept the CIA assessment or was unable to challenge it. But a more important point is that astute private observers were reaching conclusions opposite those from the CIA with the expenditure of far less money and without the services of 1,700 political analysts.

The State Department, with its huge embassy in Tehran and an intelligence and research division, also has been faulted. Its Iranian assessment did not differ significantly from the

CIA's and blame has been leveled at U.S. Ambassador William Sullivan for, among other things, his public assurance in June that the spreading riots were no cause for alarm.

Apparently the embassy had little contact with religious and student groups in Iran. Such infiltration is primarily the work of the CIA as is the job of providing overall national intelligence estimates of the army critical areas of the world.

"We say publicly that, 'There is no evidence the Soviets are exploiting the situation in Iran,'" complained one knowledgeable source. "But we have no real reason for saying that if we have no sources inside the communist party or in the religious or student groups there."

Some officials believe that if the CIA's assessments of mid-August or earlier had been different, the admin-

istration could have counseled a go-slow policy to the shah on expanding civil liberties.

These officials contend that the release of political prisoners and the promise of free elections by the shah, partly in accord with President Carter's human rights policies, contributed to the undoing of the civilian government and the imposition of martial law in Iran.

White House criticism of CIA performance has been chronic through several administrations. Carter administration dissatisfaction dates at least to the start of this year, when Brzezinski sent Turner a long memo complaining about the quality of the political intelligence coming out of the agency.

The several-page-long document was a general critique of the agency's political intelligence collection and as-

document which the White House got... as well as Arsenauki's views on the changing demands on intelligence and his suggestions for different techniques to meet the new demands.

President Carter... considered likely...

Turner's response and... it was said, however, that Turner pointedly told Carter that he had made no...

the president's sharp note of... addressed to the three by their nicknames (Cy, Zbig and Stan), was thus not only his first angry note on intelligence failures, but it also burst what was called Turner's complacency about his personal rapport

with the president based on the fact that they were classmates at the U.S. Naval Academy.

About three sentences long, Carter's note began by stating: "I am not satisfied with the quality of political intelligence gathered by the three."

He then directed the three men to sit down together and jointly recommend a specific program to improve the quality of the intelligence gathered

and its analysis "as soon as possible."

Requests to interview Turner, and the head of the CIA's political analysis division, Robert R. Bowie, were rejected by CIA spokesman Herbert E. Hottel.

The director does not want to discuss the matter in public at this time, Hottel said. "It was a multiple-address thing, and if there's any discussion, it should come out of the White House."