

# CIA Report On Openness Classified Secret

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When CIA Director Robert M. Gates publicly promised "a greater openness and sense of public responsibility" at the intelligence agency a few weeks ago, he was acting on the recommendations of a special task force that had studied ways to make the agency more visible, credible and responsive to the outside world.

But when the 15-page "Task Force Report on Greater CIA Openness" was submitted to Gates Dec. 20, it was stamped "Secret," a classification formally reserved for information "the unauthorized disclosure of which reasonably could be expected to cause serious damage to the national security."

CIA officials refused to disclose any of the report, even in the wake of Gates's Feb. 21 speech. "An internal document," an agency spokesman told a reporter that day. "We determined [it] must be withheld in its entirety," the agency informed the American Civil Liberties Union's Center for National Security Studies about two weeks later in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Now, after public scolding at a House hearing, Gates has approved declassification of almost the entire report as well as his five-page decision directive, dated Jan. 6, and sent them to one of the scolders, Rep. Lee H. Hamilton (D-Ind.), former chairman of the House intelligence committee.

Much of the task force's report simply mirrors, albeit with more detail, what Gates announced pub-

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licy: initiatives to declassify historical records, greater accessibility to the press on part of agency officials, expanded contacts with public audiences and colleges and universities. It is difficult to discern anything that would do "serious damage to the national security."

There are, however, some items that might be considered embarrassing. For instance, the report shows that despite agreement within the agency and outside it on the need for more openness, the CIA's public affairs office, expected to be a mainstay of the new look, is being forced to cut its budget by a third.

"We recognize that a program of increased openness will require commitment of additional resources, not only for PAO [the public affairs office] but for other parts of the agency," the report said.

The task force, headed by then-CIA public affairs director Joseph DeTrani, also touted what it saw as the accomplishments of the agency's existing media program.

"PAO now has relationships with reporters from every major wire service, newspaper, news weekly and television network in the nation," the report said. "This has helped us turn some 'intelligence failure' stories into 'intelligence success' stories, and it has contributed to the accuracy of countless others."

In many instances, the report continued, "we have persuaded reporters to postpone, change, hold or even scrap stories that could have adversely affected national security interests or jeopardized sources and methods."

Gates rejected some of the task force recommendations, including a proposal that the public affairs office give unclassified background briefings to reporters "when there is a major international event" such as the Persian Gulf War.

The CIA director said he was "inclined to support" a plan to declassify records on specific events, "particularly those which are repeatedly the subject of false allegations, such as the 1948 Italian elections, 1953 Iranian coup, 1954 Guatemalan

coup, 1958 Indonesian coup and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962."

The CIA had been adamant about keeping the report under wraps as recently as March 18, when the new PAO director, Gary Foster, was questioned about it by House Government Operations Committee Chairman John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.) at a hearing on government secrecy.

Foster said that people whose names are classified were mentioned in the report. He said some portions might not be classified, "but taken out of context, they wouldn't mean much to anybody." As it turned out, only the names were excised from the report and decision directive that Gates sent Hamilton April 13, the same day a column Hamilton wrote on "The Cost of Too Much Secrecy" appeared in *The Washington Post*.

"It's a step in the right direction for the agency and I applaud that," Hamilton said. But Leslie Harris, Washington ACLU legislative director, called it "disappointing."

"It reads like an internal discussion of how we can get people to like us," Harris said. "It doesn't call for a

serious look at what secrecy is really necessary now that the Cold War is over."

The names of the members of the task force, including DeTrani, were deleted. And so were the names of journalists, businessmen, academics and others who, the report said, "shared their views on CIA openness with the task force."

That list presumably includes Washington Post executive editor Leonard Downie Jr. and other Post editors whom DeTrani consulted last fall on a visit to the newspaper.

CIA spokesman Peter Earnest said the names of those the CIA excised were blacked out under FOIA provisions permitting secrecy for "deliberative" materials and for the agency's "sources and methods."

"I'm not a CIA 'source,'" Downie said. "They visited us quite openly. We wanted to tell them how they could tell us more about what they do. It sounded as if they were interested in being more open and in finding ways of making the CIA more accessible to us so we could cover them better."