

Blinding a giant

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NEW YORK — Because the subject matter is of such vital importance to all Americans, today's column is being turned over entirely to extracts from a remarkable article appearing in the current report of the United States Strategic Institute — a prestigious, non-profit, non-partisan organization in Washington established to promote study of national security problems.

The 17-page article by Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, who retired this year from his latest hush-hush post as director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, is entitled "U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads." It is a sobering document that really should be read in full. My hope is that the necessarily brief extracts here still will be enlightening and constructive.

Gen. Graham's words now take over, as follows:



No intelligence officer, civilian or military, can

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view with equanimity the damage done in the past year to U.S. intelligence. Congressional investigations, sensational media treatment and 'insider' exposes have combined to paint U.S. intelligence agencies as generally evil and sinister, at best inept and often ridiculous.

The damage done is enormous, though hard to quantify publicly. Were intelligence agencies to try, they would only compound the damage. If they enumerate sources lost, they will lose more; if they spell out serious morale problems, morale will erode even further.

Intelligence of value to the U.S. is, by definition, information which other governments would prefer NOT to get into our hands. Thus, any source of information runs a certain risk of arousing the ire of another party if he provides it to U.S. intelligence agencies.

In some instances, the source runs the risk of losing his freedom or his life; in others he runs the risk of losing his contacts, his job, his business. Such sources of information, be they cooperating foreign intelligence services or private individuals, cannot but view with alarm the public exposure of U.S. intelligence activities.

their lives — if it seems politically acceptable to do so.

Sen. Church insisted on publishing his committee's findings on alleged CIA assassination attempts despite the strong and cogent pleas of William Colby that the naming of large numbers of CIA men and their contacts would put their lives and well-being in jeopardy — a warning that came tragically true in Greece, where a CIA man was assassinated.

What purpose was served by all this exposure? The basic findings were pretty dull reading. CIA, it turned out, never assassinated anyone. The closest they ever got was providing the means to anti-Castro Cubans.

As for Mr. Pike, he was very much interested in the story of one malcontent ex-CIA analyst who accused all intelligence men, military leaders and diplomats who failed to support his unique view of Viet Cong strength at Tet, 1968.

Although William Colby's testimony and mine belatedly but thoroughly disproved the wild accusations, no word was forthcoming from Pike. And there is little doubt that such behavior on the part of the congressional committees had a most deleterious effect on intelligence operations in general.

Both babbling bureaucracy and irresponsible press share the blame for the hemorrhage of leaks in the public media which have done such grave damage. But the solution is not to determine who killed Cock Robin; the solution is to make the laws of the land protecting

It is hard to overestimate the value of information obtained without remuneration from U.S. citizens who travel or work abroad and from friendly foreign nationals who, out of simple patriotism or sympathy to our country, provide information.

It also is hard to overestimate the future damage to our intelligence that will result from the new need for such people to weigh their cooperation tendencies against the possibility of their public identification with such 'wicked' organizations as the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency.

This ongoing and potential damage, coupled with that inflicted on the National Security Agency through exposure of its intercept capabilities and activities, provides ample reason for the despondency current in the intelligence community.

Sen. Frank Church and Rep. Otis Pike (heads of the congressional committees which have been probing and airing secrets of the nation's self-protection agencies) have made pious speeches about the continuing need for intelligence, but they seem unable to resist the urge to defame intelligence people — and endanger

its intelligence forces enforceable, and then enforce them.

The coming months, as Congress and the White House wrestle with problems of U.S. intelligence organization and rules of conduct, will be critical to the nation, and to the future of the Free World as a whole. Reformers must reform only that which MUST be reformed; reorganizers must reorganize only that which MUST be reorganized.

If we are not careful, we can so weaken U.S. intelligence that our country will resemble a blind giant groping its way through the dangers of the next decade.

And that's it — or as much as we have space for. Meanwhile, as a postscript, it seems obligatory for me to note that investigative reporting — the exposing of malfeasance, ineptitude or graft by public officials — is a fundamental duty of any good newspaper or other news media.

But revealing — purposefully in a bad light and with the most evil connotations — the sensitive operations of our country's top secret intelligence operations is something else again.

In my view it is not only a disservice to our country, but to journalism as well.