

Chicago Sun-Times 18 March 1973

# Bureaucratic battle shakes up the CIA

By Thomas B. Ross

Sun-Times Bureau

WASHINGTON — The bitterest bureaucratic battle in town — and one with immense implications for national security — is currently being waged in the supersecret executive suite of the Central Intelligence Agency.

It involves a move by the new director of the CIA, James R. Schlesinger, to shake up the Board of National Estimates, which produces the government's most important analyses of key crisis areas in the world.

The Board has historically taken a cautious, even dovish, position on international events. The Pentagon Papers showed that it consistently stated the most pessimistic view of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Its critics allege that it has a left-wing bias that makes it prone to underestimate Communist threats. Even its defenders concede that, other than on Vietnam, its record was been spotty.

President Nixon reportedly has been suspicious of the board from the outset, viewing it as dominated by liberal academics appointed in Democratic administrations. The President's national security adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, is said to have grown skeptical of its estimates, particularly after the board failed to predict the North Vietnamese offensive across the demilitarized zone last spring.

Although Kissinger denies it, others in the

White House insist that he forced the resignation of former CIA director Richard M. Helms because of his dissatisfaction with the agency's estimates.

When the President took Helms up on the mountain at Camp David late last year and told him his services were no longer required at the CIA, Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.), chairman of the CIA subcommittee, volunteered to lead a fight for his retention.

But Helms, advised that the White House was prepared to play a rough game of leak, decided to go quietly to Iran as ambassador.

Those who blame Kissinger for Helms' downfall think his strategy is to use Schlesinger to enlarge his own control over the Board of Estimates.

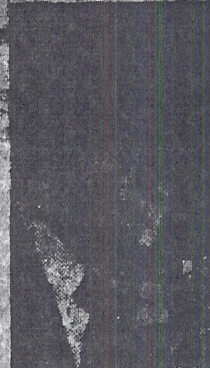
One of Schlesinger's first acts was to move in Maj. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, former chief estimator for the Defense Intelligence Agency, to supervise the CIA's estimates.

Graham's appointment has enraged the old boy net at the CIA for several reasons. First, he is a military man and the CIA was originally set up as a civilian agency to keep it from being tainted by the biases of the military services.

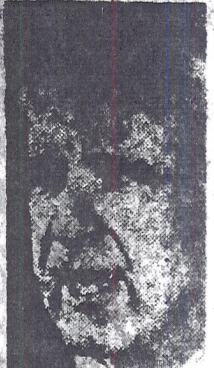
Secondly, he has been the most consistent critic of the CIA's estimates. And finally, he is alleged to have a bad prediction record of his own.

In 1969, his detractors say, he set forth an elaborate warning that the Soviet Union was on the verge of a preventive attack on China's nuclear installations before they could turn out operational weapons. He reportedly predicted that the attack would take place within six months but, despite a steady buildup along China's northern border, the Russians have still not made a move.

Nevertheless, Graham has gained favor at the White House, evidently because his warnings have proved useful in Mr. Nixon's diplomacy toward China, which is thought to be



RICHARD M. HELMS



JAMES R. SCHLESINGER

seeking protection against the Russians.

At the root of the shakeup at the CIA is Mr. Nixon's desire to get more intelligence for less money. The CIA, the DIA and the other intelligence branches of the government together spend about \$6 billion a year. And the President is said to be disappointed in the slim yield for the big outlay.

Schlesinger, former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, is a management and budget expert who has been given broad authority by the President to take a firm grip on intelligence spending.

As director of Central Intelligence, Schlesinger is charged under the law with management not only of the CIA but of all the other intelligence offices. Most of the intelligence budget is spent in the Pentagon by the National Security Agency, for code-making and code-breaking, and by the Air Force, for the spy satellite program.

Ironically, Schlesinger has moved first against the intelligence division of the CIA, which has gained a generally good public reputation, while so far sparing the plans division, the so-called "department of dirty tricks" which has marred the image of the agency and the United States around the world.

Thomas H. Karamessines has been replaced as head of the plans division but largely for reasons of health. And his successor is another old boy, William E. Colby, a veteran agent in Southeast Asia.

By moving the Board of Estimates to the right while reinforcing the power of the old line operators, Mr. Nixon is giving the impression that he intends to rely on the CIA for covert power as he withdraws overt U.S. military forces from Vietnam and other countries.