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Colby and Semantics

To the Editor:

William Colby's Feb. 26 Op-Ed article, "After Investigating U.S. Intelligence," is surely a challenge to the intelligence of most Americans. Virtually the entire piece rests upon the existence and honorable behavior of an undefined someone or something he calls "intelligence." Only in the last line is the shift made to "the best intelligence service in the world."

If Mr. Colby means by "intelligence" those Government agencies which conduct spying, data-gathering and covert actions against foreign governments, the limited Congressional and public scrutiny he praises has already invalidated his claim. If, on the other hand, he is referring to the data gathered, the results of spying and the long-run outcomes of covert actions, his claim is hardly justified without a much fuller disclosure of intelligence agencies and their activities—at the least the release of the House Committee report.

In light of President Ford's recent initiatives to block forever the opportunity for accountability to anyone other than himself, Mr. Colby's suggestion that C.I.A. stand for "constitutional intelligence for America" is an utter debasement of both the U.S. Constitution and the English language. His efforts to capitalize on a purported swing of public opinion toward secrecy and national security are clearly based on an assumption of American unintelligence.

RICHARD K. SCHARF

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