

# Excerpts From Speech by Helms to Society of Newspaper Editors

Special to The New York Times  
WASHINGTON, April 14—  
Following are excerpts from  
an address by Richard Helms,  
Director of Central Intelligence,  
before the American  
Society of Newspaper Editors:

I welcome this opportunity  
to speak to you today about  
the place of an intelligence  
service in a democratic gov-  
ernment.

In doing so, I recognize  
that there is a paradox which  
I hope can be dispelled:

On the one hand, I can as-  
sure you that the quality of  
foreign intelligence available  
to the United States Govern-  
ment in 1971 is better than it  
has ever been before.

On the other hand, at a  
time when it seems to me to  
be self-evident that our Gov-  
ernment must be kept fully  
informed on foreign develop-  
ments, there is a persistent  
and growing body of criti-  
cism which questions the need  
and the propriety for a dem-  
ocratic society to have a Cen-  
tral Intelligence Agency.

I am referring to the as-  
sertions that the Central In-  
telligence Agency is an "in-  
visible government," a law  
unto itself, engaged in pro-  
vocative covert activities re-  
frainant to a democratic so-  
ciety and subject to no con-  
trols.

This is an outgrowth, I sup-  
pose, of an inherent Ameri-  
can distaste for the peace-  
time gathering of intelli-  
gence. Our mission, in the  
eyes of many thoughtful  
Americans, may appear to be  
in conflict with some of the  
traditions and ideals of our  
free society.

May I emphasize at this  
point that the statute [Na-  
tional Security Act of 1947]  
specifically forbids the Cen-  
tral Intelligence Agency to  
have any police, subpoena or  
law-enforcement powers, or  
any domestic security func-  
tions. I can assure you that  
except for the normal re-  
sponsibilities for protecting  
the physical security of our  
own personnel, our facilities,  
and our classified informa-

tion, we do not have any  
such powers and functions;  
we have never sought any;  
we do not exercise any. In  
short, we do not target on  
American citizens.

In matters directly affect-  
ing the security of the United  
States, the President and his  
National Security Council  
want what we call "na-  
tional" intelligence—evalua-  
tions which reflect the con-  
sidered and agreed judgment  
of all of the intelligence com-  
ponents of the United States  
Government. The production  
and dissemination of this  
national intelligence is the  
responsibility and the pri-  
mary function of the Central  
Intelligence Agency.

We not only have no stake  
in policy debates, but we can  
not and must not take sides.  
The role of intelligence in  
policy formulation is limited  
to providing facts—the agreed  
facts—and the whole known  
range of facts—relevant to the  
problem under consideration.

Our role extends to the es-  
timate function—the projec-  
tion of likely developments  
from the facts—but not to  
advocacy.

Ironically, our efforts to  
obtain foreign intelligence in  
this country have generated

some of the more virulent cri-  
ticism of the Central Intelli-  
gence Agency.

It is a fact that we have,  
as I said, no domestic secur-  
ity role, but if there is a  
chance that a private Amer-  
ican citizen traveling abroad  
has acquired foreign informa-  
tion that can be useful to the  
American policy-maker, we  
are certainly going to try to  
interview him.

If there is a competent  
young graduate student who  
is interested in working for  
the United States Govern-  
ment, we may well try to  
hire him.

The trouble is that to  
those who insist on seeing  
us as a pernicious and per-  
vasive secret government,  
our words "interview" and  
"hire" translate into suborn,  
subvert and seduce, or some-  
thing worse.

We use no compulsion. If  
a possible source of infor-  
mation does not want to talk  
to us, we go away quietly.  
If some student groups ob-  
ject to our recruiting on  
campus, we fall back to the  
nearest Federal office build-  
ing.

Similarly, we welcome  
the opportunity to place re-  
search contracts with the  
universities, but again, these  
are strictly voluntary.

And so I come to the  
fundamental question of re-  
conciling the security needs  
of an intelligence service  
with the basic principles of  
our democratic society. At  
the root of the problem is  
secrecy, because it is axio-  
matic that an intelligence  
service—whatever type of  
government it serves—must  
wrap itself in as much se-

crecy as possible in order to  
operate effectively.

If we disclose how much  
we know, the opposition is  
handed on a platter highly  
damaging indications of how  
and where we obtained the  
information in what way his  
security is vulnerable, and  
who may have helped us. He  
can seal off the breach in  
his defenses, roll up the  
agents, and shut off the flow  
of information.

I cannot give you an easy  
answer to the objections  
raised by those who consider  
intelligence work incompat-  
ible with democratic prin-  
ciples. The nation must to a  
degree take it on faith that  
we too are honorable men  
devoted to her service. I can  
assure you that we are, but  
I am precluded from dem-  
onstrating it to the public.

I can assure you that what  
I have asked you to take on  
faith, the elected officials of  
the United States Govern-  
ment watch over extensively,  
intensively and continuously.

Starting with the executive  
branch, the Central Intelli-  
gence Agency operates un-  
der the constant supervision  
and direction of the National  
Security Council. No signifi-  
cant foreign program of any  
kind is undertaken without  
the prior approval of an  
N.S.C. subcommittee, which  
includes representatives of  
the President, the Secretary  
of State and the Secretary of  
Defense.

In addition, we report pe-  
riodically and in detail on  
the whole range of foreign  
intelligence activities to the  
President's Foreign Intelli-  
gence Advisory Board, a  
group of men who have dis-

tinguished themselves in Gov-  
ernment, industry, education  
and the professions.

Our budget is gone over  
line for line by the Office  
of Management and Budget  
and by the appropriate com-  
mittees of the Congress as  
well.

There are elements of the  
Appropriations and Armed  
Services Committees in both  
the Senate and the House  
which—like the President's  
board—are told more about  
our activities and our opera-  
tions than is known to most  
of the personnel in our high-  
ly compartmented agency.

But how, in the end, we are  
to be supervised is for Con-  
gress itself to decide.

In short, the Central In-  
telligence Agency is not and  
cannot be its own master.

The same objectivity  
which makes us useful to  
our Government and our  
country leaves us uncomfort-  
ably aware of our ambiguous  
place in it. We may chafe  
under the criticism we do  
not answer, but we under-  
stand as well as anyone the  
difficulties and the contradic-  
tions of conducting foreign  
intelligence operations on be-  
half of a free society.

We are, after all, a part  
of this democracy, and we  
believe in it. We would not  
want to see our work distort  
its values and its principles.  
We propose to adapt intel-  
ligence to American society,  
not vice versa.

We believe, and I say this  
solemnly, that our work is  
necessary to permit this  
country to grow on in a fear-  
some world and to find its  
way into a better and more  
peaceful one.