

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

# Restructuring the CIA

The assassination last week in Athens of Richard S. Welch, the CIA chief in Greece, has strengthened the case of administration officials now lobbying hard for major restructuring of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), but President Ford has not yet made any decision.

Mr. Ford's own feelings about the CIA are to move cautiously, not rapidly, in any invention of new organizational structures for an agency that has been under constant and ruthless attack for more than one year.

He wants to point the direction of his plans for changing the CIA in his Jan. 19 state of the union message, but the details of any reorganization, major or minor, will come in a later and separate message to Congress. But while he studies a voluminous briefing book outlining the problems (which he took with him on his vacation in Vail), the political and bureaucratic debate is growing more heated around him, with major differences in approach that he must contend with.

The debate breaks down to a position for maximum change in the present CIA structure versus a position for minimum change, with Mr. Ford predictably leaning toward a middle position.

The maxi-change position: The fact that Welch, one of the CIA's most respected intelligence analysts, had little if anything to do with covert operations but still was murdered in Athens as "a CIA man" has strengthened the maxi-change advocates who want the name itself of the 27-year-old agency changed.

"We have to get rid of those three little letters, C-I-A," one long-time intelligence expert told us. "Sure, it's a cosmetic change, but the CIA won't ever overcome its totally unfair stigma as a government-

sanctioned international murder organization until it gets a new name."

Along with name-changing, this maxi-change position would split the agency into three more or less independent parts: intelligence collection and analysis, operating out of CIA headquarters in suburban Langley; covert operations (sometimes called the "department of dirty tricks"), removed from Langley to a new bureaucratic home that could give it genuine cover; and national estimates, which would provide the administration with regular estimates—based on the independent findings of both the analysts and the covert operations—of how other countries, particularly adversaries, may be expected to move.

Presiding over this new set-up, according to the maxi-changers, would be George Bush, the CIA director-designate. Working not out of CIA headquarters in Langley but in new offices, possibly the White House itself, with Cabinet rank.

One high official intimately connected with the manifold and still-worsening intelligence nightmare this country faces has now reluctantly come to favor a new organizational role for the new intelligence chief.

By moving out of the Langley headquarters, this official believes, Bush would be able to strengthen his oversight of beleaguered covert operations. Likewise, he could provide far more "rigorous and skeptical" questioning of the intelligence estimators than if they were at his elbow.

As it is today, CIA director William Colby—just as his predecessors—is tied into every intimate detail of the planning and carrying out of covert operations, and

therefore has a natural stake in defending them from outside criticism. The only exception to this in past CIA directors was John McCone, who intentionally divorced himself from most covert operations (but even so did virtually nothing to police or oversee the dirty tricks department).

Admittedly, the future of covert operations, such as the CIA's once-secret help for anti-Soviet factions in Angola, now hangs on a thin congressional thread. Nevertheless, if the decline of detente with the Soviet Union should continue, Congress might take a quite different view of covert operations in the future.

One other advantage of the maxi-change position, say advocates, is that it would free the intelligence chief for closer, overall supervision and involvement with the government's entire intelligence community, including the Defense Intelligence Agency, separate service intelligence units and the huge, super-secret National Security Agency (NSA), the nation's magic electronic eyes and ears.

To some old hands in the CIA, this maxi-change position goes much too far and might add a new, heavy layer of demoralization to the thoroughly demoralized CIA. They favor the mini-change position, leaving the CIA pretty much as is but accepting and even court-ing better oversight provisions both inside the CIA, through a strengthened inspector general, and in Congress.

Choosing the proper course for this country's vital intelligence service won't be easy for Gerald R. Ford, but few decisions he makes as President carry so high a responsibility for the country's future.