

# CIA Chief Defends Firing of Spies

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Central Intelligence Agency Director Stansfield Turner yesterday defended his controversial cutbacks in the agency's clandestine service while acknowledging that they have shaken morale.

"Clearly there is a morale problem when you ask 212 persons to leave," Turner told reporters on Capitol Hill, after a secret briefing for the Senate Intelligence Committee. "I feel like football coach with too many good players on the team."

Turner said he was "very disappointed" in former CIA officer Frank Snepp for his unauthorized account of the final period of the Vietnam war, a book called "Decent Interval" just published by Random House.

In the book, Snepp charges that the American withdrawal from South Vietnam in April, 1975, was a chaotic disaster brought on by major U.S. intelligence failures in Saigon and Washington.

Turner said Snepp had violated his written oath of secrecy as a CIA officer and also broken a personal promise to Turner to submit his manuscript for review. "He let me down," Turner said.

As for the substance of Snepp's allegations, Turner said that "in my view, Mr. Snepp was not in a position of sufficient authority to be a good judge of decisions made by the State Department, the Defense Department and the CIA in Washington and in Saigon."

Snepp, who spent five years in the CIA's Saigon station, had been the agency's principal analyst of North Vietnamese political affairs.

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