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For the Record

Eric Sevareid, on the CBS Evening News, commenting on the nomination of George Bush as CIA director:

The Senate's doubt about Mr. Bush's suitability springs from his career in party politics....A more real question is his toughness. The CIA requires a man with a touch of the ruthless, to keep the CIA activities within the bounds of common sense, but also to stand against the current crop of zealots, including some congressmen and their assistants who do not seem to care how badly this weapon for security is weakened in a rough world.

New supervisory monitoring machinery can be tried but it will not solve the dilemma of a democracy struggling short of war, but worldwide, with a totalitarian regime: The need for frequent secrecy versus the need of Congress and the public to know what is being done in the country's name. Solution is impossible, a better balance is not....

We've had CIA officials domestically breaking the domestic law in the name of some higher law of their own selection. We've had congressmen breaking solemn agreements with executives by leaking classified information in the name of higher laws of their selection. We've had journalists breaking their word on information received off the record by leaking it to other journalists....

And we've had much worse. We've had American zealots publishing the names of American intelligence personnel, which in this time of terrorists everywhere increases the risk of kidnappings and murder....To do this is to commit the moral equivalent of treason, treason to the very humanitarian principles the zealots think they are upholding. When these agents die—and they are not all American nationals by any means—they die as anonymously as they live. So we may never know.