C.I.A.: Maker of Policy, or Tool?

Survey Finds Widely Feared Agency Is Tightly Controlled

Following is the first of five articles on the Central Intelligence Agency. The articles are by a team of New York Times correspondents consisting of Tom Wicker, John W. Finney, Max Frankel, E. W. Kneworth and other members of the Times staff.

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 24—One day in 1960 an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency caught a plane in Tokyo, flew to Singapore and checked into a hotel room in time to receive a visitor. The agent plugged a lie detector into an overloaded electrical circuit and blew out the lights in the building.

In the investigation that followed, the agent and a C.I.A. colleague were arrested and jailed as American spies.

The result was an international incident that embarrassed an American Ambassador. It led an American Secretary of State to write a rare letter of apology to a foreign Chief of State.

Five years later that foreign leader was handed an opportunity to denounce the perfidy of all Americans and of the C.I.A. in particular, thus increasing the apprehension of his Oriental neighbors about the agency and enhancing his own political position and prospects for re-election.

Ultimately, the incident led the United States Government to tell a lie in public and then to admit the lie even more publicly.

The lie was no sooner disclosed than a world of questions began to open up about the C.I.A. and the United States Government for years:

1. Was this secret source, which was known to have overthrown governments and installed others, raised armies, staged an invasion of Cuba, spied and engaged in other clandestine and illicit activities, a C.I.A. agent?

2. Did it lie to or influence the political masters of the United States to such an extent that it really was an “invisible government” more powerful than the President?

3. Are these questions constant?

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The Central Intelligence Agency, which does not often appear in the news, made headlines overnight in recent days. The agency was found to have interceded in the slander trial of one of its agents in an effort to obtain his exoneration without explanation except that he had done its bidding in the interests of national security. And it was reported to have planted at least five agents among Michigan State University scholars engaged in a foreign aid project some years ago in Vietnam. Although the specific work of these agents and the circumstances of their employment are in dispute, reports of their activities have raised many questions about the purposes and methods of the C.I.A. and about its relationships with other parts of the Government and nongovernmental institutions. Even larger questions about control of the C.I.A. within the framework of a free government and about its role in foreign affairs are periodically brought up during the control of its supposed political masters.

Was it in fact damaging, while it sought to advance, the national interest? Could it spend huge sums for ransoms, bribes and subversion without check or regard for the consequences?

Did it lie to or influence the political leaders of the United States to such an extent that it really was an “invisible government” more powerful than the President?

These are questions constant...

To seek reliable answers to these questions; to sift, where possible, fact from fancy and theory from condition; to determine what real control of public policy and international relations are posed by the existence and role of the C.I.A., The New York Times has compiled information and opinions from informed Americans throughout the world.

It has obtained reports from 20 foreign correspondents and editors with recent service in more than 25 countries and from reporters in Washington who interviewed more than 50 key government officials, members of Congress and military officers.

This study, carried out over several months, disclosed, for instance, that the Singapore affair resulted not from a lack or political control or from reckless bidding for political advantage through the use of Pigs disaster in Cuba in 1961, these controls have been tightly exercised.

The consensus of those interviewed was that the critical favorites recur: controls that are effective and sufficient; it is really the will of the political officials who must exert control that is important and that has, most often been lacking.

Even when control is tight and effective, a more important question may concern the extent to which C.I.A. information and policy judgments affect political decisions in foreign affairs.

Whether or not political control is being exercised, the more serious questions is whether and to what extent the existence of an efficient C.I.A. causes the United States Government to rely too much on clandestine and illicit activities, back-alley tactics, subversion and what is known in official jargon as “dirty tricks.”

Finally, regardless of the facts, the C.I.A.’s reputation in the world is so horrendous and its role in events so exaggerated that it is becoming a burden on American foreign policy, rather than the secret weapon it was intended to be.

The Singapore incident, with its bizarre repercussions five years later, is an excellent lesson in how that has happened, although none of the fears of the critics are justified by the facts.
of the particular case.

Problem in Singapore

The ill-fated agent who blew out the lights from Tokyo to Singapore—only after a prolonged argument inside the C.I.A. in Singapore—was an agent in a strategic part of the world. The C.I.A., which had been forced out of the Malaysian Federation, was soon to get its independence from Britain and enter the Malaysian Federation. Should C.I.A. recruit some well-placed spies, or should it, as before, rely on MI-6, the British secret service, and on Britain’s ability to maintain good relations and good sources in Singapore?

Allen W. Dulles, then the C.I.A.’s director, decided to infiltrate the party with its own agents, to make sure that the British were sharing everything they knew. Although the decision was disputed, it is not uncommon in any intelligence service to bypass or double-check on an ally.

On Vice President Humphrey’s visit to Singapore, he was threatened with a bribe by one of the highest officials of the C.I.A., who had been routine fed a denial of wrongdoing by C.I.A. officials who did not know of the Russian apology, desperate to get a chance at the system. Mr. Lee then published Mr. Rusk’s letter of 1961 and threatened also to play some interesting tape recordings for the press.

Hastily, Washington confessed—no to the bribe offer, which it was discovered the C.I.A. cannot readily find, either for real, or to extract some interesting tape recordings for the press.

Acting on Orders

Errors of bureaucracy and mixups of channels can easily be found in the Singapore incident, but critics of the C.I.A. cannot easily find the charges so often raised about the agency—”control,” ”making policy” and ”undermining policy.”

The agent in Singapore was acting on direct orders from Washington. His superiors in the C.I.A. were acting within the directives of the President and the National Security Council. The mission was not contrary to American foreign policy, was not undertaken to change or subvert that policy, and was not dangerously fool-hardy. It was not much more than routine—and would not have been unusual in any intelligence service in the world.

Nevertheless, the Singapore incident—the details of which have been shorn in the C.I.A.’s enforced secrecy—added greatly to the rising tide of dark suspicion that many people throughout the world, including many in this country, harbor about the agency and its activities.

Senator Stephen M. Young, Democrat of Ohio, has proposed that a joint Senate-House committee oversee the C.I.A. because, ”wrapped in a cloak of secrecy, the C.I.A. has, in effect, been making foreign policy.”

Mayor Lindsay of New York, a Republican member of Congress, indicted the C.I.A. on the House floor for a long series of fiascos, including the most famous blunder in recent American history—the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

Nkrumah of Ghana and many other leaders have repeatedly insisted that behind the regular American government is an ”invisible government,” the C.I.A., threatening them all with infiltration, subversion and even war. Communist China and the Soviet Union sound this theme endlessly.

”The Invisible Government!” was the phrase applied to American intelligence agencies, and particularly the C.I.A., in a book of that title by David Wise and Thomas B. Ross. It was a best-seller in the United States and among many government officials abroad.

Subject of Humor

So prevalent is the C.I.A. reputation of making a joke of the world that even humorists have taken note of it. The New Yorker magazine last December printed a cartoon showing two natives of an unspecified country watching a volcano erupt. One native is saying to the other: ”The C.I.A. did it. Pass the word.”

In Southeast Asia, even the most rational leaders are said to be ready to believe anything about the C.I.A.

”Like Dorothy Parker and the things she said,” one observer notes, ”the C.I.A. gets credit or blame both for what it does and for many things it has not even thought of doing.”

Many earnest Americans, too, are bitter critics of the C.I.A.

Senator Eugene J. McCarthy, Democrat of Minnesota, has charged that the agency ”is making foreign policy and in so doing is assuming the roles of President and Congress.” He has introduced a proposal to create a special Foreign Relations subcommittee to make an ”all and complete” study of the effects of C.I.A. operations in United States foreign relations.

Former Senator Harry S. Truman, whose Administration established the C.I.A. in 1947, said in 1963 that by then he believed ”something about the way the C.I.A. has been functioning that is casting a shadow over our historic positions, and I feel that we need to correct it.”

Kennedy’s Bitterness

And President Kennedy, as the enormity of the Bay of Pigs disaster came home to him, said in one of the highest officials
of his Administration that he wanted "to splitter the C.I.A. in thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."

Even some who defend the C.I.A. warn that the world's suspicions are still at home and abroad, have impaired the Agency's effectiveness and therefore the nation's safety.

They are anxious to see the criticisms answered and the suspicions allayed, even if--in some cases--the agency should thus be exposed to domestic politics and to compromises of security.

"If the establishment of a Congressional committee with responsibility for intelligence would quiet public fears and restore public confidence in the C.I.A.," Mr. Dulles said in an interview, "then I now think it would be worth doing despite some of the problems it would cause the agency."

Because this view is shared in varying degrees by numerous friends of the C.I.A. and because its critics are virtually unanimous in calling for some "control," most students of the problem have looked to Congress for a remedy.

In the 19 years that the C.I.A. has been in existence, 156 resolutions for tighter Congressional control have been introduced, each with the same fate.

The statistic in itself is evidence of widespread uneasiness about the Agency. It has created little new knowledge about the agency.

For the truth is that despite the C.I.A.'s international reputation, few persons in or out of the American Government know much about its work, its organization, its supervision or its relationship to the other arms of the executive branch.

A former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for instance, had no idea how big the C.I.A. budget was. A Senator, experimenting in foreign affairs, proved, in an interview, to know very little about, but to fear very much, its operations.

Many critics do not know that virtually all C.I.A. expenditures must be authorized in advance—first by an Administration committee that includes some of the highest-ranking political officials and White House staff assistants, then by officials in the Bureau of the Budget, who have the power to rule out or reduce an expenditure.

They do not know that, instead of a blank check, the C.I.A. has an annual budget of a little more than $800-million—only one-sixth the $5-billion the Government spends on its overall intelligence effort. The National Security Agency, a cryptographic and code-breaking operation run by the Defense Department, and almost never questioned by outsiders, spends twice as much as the C.I.A.

The critics pay some regard to the fact that President Kennedy, after the most rigorous inquiry into the Agency's affairs, methods and problems after the Bay of Pigs, did not "splitter" it after all and did not recommend Congressional supervision.

They may be unaware that since then supervision of intelligence activities has been tightened. When President Eisenhower wrote a letter to all Ambassadors placing them in charge of all intelligence activities in their countries, he followed it with a secret letter specifically exempting the C.I.A. but when President Kennedy put the Ambassadors in command of all activities, he sent a secret letter specifically including the C.I.A. It stands in effect, but like all directives, variously interpreted.

Out of a Spy Novel

The critics, quick to point to the agency's published blunders and setbacks, are not mollified by its genuine achievements—its precise prediction of the date on which the Chinese Communists would explode a nuclear device; its fantastic world of electronic devices; its use of a spy, Oleg Penkovsky, to reach the Kremlin itself; its work in keeping the Congo out of Communist control; or the feat—straight from a spy novel—of arranging things so that when a C.I.A. plane, flown by Canadian, 'fumbled' and fell in Egypt, the "management consultant" who had an office next to the Arab leader and who was one of his principal advisers was a C.I.A. operative.

When the U-2 incident is mentioned by critics, as it always is, the emphasis is usually on the C.I.A.'s—and the Eisenhower Administration's—blunder in permitting Francis Gary Powers's flight over the Soviet Union in 1960. They have a scheduled summit conference. Not much is usually said of the inestimable intelligence value of the undisguised U-2 flights between 1955 and 1960 over the heartland of Russia.

And when critics frequently charge that C.I.A. operations contradict and sabotage official American policy, they may not know that the C.I.A. is often overruled in its policy judgments.

As an example, the C.I.A. strongly urged the Kennedy Administration to recognize the Egyptian-backed Yemeni regime and warned that President Nasser would not quickly pull his troops out of Yemen. Ambassador John Badeau thought otherwise. His advice was accepted, the republic was recognized, President Nasser's troops remained—and much military and political trouble followed that the C.I.A. had foreseen and the State Department had not.

Nor do critics always give the C.I.A. credit where it is due for its vital and daily work as an accurate and encyclopedic source of quick news, information, analysis and deduction about every-thing from a new police chief in Mozambique to an aid agreement between Communist China and Albania, from the state of President Sukarno's health to the meaning of Nikita S. Khrushchev fall from power.

Yet the critics who find indiscreet- ments are spectacular enough to explain the world's suspicions and fears of the C.I.A. and its operations.

A sorry episode in Asia in the early nineteen-fifties is a frequently cited example. C.I.A. agents gathered some 10,000 small arms and gold and arms and encouraged them to raid Communist China. One aim was to harass to a point where it might retaliate against Rome and thus force the Burmese to turn to the United States for protection.

Actually, few raids occurred, and the army became a troublesome and costly burden. The C.I.A. had enlisted the help of Gen. Pho Srijanad, the police chief of Thailand—and a leading narcotics dealer. The Nationalists, with the planes and gold furnished them by the agents, went into the opium business.

By the time the "anti-Communist" force could be disbanded, and the C.I.A. could wash its hands of it, Burma had renounced American aid.

Moreover, some of the Nationalist Chinese are still in northern Burma, years later, fomenting trouble and infuriating governments in that area, although they have never been supported by the C.I.A. or any American agency for a decade.

In 1958, a C.I.A.-sponsored operation involving South Vietnamese agents and Cambodian rebels was interpreted by Prince Sihanouk as an attempt to overthrow him. It failed but drove him farther down the road that ultimately led to his break in diplomatic relations with Washington.

Indonesian Venture

In Indonesia in the same year, against the advice of Presidential diplomats, the C.I.A. was authorized to fly in supplies from Taiwan and the Philippines to aid army officers rebelling against President Sukarno in Sumatra and Java. An American pilot was shot down on a bombing mission and released only at the insist-
turally enough, drew the obvious conclusions: how much of his fear and dislike of the United States can be traced to those days is hard to say.

In 1966, C.I.A. agents in Laos, disguised as "military advisers," stuffed ballot boxes and engineered local uprisings to help a handpicked strongman, Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, set up a "pro-American" government that was desired by President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

This operation--so much so that it stimulated Soviet intervention on the side of leftist Laotians, who counterattacked the Phoumi government. When the Kennedy Administration set out to reverse the policy of the Eisenhower Administration, it found the C.I.A. deeply committed to Phoumi Nosavan and needed two years of negotiations and threats to restore the neutral government of Prince Souvanna Phouma.

Pro-Communist Laotians, however, were never again driven from the border of North Vietnam, and it is through that region that Vietcong in South Vietnam have been supplied and equipped in their war to destroy still another C.I.A.-aided project, the non-Communist government.

Catalogue of Charges

It was the C.I.A. that built up Ngo Dinh Diem as the pro-American head of South Vietnam after the French, through Emperor Bao Dai, had found him a monarch in Belgium and brought him back to Saigon as Premier. And it was the C.I.A. that helped persuade the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations to ride out the Vietnamese storm with Diem--probably too long.

These recorded incidents not only have prompted much soul-searching about the influence of an instrument such as the C.I.A. on American policies but also have given the C.I.A. a reputation for deeds and misdeeds far beyond its real intentions and capacities.

Through spurious reports, gossip, misunderstandings, deep-seated fears and forgeries and falsifications, the agency has been accused of almost anything anyone wanted to accuse it of.

It has been accused of:

1. Plotting the assassination of Jawaharlal Nehru of India.
2. Provoking the 1965 war between India and Pakistan.
3. Engineering the "plot" that became the pretext for the murder of leading Indonesia generals last year.
4. Supporting the rightist army plots in Algeria.
5. Murdering Patrice Lumumba in the Congo.
6. Plotting the overthrow of President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.

All of these charges and many similar to them are fabrications, authoritative officials outside the C.I.A. insist.

The C.I.A.'s notoriety even enables some enemies to recover from their own mistakes. A former American official unconnected with the agency recalls that pro-Chinese elements in East Africa once circulated a document urging revolt against their government. When this inflammatory message backfired on its authors, they promptly accused it of being a C.I.A. forgery designed to discredit them--and some believed the falsehood.

Obvious Deduction

"Many other European African leaders are ready to take forgers' face value," one observer says, "because deep down they honestly fear the C.I.A. Its image in this part of the world couldn't be worse."

The image feeds on the rankness of its reputations as well as the wildest of stories--for the simple reason that the wildest of stories are not always false, and the C.I.A. is often involved and all too often obvious.

When an embassy subordinate in Lagos, Nigeria, known to be the C.I.A. station chief had a fancier house than the United States Ambassador, Nigerian made the obvious deduction about who was in charge.

When President Joao Goulart of Brazil fell from power in 1964 and C.I.A. men were accused of being among his most energetic opponents, exaggerated conclusions as to who had ousted him were natural.

It is not only abroad that such C.I.A. involvements--real or imaginary--have aroused dire fears and suspicions. Theodore C. Sorensen has written, for instance, that the Peace Corps in its early days strove manfully, and apparently successfully, to keep its ranks free of C.I.A. influence.

Other Government agencies, American newspapers and business concerns, charitable foundations, research institutions and universities have, in some cases, been as vigilant as Soviet agents in trying to protect themselves from C.I.A. penetration. They have not always been so successful as the Peace Corps.

Some of their fear has been misplaced; the C.I.A. is no longer so dependent on clandestine agents and other institutions' resources. But as in the case of its overseas reputation, its actual activities in the United States--for instance, its aid in financing a center for international studies at the Massachusett Institute of Technology--have made the fear of infiltration real to many scholars and businessmen.

The revelation that C.I.A. agents served among Michigan State University scholars in South Vietnam from 1955 to 1966 has contributed to the fear. The nature of the agents' work and the circumstances of their employment are in dispute, but their very involvement, even relatively long ago, has aroused concern that hundreds of scholars and charitable American efforts abroad will be tainted and hampered by the suspicions of other governments.

"Thus, if it is in the national interest and the national interest is worldwide, and the national interest is to keep the Cold War at a distance from the United States, the C.I.A. must be brought to heel."
Thus, while the survey left no
doubt that the C.I.A. operates
under strict forms of control, it
raised the more serious question
whether there was always the
substance of control.
In many ways, moreover,
public discussion has become
too centered on the question of
control. A more disturbing mat-
ter may be whether the nation
has allowed itself to go too far
in the grim and sometimes
deadly business of espionage
and secret operations.
One of the best-informed men
THE C.I.A.—GOOD, BAD OR OTHERWISE? Much discussed and criticized, the Central Intelligence Agency has not escaped humorous treatment either. Its detractors loudly condemn it, nearly everyone talks about it, but very few really understand it.