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

Survey Finds Widespread Fear of 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, Maz Frankel, E. W. Kenworthy 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, a 49-year-old American, was flown to Singapore and checked into a hotel room in time to receive a visitor. The agent plunged 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 inflamed London, not once but twice. It 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.

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 discredited than a world predisposed to suspicion of the C.I.A. and unaware of what really had happened in Singapore five years earlier began to repeat questions that have dogged the intelligence agency and the United States Government for years:

Was this secret body, which was known to have overthrown governments and installed others, raised armies, staged an invasion of Cuba, spied and planted agents in foreign embassies, doing what it pleased?

Were the claims of the C.I.A., the Central Intelligence Agency, and the American Government false? Were the agency's activities and those of the United States Government illegal? Were the actions of the agency intended to advance the national interest?

The Central Intelligence Agency, which does not often appear in the news, made headlines outside its own precincts 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 relationship to 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 in Congress among other governments. To provide background for these questions, and to determine what issues of public policy are posed by the agency's work, The New York Times has spent several months looking into its affairs. This series is the result.

In a public memorandum under discussion in the Senate and in closed session in the House, the Central Intelligence Agency, which does not often come under far more stringent political and budgetary controls than most of its critics know or concede, and the Senate's Intelligence Committee, are asked questions about the purposes and methods of the C.I.A., and about its relationship to 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 in Congress among other governments. To provide background for these questions, and to determine what issues of public policy are posed by the agency's work, The New York Times has spent several months looking into its affairs. This series is the result.

Pigs disaster in Cuba in 1961 was an excellent lesson in public policy and international relations. The disaster resulted not from a lack of control of the C.I.A., but from a stronger rein on the agency — a Congressional committee to oversee the C.I.A. and probably provide little more real control than the Senate Intelligence Committee, which has neither the time nor the facilities to oversee the C.I.A., or the budgetary authority to do so.

The consensus of those interviewed was that the C.I.A.'s reputation is so poor that in making this report, the agency's effect on the world is so horrendous and its effectiveness and actually shield it from its critics' view, it is really an "invisible government" more powerful than even the President.

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ly asked around the world. Some of them were raised again recently when it was disclosed that Michigan State University was the cover for some C.I.A. agents in South Vietnam during a multimillion-dollar technical assistance program the university conducted for the regime of the late President Ngo Dinh Diem.

Last week, it also became known that an Estonian refugee who was being sued for slander in a Federal District Court in Baltimore was resting his defense on the fact that the alleged slander had been committed in the course of his duties as a C.I.A. agent.

A Wide Examination

To seek reliable answers to these questions; to sift, where possible, fact from fancy and theory from condition; to determine what real effect 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 interviews with policymakers 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 persons, the Kong Kong 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 of political control or from recklessness in Washington, but from bad fortune and diplomatic blundering.

It found that the C.I.A., for all its fearsome reputation, is under far more stringent political and budgetary controls than most of its critics know or concede, and that since the Bay of Pigs disaster in Cuba in 1961, these controls have been tightly exercised.

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To seek reliable answers to
Problem in Singapore

The ill-fated agent who blew out the lights flew from Tokyo to Singapore only after a prolonged argument inside the C.I.A. headquarters. He was to establish himself for political reasons as much nearer to the Malaysian Federation and Premier Lee broke away from the C.I.A. to bring about a ransom.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk disclosed in 1961 that Washington had paid $3.3-million to the C.I.A. for the agent's freedom.

President Sukarno of Indonesia, Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia's Chief of State President Jono Kenyatta of Kenya, former President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and many other leaders have repeatedly insisted that behind the regular American government there 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 to the C.I.A. in a book of that title by David Wise and Thomas B. Ross. It was a best-seller.

Secret discussions—apparently by C.I.A. channels—were held about the possibility of buying the agents' freedom with increased American foreign aid, but Washington eventually decided Singapore's price was too high. The men were subsequently released.

Secret Service agents found at least three "bugs," or listening devices, hidden in his private quarters by one of his hosts.

The agent who flew from Tokyo to Singapore was on a recruiting mission, and he carried an instrument used by the C.I.A. on its own employees, intended to test the reliability of a local candidate for a spy's job.

When the machine shorted out the lights in the hotel, the visiting agent, the would-be spy and another C.I.A. man were discovered. They wound up in a Singapore jail. There they were reported to have been "tortured" for real, or at least to have been double-checked on by one of his hosts.

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of his Administration that he wanted "to splinter the C.I.A. in thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."

Even some who defend the C.I.A. admit that, in the wake of the U-2 incident, the Agency's most famous director—formerly a veteran intelligence officer—now fears that the cumulative effects of the public's lack of confidence and the Congressional supervision might cause the Agency to lose its effectiveness. 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." But if this view is shared by many of the Agency's most famous directors, it is also shared by its critics. The Agency is virtually unanalysed, except for its "control," and some of the problems it would cause the Agency.

"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, "the Agency's effectiveness and therefore the nation's safety would be worth doing despite some of the problems it would cause the Agency." Because this view is shared by many of the Agency's most famous directors, it is also shared by its critics. The Agency is virtually unanalysed, except for its "control," and some of the problems it would cause 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 experienced 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 expenditure. They do not know that, instead of a blank check, the C.I.A. has an annual budget of $500 million—only one-sixth the $3 billion the Government spends on its overall intelligence effort. The National Security Agency, a crypto- 
tographic 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 Agency is also aware of 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 "split it" after all and did not recommend Congressional supervision. The Agency 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 still stands after all, but like all directives, variously interpreted.

Out of a Spy Novel

The critics, quick to point to the Agency's publicized blunders and setbacks, do not mollify its genuine achievements—its prevention 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 into the Kremlin itself; its work in keeping the Congo out of Communist control; or the feat of arranging things so that when a C.I.A. consultant came to power 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 Pows's flight over the Soviet Union in 1960. Instead there was a scheduled summit conference. Not much is usually said of the inestimable intelligence value of the undetected U-2 flights between 1958 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 R. Cooke wrote a letter to President Nasser. It 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 fear that indiscretions 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 with gold and arms and encouraged them to raid Communist China.

One aim was to hand the Chinese Communists a point at which they might retaliate against Egyptian aid to the Burmese who turned to the United States for protection. Although, few raids occurred, and the army became a troublesome and costly burden. The C.I.A. had enlisted the help of Gen. Pho Sriyanon, 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, the C.I.A. could wash its hands of it, Burma had renounced American aid, and the United Nations and moved closer to Peking.

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 supported 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 representatives of the defeated Chinese Nationalists in the jungles of northwestern Burma, supplied them with gold and arms and encouraged them to raid Communist China.

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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 hand-picked 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 succeeded—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 regime of Prince Souvanna Phouma.

"Pro-Communist Laotians, however, were never again driven from the border of North Vietnam, and it is through that region, the Vietcong in South Vietnam have been supplied and supported 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 in a monastery cell 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 abroad and misgivings 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:

- Plotting the assassination of Jawaharlal Nehru of India.
- Provoking the 1966 war between India and Pakistan.
- "Engineering the "plot" that became the pretext for the murder of leading Indonesian generals last year.
- Supporting the rightist army plots in Algeria.
- Murdering Patrice Lumumba in the Congo.
- 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 connected with the agency recalls that pro-Chinese elements in East Africa once circulated a document urging revolt against white domination. When this inflammatory message backfired on its authors, they promptly accused the C.I.A. and said it was a C.I.A. forgery designed to discredit them—and some believed the falsehood.

Obvious Deduction

"Many otherwise rational African leaders are ready to take forgrculous face value," one observer says, "because deeply they honestly fear the C.I.A. Its images in this part of the world couldn't be worse."

The image feeds on the ranks of its agents as well as on 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 Joke Soverdor 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. Sorenson 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 diligent 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 own reputation, its actual activities in the United States—some substance, its aid in financing a center for international studies at the Massachus-sets 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 scholarly and charitable American efforts abroad will be tainted and hampered by the suspicions of other governments.

It is, in fact, a sign that sincere men to believe deeply that the C.I.A. must be brought "to heel" in the nation's own interest. Yet every well-informed official and former official has said knowledge of the C.I.A. and its activities who was interviewed confirmed what Secretary of State Rusk has said public ly that the C.I.A. "does not take actions unless the top policy leaders of the Government." The New York Times survey has no doubt that, whatever its mishandlings, blunders and misfortunes, whatever may have been the situation during its bumpy early days, during its over-hasty expansion in and after the Korean War, the agency acts today on its own but with the approval and under the control of the political leaders of the United States Government.

But that virtually undisputed fact raises in itself the central questions that emerge from the survey: What is control? And who guards the guards? For it is upon information provided by the C.I.A. that the nation's own interest. Yet every well-informed official and former official has said knowledge of the C.I.A. and its activities who was interviewed confirmed what Secretary of State Rusk has said publicly that the C.I.A. "does not take actions unless the top policy leaders of the Government." The New York Times survey has no doubt that, whatever its mishandlings, blunders and misfortunes, whatever may have been the situation during its bumpy early days, during its over-hasty expansion in and after the Korean War, the agency acts today on its own but with the approval and under the control of the political leaders of the United States Government.

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Action, If Not Success

It is the C.I.A., unlike the Defense Department with its service rivalries, budget concerns and political involvements, and unlike the State Department with its international diplomatic responsibilities and its vulnerability to criticism, that is free of all agencies to advocate its projects and press home its views; the C.I.A. can promise action, if not success.

And both the agency and those who must pass upon its plans are shielded by secrecy from the outside oversight and review under which virtually all other officials operate, at home
and abroad.
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

on this subject in Washington
described that business as “ugly,
mean and cruel.” The agency
loses men and no one ever hears
of them again, he said, and
when “we catch one of them”
(a. Soviet or other agent), it be-
comes necessary “to get every-
thing out of them and we do it
with no holds barred.”
Secretary Rusk has said pub-
licly that there is “a tough
struggle going on in the back
alleys all over the world.” “It’s
a tough one, it’s unpleasant, and
no one likes it, but that is not
a field which can be left entirely
the other side,” he said.
The back-alley struggle, he
concluded, is “a never-ending
war, and there’s no quarter
asked and none given.”

“Struggle for Freedom”
But that struggle, Mr. Rusk
insisted, is “part of the strug-
gle for freedom.”
No one seriously disputes that
the effort to gain intelligence
about real or potential enemies,
even about one’s friends, is a
vital part of any government’s
activities, particularly a govern-
ment so burdened with responsi-
bility as the United States Gov-
ernment in the 20th century.
But beyond their need for in-
formation, how far should the
political leaders of the United
States go in approving the clas-
destine violation of treaties and
borders, financing of coups, in-
fluencing of parties and govern-
ments, without tarnishing and
reducing those ideals of freedom
and self-government they pro-
claim to the world?
And how much of the secrecy
and autonomy necessary to car-
ry out such acts can or should
be tolerated by a free society?

There are no certain or easy
answers. But these questions
cannot even be discussed knowl-
edgeably on the basis of the few
glimpses—accidental or inten-
tional—that the public has so
far been given into the private
world of the C.I.A.

That world is both dull and
lurid, often at the same time.
A year ago, for instance, it
was reported that some of the
anti-Castro Cuban survivors of
the Bay of Pigs were flying in
combat in deepest, darkest Af-
rica. Any Madison Avenue pub-
lisher would recognize that as
right out of Ian Fleming and
James Bond.

But to the bookish and tweedy
men who labor in the pastoral
setting of the C.I.A.’s huge
building on the banks of the
Potomac River near Langley,
Va., the story was only a satis-
fying episode in the back-alley
version of “Struggle for Free-
dom.”

Tomorrow: Who and what
is the C.I.A.?
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.