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*International Public Information Clearinghouse*

TALKING POINTS for the Center for International Policy Seminar on Intelligence Reform  
"Secrecy and Accountability in U.S. Intelligence" by Mr. Steven Aftergood, 9 October 1996

Attachments: A. Sources and Methods: A Primer For Congressional Inquiry  
B. Testimony and Comments on Executive Order 12356  
C. "E3I: Ethics, Ecology, Evolution, and Intelligence"

1. Mr. Aftergood's paper is excellent, and I find nothing in the paper that is inaccurate or mis-directed. I endorse his four recommended steps to the future, and especially his second step, recognizing the public as a consumer of intelligence, except that I would modify that to simply recognize that 80% of what we consider intelligence--decision-support--is now either erroneously classified or not done at all, and this is the fundamental weakness of our national intelligence community.

2. What I would like to focus on here, as a complement to his excellent paper, is the flaws in the argument about "sources and methods" as a justification for secrecy and especially secrecy in the face of Congressional oversight. I am including as Attachment A a copy of the paper I wrote for the Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy which lays this out in detail. In brief, "sources and methods" are confusing five distinct aspects of intelligence operations which must be individually evaluated in order to arrive at a proper determination of whether secrecy is warranted: the source or method is only the first; the other four are the process within which the source or method is utilized; the context within which the source or method is employed; the objective toward which the source or method is applied; and the return on investment of the classified source or method when compared with equivalent investments in open sources and methods, my most recent area of emphasis. What I have found is that all too often, the source or method is being used in a way which reveals it to the opposition at the same time that it is concealed from Congress; it is diverting funds from more useful open source exploitation endeavors; it is being used against objectives for which open sources are far more useful; and it is providing a very negative return on investment overall, despite some very significant successes on occasion.

3. Attachment B is my earlier testimony, of 9 June 1993, the Presidential Inter-Agency Task Force on National Security Information. I think that you will find this a practical and detailed review of the costs of secrecy, and the false premises that surround much of the secrecy as it is practiced by our national intelligence community. I would emphasize that secrecy costs millions of dollars to maintain, and it has dramatically negative impacts on both informed judgement by those who really do need to know but are not cleared to know, and in exploiting opportunities for advantage and the development of wise initiatives by global players with no time or interest in false secrets.

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4. Attachment C is a copy of the article to which Mr. Aftergood refers in footnote 52, and the clearest statement of my commitment to a democratic intelligence community that harnesses the distributed intelligence of the Nation, and informs the people.

5. I would conclude by stressing five basics:

a. Nowhere is it written that intelligence must be classified. Intelligence is information that has been tailored to support a specific decision, just as information is data that has been collated and is of generic interest. Our Nation will be far stronger when we have an extended "virtual intelligence community" that encompasses our private sector and produces unclassified intelligence useful to policy-makers, commanders, business leaders, and the people themselves. Unclassified intelligence is at the heart of democratic consensus.

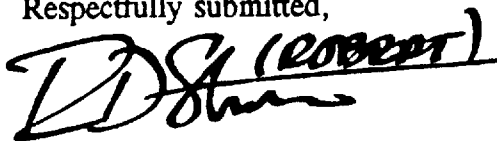
b. Secrecy today is both too easy to exercise by the existing bureaucracy, and it is also unenforceable. When the best employees violate the rules of secrecy in order to get their jobs done across organizational and other boundaries, we must recognize that we have a pathological system badly in need of major surgery.

c. The estimate about intelligence corruption and undiscovered spies is intriguing. I think we have far more internal spies, including "friendly spies", than the 1 in 10,000 estimate. My personal estimate, based on my own experience and the more documented corruption of police forces as being 1 in 25, is that we have at least 1 in 1,000 and perhaps-- in some high value areas like drug intelligence--1 in 250. I have long advocated a 30 day national counterintelligence amnesty as a means of rapidly "outing" a sufficient number of undiscovered spies, and in this manner radically reassessing our existing secrecy apparatus.

d. The focus on declassifying the budget down to the program level is timely, because the intelligence community priorities system is broken and unresponsive to real world challenges. We need to have a budget matrix of intelligence producers versus intelligence consumers where the intersecting number and the bottom line dollar figures actually reflect our priorities.

e. Finally, I would stress that history, and the declassification of past intelligence records, is the democratic way of vaccinating ourselves against future failures. We should pause to reflect on the findings of *The Very Best Men* and *Blond Ghost*, for they contain serious lessons for those of us who would craft a better balance between spies, satellites, and schoolboys as we enter the 21st Century.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R.D. Steele", with the name "Robert" written in parentheses above the signature.

Robert D. Steele  
President

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