

ABOLISH THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

By Ed O'Rourke

Since the beginning of the Central Intelligence Agency to George Tenet's departure, a top notch spy agency was always five years away. The enabling legislation poorly defined the agency's role. The Pentagon and the State Department never cooperated with the agency. Due to self-inflicted wounds, the agency always has been dysfunctional. Tim Weiner tells about this in *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*. He says, "This book is on the record – no anonymous sources, no blind quotations, no hearsay."

The CIA never knew what was going on in the Kremlin. All Soviet spies with important information were volunteers, not recruits. The CIA's Soviet Division betrayed almost all of them.

Covert operations, not mentioned in the National Security Act, became the driving force that garnered the most people, budget and power. Through the CIA's history, they sent thousands of foreign agents to their deaths. During the Korean War, the agency dropped thousands of Chinese and Koreans into North Korea or China, never to be heard from again. Most of the missions were not for intelligence but to supply nonexistent or fictitious resistance groups. The same thing happened for operations in Eastern Europe. The Soviets had penetrated the training camps.

Just about every major event in the Soviet Union and elsewhere was a total surprise to the CIA:

- On September 20, 1949, the CIA declared that the Soviet Union would not produce an atomic weapon for at least another four years. Three days later, President Truman announced that the Soviet Union exploded one.

- The CIA headquarters ignored reports of 300,000 Chinese troops gathering near the Korean border in 1950.
- The CIA had no clue that the Soviets would test their first hydrogen bomb in August 1953. The United States had no idea of the number of nuclear weapons the Soviet Union had.
- In late October, 1956, CIA director Allen Dulles told President Eisenhower that reports of a joint Israeli-British-French military plan to invade Egypt were absurd.
- The CIA did not predict the Tet offensive during the Vietnam War.
- The CIA predicted that the Soviets would not invade Afghanistan.
- India's successful atomic test on May 11, 1998 was a surprise to the CIA.
- The Soviet Union's collapse was a surprise. The agency was projecting increasing military strength. Those who read the German news magazine Der Spiegel, on the other hand, had seen this coming for several years.

Today, very few CIA officers speak or read Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu or Farsi - languages spoken by three billion people. Few officers knew the language, history and culture of the country they were researching. This has been part of the CIA's history. For example, in 1952, none of the more than 200 officers in Seoul spoke Korean.

The intelligence agencies allege that they do have successes. They say that people hear about their failures but the intelligence agencies do not want to talk about their successes because the information would be useful to the country's opponents. In fact, successes have been few. Senator Mike Mansfield, majority Senate leader from 1961 to early 1977, regularly asked his aides to furnish him with CIA success stories that he could use at the next budget session. They never could come up with any.

Instead of attempting to reform a dysfunctional agency, the best bet is to abolish the CIA and assign intelligence gathering to the State Department. Ask the Pentagon to carry out infrequent covert operations.

Main Source:

Weiner, Tim. Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA. Doubleday: New York, 2007, 702 pages