Taming the Rogue Elephant

David P Oakley, Kansas State University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/david_oakley/2/
The American Intelligence Journal (AIJ) is published by the National Military Intelligence Association (NMIA), a non-profit, non-political, professional association, supporting American intelligence professionals and the U.S. Intelligence Community, primarily through educational means. The Board of Directors is headed by Lieutenant General James A. Williams, USA (Ret), and the president of NMIA is Colonel Joe Keefe, USAF (Ret). NMIA membership includes active duty, former military and civil service intelligence personnel and U.S. citizens in industry, academia or other civil pursuits who are interested in being informed on aspects of intelligence. For a membership application, see the back page of this Journal.

Authors interested in submitting an article to the Journal are encouraged to send an inquiry – with a short description of the text – to the Editor by e-mail at <William.Spracher@dia.mil>. Articles and inquiries may also be submitted in hard copy to Editor, c/o NMIA, 256 Morris Creek Road, Cullen, Virginia 23934. Comments, suggestions and observations on the editorial content of the Journal are also welcome. Questions concerning subscriptions, advertising and distribution should be directed to the Production Manager at <Admin@nmia.org>.

The American Intelligence Journal is published semi-annually. Each issue runs about 100 pages and is distributed to key Government officials, members of Congress and their staffs, and university professors and libraries, as well as to NMIA members, Journal subscribers and contributors. Contributors include Intelligence Community leaders and professionals as well as academicians and others with interesting and informative perspectives. Back issues of the AIJ are available to members within the U.S. at the cost of $25, to non-members and international at $50.

Copyright NMIA. Reprint and copying by permission only.
Table of Contents

President's Message ...................................................................................................................................................................... 1

From the Editor's Desk ................................................................................................................................................................. 2

**In My View...**
Take Off the Training Wheels!
  by Prof. William M. Nolte, Ph.D. ............................................................................................................................................... 5

New Directions for NDIC: A Conversation with President A. Denis Clift ................................................................................. 7

The National Defense Intelligence College
  by Dr. Vance Skarstedt. ................................................................................................................................................ 13

Naval Intelligence Training: Contributing to Today's Fight While Shaping for the Future
  by Capt Elizabeth L. Train, USN. ............................................................................................................................................... 18

DIA's Analytic Competency--Based Training
  by Bruce Bennett .......................................................................................................................................................... 25

The Role of Innovation: Creating a Culture of Improvement
  by Adrian (Zeke) Wolfberg and Brian Pelley .............................................................................................................. 30

Mind the Gap: National Security and Resilience-A Tough Balancing Act
  by Richard Broome and William Gouveia ...................................................................................................................... 38

When the Americans Came to Europe
  by Dr. Peer Henrik Hansen .......................................................................................................................................... 42

Counterintelligence in Irregular Warfare: A Void in the Full-Spectrum Joint Force Capability
  by Aden Magee ............................................................................................................................................................ 54

Taming a Rogue Elephant?
  by David Oakley ........................................................................................................................................................... 61

Korean Reunification
  by Peter Humphrey ....................................................................................................................................................... 68

**Profiles in Intelligence...**
Oskar Reile: A Successful Spy, Who Failed
  by Dr. Kenneth Campbell ............................................................................................................................................ 75

**NMIA Bookshelf...**
*Network Centric Warfare*, reviewed by the Editor ........................................................................................................... 80
*Military Transformation, Past and Present*, reviewed by the Editor ................................................................................... 81
*Futures of War*, reviewed by the Editor ........................................................................................................................... 82
*Leave No Man Behind*, reviewed by the Editor ................................................................................................................ 83
*The U.S. Military and Human Rights Promotion: Lessons from Latin America*
  reviewed by COL William C. Spracher, USA (Ret)............................................................................................................. 84

**Books in Brief...**
Recent Publications from the NDIC Press
  by COL William C. Spracher, USA (Ret).......................................................................................................................... 86

*The opinions expressed in these articles are those of the authors alone. They do not reflect the official position of the U.S. government, nor of the National Military Intelligence Association, nor those of the organizations where the authors are employed.*
Taming the Rogue Elephant?
by David Oakley

In the mid-1970s, the Church (Senate) and Pike (House) Committees convened to investigate the activities of American intelligence organizations. The hearings resulted in little legislation that would restrict CIA’s ability to conduct its core missions of covert action and foreign intelligence collection. Despite negligible legal constraints, the publicity from the hearings did land a psychological blow on the organization. This blow increased the bureaucratic tendencies of the CIA and led to a more risk-averse culture all in an attempt to preserve the institution and avoid further congressional ire.

INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of Watergate, two separate Congressional committees convened to investigate the activities of American intelligence organizations domestically and overseas. The two committees, Church Committee (Senate) and Pike Committee (House), were established to investigate “whether intelligence activities threatened the rights of American citizens.” Since 1975, historians, policymakers, and intelligence professionals have debated the utility of the committees and the primary reason for their establishment.

Largely absent in this debate has been a discussion of the impact, some positive, but mostly negative, the committee hearings had on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The grandstanding by members of the legislative branch to curry favor in the jaundiced eyes of a public highly resentful and suspicious of government sent a resonating shock through the bowels of the CIA. Since the mid-1970s, the CIA has been battling the image of a “rogue elephant” operating beyond any official control or mandate. This image prevails despite the fact that its controversial activities were always at the behest of an executive branch and often under the straying eye of an non-responsive legislature. The wrath of the legislative branch unleashed during the committee hearings seared the image of a morally corrupt and illegitimate CIA in the eyes of a disturbed populace. The organization has suffered from the effects of this wrath ever since. Over time, the CIA reacted to the negative image by an increasing tendency toward risk aversion and through the self-imposition of overly restrictive regulations and policies.

The psychological impact on the CIA was not a result of greater scrutiny by an involved legislative branch. The negative impact was due to the sensationalized manner in which Congress finally assumed its oversight role. Instead of utilizing the opportunity to provide the CIA with adequate and responsive oversight, its respective chairmen turned the process into a public side-show to garner political points with a despondent public. Although an adequate oversight process did eventually result from the committee hearings, it could not heal the psychological damage inflicted by the proceedings.

Over the years, CIA has grown sensitive to these character assaults and has adapted by assuming lesser risk, growing more legalistic, and developing a more entrenched bureaucracy all in an attempt to ensure the survival of the institution. These survival measures have often been at the expense of operational capabilities and run counter to the interest of the organization and the nation.

PREVAILING ARGUMENTS

There are two dominant and distinct narratives concerning the early days of the agency and the effects of the Church and Pike Committees’ hearings on CIA operations. The first narrative describes the CIA as a rogue organization operating without oversight according to its own immoral principles. Supporters of this narrative believe the hearings were necessary to reign in an organization that was out of control. Loch Johnson, a lead staffer on the Church Committee, believed the hearings served the American people well by “bringing the intelligence nightmares to an end through the disinfecting sunlight of the media, the Ford Administration, and Congress.”

Johnson and individuals who share his view believe the investigations of the mid-1970s were positive for both the long-term health of our democracy and the strength of our intelligence organizations.

Supporters of the second narrative believe the hearings were largely an attempt by Congress to curry favor with a domestic audience annoyed with the excesses of a corrupt White House. These individuals believe intelligence operations were historically the purview of the executive branch and the hearings were largely a reaction to Vietnam and Watergate. These individuals believe Congress was
merely trying to exert influence in an area in which it did not belong nor previously ventured. According to this school of thought, the Church and Pike Committees’ hearings resulted in a neutering of our intelligence capabilities and the overturning of 200 years of Congressional deference to presidential control over foreign policy.²

The truth about the Church and Pike Committees resides somewhere in between these two narratives. While it is true that there was misconduct within the CIA, the indiscretions were at the direction of the President and not the work of a “rogue elephant” operating uncontained. Key historical leaders within the executive branch and outside the CIA freely admit the culpability of the nation’s chief executive in directing CIA operations.³ But while individuals like John and Robert Kennedy, who ordered more than 163 covert actions in three years (by comparison, Eisenhower ordered 170 in eight years), enjoy sainthood-like status in our history books, the individuals who carried out their orders are rarely accorded such honors.⁴ The individuals who participated in the Bay of Pigs or the numerous attempts on Castro’s life are often disparaged for actions they were ordered to conduct.

It is also a misperception that no Congressional oversight apparatus existed prior to the establishment of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI). Prior to 1976, the Congressional Armed Services Committees were responsible for oversight of CIA operations and the Congressional Appropriations Committees were responsible for CIA funding. These organizations had the ability to influence the CIA, but largely deferred to the executive branch in overseeing the CIA’s activities.

Congressional action established the CIA through the 1947 National Security Act and gave it its authority with the 1949 Central Intelligence Agency Act. Notably, the 1949 Act marks the beginning of Congressional neglect in CIA oversight. The 1949 CIA Act allowed the CIA to expend money without regard to the provisions of law and federal regulations relating to the expenditure of government funds. This bill allowed CIA funds to be hidden in other agencies’ accounts due to national security concerns and enabled the DCI to approve funds with little to no oversight.⁵ Few Congressmen at the time questioned the constitutionality of the 1949 CIA Act, believing that national security interests trumps the constitutional requirements for full disclosure of the budget. With the passing of this bill, Congress delegated its constitutional responsibility for budgetary oversight to the appropriations committees, which themselves did not have full visibility of the funds being allocated to the CIA.

In 1953, Mike Mansfield, a newly elected Senator from Montana, attempted to impose a more robust oversight structure on the CIA. Senator Mansfield’s proposal was a joint 18-member committee similar to the Joint Atomic Energy Committee in structure.⁶ Over the next three years, Senator Mansfield and his supporters tried to garner support to establish this new oversight structure. In the end, Senator Mansfield and his supporters failed due to non-support from the powerful heads of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees that were providing CIA oversight.

Influential men like Senator Richard Russell, the long-serving Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, believed oversight of the CIA was not needed, stating “It is difficult for me to foresee that increased staff scrutiny of CIA operations would result in either substantial savings or a significant increase in available intelligence information...If there is one agency of the government in which we must take some matters on faith, without a constant examination of its methods and sources, it is the CIA.”⁷

The desire to neglect Congress’ role in CIA oversight crossed party lines. Senator Leverett Saltonstall, a Republican from Massachusetts, defended DCI Dulles’ reluctance to answer subcommittee questions by stating “The difficulty in connection with asking questions and obtaining information is that we might obtain information which I personally would rather not have, unless it was essential for me as a Member of Congress to have it...It is not a question of reluctance on the part of CIA officials to speak to us. Instead, it is a question of our reluctance, if you will, to seek information and knowledge on subjects which I personally, as a Member of Congress and as a citizen, would rather not have.”⁸

Senator Mansfield was attempting to establish and codify a more stringent oversight process for CIA operations. The CIA under DCI Dulles was receptive to greater Congressional involvement and willing to accept a certain level of oversight.⁹ DCI Dulles understood the sensitive political nature of being a clandestine government organization embroiled in a political fight between the executive branch, leaders of the legislative branch, and other elected officials.¹⁰ DCI Dulles instinctively understood that, to ensure the longevity of the organization, Congress must be allowed to carryout a certain degree of its legally appointed responsibilities by providing oversight of the CIA. This does not imply that DCI Dulles wanted more intrusive review of CIA operations. If given the choice he would have preferred to operate absent any scrutiny. Dulles was fully aware of the political necessity of having a limited and reticent Congress involved in CIA oversight in order to ensure the preservation of the organization and limit the possibility of becoming a victim of political partisanship.
CONGRESS REACTS

In the aftermath of Watergate and the waning days of Vietnam, two important events focused Congress’ gaze on the CIA. The first event was Congressman Michael Harrington’s leaking of classified information regarding CIA involvement in the overthrow of Chilean President Salvador Allende. This politically motivated leak resulted in numerous newspaper articles. In response to the severe public outcry, Congress passed the Hughes-Ryan Act, which introduced greater oversight of the CIA. The Hughes-Ryan Act limited the CIA’s ability to conduct covert actions by requiring a presidential finding for all covert actions (previously only about 10-20% required presidential approval) and their review by six congressional committees (armed services, foreign affairs, and appropriations). The second event was the publication of a 1974 New York Times article by Seymour Hersh in which he described CIA involvement in domestic intelligence operations against the anti-war movement, domestic surveillance activities, assassination plots, and human experimentation (cite).11

Seymour Hersh’s New York Times article was largely based on records compiled by DCI James Schlesinger in 1973 and later aptly termed the “Family Jewels.” After learning of the Watergate burglary role of former CIA employees and Cuban exiles still on the CIA payroll, DCI Schlesinger encouraged CIA employees to come forward and report violations of federal law and CIA regulations. In June 2007, the remainder of the documents were declassified and subsequently released as part of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process.12

Both houses of Congress established investigatory committees in response to the public outcry and the prevailing political environment. The first of the congressional committees was the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities. This committee became known as the Church Committee, after the Committee Chairman Senator Frank Church. From 1975 to 1976, the Church Committee convened in order to answer whether or not intelligence activities “threatened the rights of American citizens.” The committee concerned itself with how to balance the need for national security with individual rights.

To answer this question, the committee focused on three areas: 1) intelligence collection, 2) intelligence dissemination, and 3) covert action. When the hearings began, Senator Church was contemplating a run for the White House in the 1976 Democratic primary. Senator Church’s political ambitions could explain the confrontational environment that surrounded the hearings. Early on, Senator Church described the CIA as “a rogue elephant rampaging out of control.”13 Comments like this and the introduction of supposed “assassination tools” set a dramatic tone for the hearings early on.14 The negative stigma of such comments remains to this day with various political luminaries citing the Church Committee as the beginning of the downfall of intelligence.

Because of the controversial nature of the Church Committee, the fact that little legislation resulted from the hearings is often overlooked. The Church Committee made various recommendations, including relieving the DCI of daily management of the CIA and focusing him entirely on the management of the Intelligence Community (a recommendation that was largely followed in the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act’s establishment of a Director of National Intelligence). The only truly legislative action that was a direct result of Church Committee recommendations was the creation of the SSCI and the HPSCI.15 Senate Resolution 400 and House Resolution 658 established the SSCI and HPSCI, respectively. These two committees would have sole purview over CIA operations and would authorize the annual appropriations for all “intelligence activities” of the government. The SSCI and HPSCI members would not be determined through the normal party caucus process, but rather Senate and House leaders would select their respective committee members.16

It can be argued that, by streamlining oversight responsibilities, these two committees increased the protection level of national security interests that were previously undone by the 1974 Hughes-Ryan Amendment. Not only did the Church Committee result in little legislation, the tone of the final report was largely complimentary in regard to CIA historical effectiveness. The report stated that “intelligence work has, at times, successfully prevented dangerous and abhorrent acts, such as bombings and foreign spying, and aided in the prosecution of those responsible for such acts.” In the end, the Church Committee found little evidence of a rogue organization operating beyond any political guidance. Instead it found an organization that was following the orders of the executive branch and largely serving the public interest.

Not to be outdone, the House also established a committee to review intelligence activity. The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence was originally referred to as the Nedzi Committee, named after its chairman Congressman Lucien Nedzi of Michigan. Representative Nedzi had previously served on the House Armed Services Subcommittee that provided CIA oversight. Controversy arose when it surfaced that Nedzi was previously informed by DCI Colby of the existence of the “Family Jewels.”
After this fact came to light, Nedzi was replaced by Congressman Otis Pike of Washington. Early on, Pike tried to focus the committee on more substantive issues regarding the effectiveness of the intelligence agencies in conducting their core missions. To assess the CIA’s performance, Representative Pike focused on three areas: 1) the cost of the intelligence agencies, 2) the intelligence agencies’ performance, and 3) the risk the intelligence agencies posed to Americans.

Although Representative Pike posed three legitimate questions, the Pike Committee hearings quickly turned into a stage upon which politically driven partisans could benefit from tarnishing and scapegoating executive branch intelligence organizations. Quickly, reports from the hearings began surfacing outside the confines of the Committee’s hearing rooms. At one point, the leaking became so pervasive that executive branch organizations declined to testify until Representative Pike could guarantee the secrecy of their testimony. Although the committee hearings resumed and a final report was provided to the entire House of Representatives, the report was never released. The House decided to withhold the report after portions of it were leaked by CBS Reporter Daniel Schorr to the Village Voice. In the end, the Pike Committee had no legislative impact on CIA operations.

INSTITUTIONAL PRESERVATION

If the Church and Pike Committees had limited legislative impact on the CIA, why are the two committees often cited for their negative effect on intelligence capabilities? While severe legislative restrictions are absent, the more lasting legacy, and one with deeper repercussions, is the psychological impact on the Agency’s culture and operations. Institutional Preservation Theory maintains that preserving an organization in as strong a position as possible—both now and in the future—is a central motive for an organization’s decision-makers. This preservation mindset can often play itself out in the self-imposition of restrictions that hinder the organization’s ability to conduct its mission, degradation in an organization’s willingness to accept risk, or in how the organization deals with those individuals viewed as controlling or influencing the future health or life span of an organization. CIA actions shortly preceding the Church and Pike Committee hearings, and a series of actions taken since, show how the CIA has adapted in order to preserve itself.

The decision by DCI Colby to release the “Family Jewels” documents to the Congressional oversight committees was not a sign of altruism, but an initial symptom of institutional preservation. Colby was a man who had served the majority of his life within the CIA and its predecessor the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). He was a man who was intimately aware of the importance of secrecy within an intelligence organization. Neither was Colby a political opportunist looking to garner sympathy or opportunity from his Congressional overseers. Colby understood that a lifetime in the CIA meant he was directly associated with the confessions outlined in the Family Jewels. Colby’s release of the documents was also very unpopular with many of his colleagues within the CIA and his actions sullied his reputation. Colby could have disposed of the documents and there was great likelihood that their contents would not surface for some time. Colby chose to release the documents because he fully realized that the CIA would not survive unless it came clean about its previous abuses. Colby’s actions leading up to the committee hearings and his decision to release the documents were purely based on institutional preservation.

Institutional preservation most notably shows itself in how an organization adapts to ensure long-term survival. In the aftermath of the Church and Pike Committee hearings, and the increased oversight of the organization, the CIA instituted procedures that handicapped its ability to conduct core missions.

Since the mid-1970s, the CIA has greatly increased its legal review procedures by adding approximately eighty attorneys to ensure its operations fit prescribed legal parameters. The large increase in staff attorneys is not the only sign of a growing concern among CIA employees about their exposure to litigation. The practice of purchasing private liability insurance has grown common among many CIA supervisors who are concerned their actions, no matter how genuine, could result in the loss of personal freedoms or private fortune. The perceived need to purchase liability insurance is telling of a work force that has lost trust in its ability to be protected.

Concern over the exaggeration of human rights abuses conceived during the Church and Pike hearings has resulted in growing restrictions placed on CIA’s ability to recruit sources with suspected human rights abuses. The application of Western Principles of human rights on foreign sources makes it difficult to recruit assets who have access to information of value. Usually individuals with access to information on terrorist organizations or advisors within the inter sanctum of a military junta have questionable backgrounds. These individuals are often suspected of human rights violations or, in the least, associated with individuals suspected of human rights abuses.

In the early 1990s, the Intelligence Oversight Board (which was established by Executive Order 11905 in 1976) asserted in one of its reports that the CIA did not pay sufficient attention to human rights abuses and needed to rectify this shortfall by
establishing the appropriate process within its asset validation system. DCI John Deutch reacted to this report by implementing stringent human rights policies in the Directorate of Operations.20 During this period, the CIA also continued to move from a flexible field-based organization, with officers overseas who were largely directed by Chiefs of Station (COS), to an organization that was largely headquarters-based and centrally directed. This new organization was less dynamic in nature and dependent on approvals from headquarters to conduct operations. The CIA took these measures to mitigate risks of rogue officers bringing shame on the organization. Along with this new management dynamic came greater scrutiny and bureaucratic hassle to get operations approved. This environment made acceptance of risk in operational decisions much less attractive.

Executive Order 11905 banned the practice of political assassination by agencies of the United States Government. Over time, the interpretation of this EO, and subsequent EOs covering assassinations, led the CIA to establish the “duty to warn” criteria. This duty to warn obligated CIA officers to inform individuals who were targets of assassination on the potential threat to their life. Even if the individual whose life was potentially threatened was a declared enemy of the United States, CIA officers were still obligated to report and process the threat accordingly. The fear of violating the ban on assassination attempts and the fear of the Agency being viewed as a “rogue elephant” was cited in the 9/11 Commission Report as a primary reason why the CIA did not execute a 1998 operation that might have captured Osama Bin Laden.21

The Church and Pike Committee hearings brought about the tradition of bringing CIA officers in front of Congress to testify on CIA operations. Often this testimony has resulted in the prosecution of CIA officers for following Executive Orders. These individuals are forced to pay hefty legal fees out-of-pocket to defend themselves. Although no individual should be above the law, the common practice of bringing CIA officers before legislative committees to testify on operations has a chilling effect on CIA officers’ willingness to conduct risky operations. The CIA is unlike any other government bureaucracy in that it must break foreign laws to conduct its missions. In addition, CIA officers are often asked to deal with unsavory characters that, unknown to them, might have violated American law. Officers constantly concerned that any action could become the topic of Congressional inquiry will naturally defer risk for greater safety.

In his 2005 book, At the Center of the Storm, former DCI George Tenet accurately and succinctly captures the prevailing fear of many CIA employees that originated after the mid-1970s Congressional hearings: “Mid- and senior-level officers in the Agency were haunted by the fear of being hauled before Congress or into court and asked to defend their actions. A succession of administrations would tell them that they were expected to take risks and be aggressive. But if something went wrong, Agency officials faced disgrace, dismissal, and financial ruin. Many of those willing to stick it out at CIA rushed to purchase their own ‘professional liability’ insurance. That helped, but the chilling effect of having to do so spread broadly through the organization.”22

The issue with oversight is not that it is conducted, but the manner in which it is conducted. Oversight of the CIA is often a knee-jerk reaction following large intelligence failures or legal violations. Congress is more than willing to provide adequate oversight of the Intelligence Community after events such as Watergate, Iran-Contra, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, or WMD in Iraq. For political expediency, Congress pulls forward CIA and thoroughly outlines its failures for the world to view. Absent large catastrophic events or political expediency, Congress provides negligible oversight.

The willy-nilly nature of Congressional oversight and the public manner in which Congressional committees berate the CIA have huge ramifications for the security of our nation. The CIA was lambasted for its estimation that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) existed in Iraq. The Congressional scolding severely affected the willingness of analysts to interpret unfinished intelligence products in order to provide definitive statements of likelihood. Instead, analysts resorted to providing broad, vague, and indeterminate statements that have little value for policymakers. This aversion to definitive statements as a result of the politicization of intelligence results in a degraded intelligence capability for our country.

Intelligence is a game of guessing and estimation. All the information is never available and officers seldom have access to the best sources. But intelligence does provide a helpful glimmer of light in an otherwise dark room, even if it sometimes leads us in the wrong direction. The key to intelligence is realizing its shortcomings, dangers, and accepting that in the end it is often no more than an educated guess. Most importantly, Congress has to accept the fact that intelligence failures will occur and when they do occur handle their investigations in a professionally responsible manner that brings less shame and blame on the CIA. When the CIA is utilized as a scapegoat for larger government failures, the organization tends to pull back into bureaucratic defilade to ensure its long-term survivability. This posture ill serves not only Congress, but the American people.
CONCLUSION

The Agency, like any organization, is concerned with its longevity and will adjust its behavior to assure long-term institutional survival. Where the CIA differs from other government bureaucracies in an open society is the nature of its core missions. As a clandestine organization operating within a democracy, the CIA is placed in a very precarious position. America prides itself as an open society in which the populace has access to decisions and actions made by its governmental leaders. Americans are guided by a strong belief in the primacy of the Constitution and the guarantees articulated in the Bill of Rights.

The CIA is an organization that operates in a gray zone and in many ways its existence is antithetical to the beliefs and natural inclinations of an open society. Its sources and methods must be hidden from public view and it cannot avoid breaking other nations’ laws while executing its core missions. This inherent nature makes the organization highly susceptible to overly heightened public mistrust in the politically tumultuous environment that is American politics. If an organization cannot openly defend itself against allegations of wrongdoing, it is highly susceptible to being scapegoated for failures or misdeeds that it did not originate.

While the CIA’s secretive nature is necessary, it also benefits the legislative and executive branches of government. If a policy decision fails or an unforeseen international disaster occurs, it is politically beneficial for both branches of government to blame the shortcomings on an organization that often cannot publicly defend itself. The constant blaming of an organization results in a culture reluctant to undertake the necessary risks to execute its mission. The organization retrenches and looks instead for ways to ensure its longevity, believing it is better to live and fight another day than to assume greater risks that would put its officers or the organization itself on the political chopping block.

The Church and Pike Committees’ psychological impact was far more lasting than most legislative actions have been. By showing that the CIA could be utilized as a scapegoat, Congress inadvertently began the process of turning to the Agency as a whipping post for policy failures. Prior to the Church and Pike Committees, the Agency was willing to accept huge risks in executing its missions because it believed that failures were beyond political partisanship. The actions of the Church and Pike Committees showed the Agency that it was not safe from partisanship and that any operation, no matter who directed it or whom it was directed against, could be pulled into the political arena if it was advantageous to do so.

The sensationalization of committee hearings only played into the public’s mistrust of the CIA and created an image of a rogue organization subverting American citizens’ rights. Left out of the discussion was the fact that the Agency was directed and funded by elected officials within the executive and legislative branches.

The Church and Pike Committees’ hearings were a transformational period in the history of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Congress provided little oversight in the nearly 30 years of CIA existence prior to the hearings, thus allowing CIA operations to be largely conducted at the whim of the executive branch. In the aftermath of Watergate and Vietnam, it became politically advantageous for Congress to assume its proper oversight role. Congressional acceptance of its oversight role was long overdue and in itself a positive evolution in CIA-Congress relations. The issue with the hearings was not that Congress was attempting to assert its constitutional authority over the CIA, but the public manner in which it decided to do so. Prior to the committee hearings, there was bipartisan effort to keep CIA operations beyond political ire. The hearings marked the first time in its history that CIA operations were officially before a public audience and its motives scrutinized by a previously complacent Congress.

The much publicized committee hearings resulted in negligible legislative restrictions placed on the CIA. Despite this fact, the hearings did have a long-term psychological impact on the Agency. The committee hearings showed the Agency it was not immune to partisan politics and its activities, no matter how sensitive, could become the topic of public debate.

Currently a Major in the United States Army, David Oakley serves as a strategist for the 1st Infantry Division. Previously he worked as a Staff Operations Officer in the Near East Division of the CIA’s National Clandestine Service and as a contractor for the National Counterterrorism Center’s Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning. Mr. Oakley is pursuing a PhD in Security Studies at Kansas State University; his research continues to examine the impact of Congressional action on the CIA up through 9/11 to the War on Terror. He can be reached at Oakley_david@hotmail.com

Notes
3 One executive branch official to state this case was Henry Kissinger. He wrote “The CIA did not deserve the opprobrium...
various investigations heaped on it. Most of its operations were designed to prevent radical forces from taking over countries considered important to American security and interests and where our adversaries had instruments of action not available to us. Not all were well designed, but all were approved and, in the most controversial cases, ordered by presidents of every Cold War administration, even when the paperwork was conducted to provide deniability.” Richard M. Helms, *A Look Over My Shoulder: A Life in the Central Intelligence Agency* (New York: Random House Books, 2003), xii.

5 David M. Barrett, *The CIA and Congress: The Untold Story from Truman to Kennedy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 40.
8 Snider, *The Agency and the Hill*, 16.
9 Ibid., 11.
10 DCI Dulles stated, “any public impression that the Congress exerts no power over CIA is quite mistaken. Control of funds gives a control over the scope of operations-how many people CIA can employ and how much it can do and to some extent what it can’t do.” Allen W. Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence: America’s Legendary SpyMaster on the Fundamentals of Intelligence Gathering for a Free World*” (Guilford: The Lyons Press, 2006), 262.

14 Helms, *A look over my shoulder*, 431.
22 George Tenet., *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 15.