

Gerald Ford and American Intelligence

by Dr. Dennis Casey

HQ AIA/HO

Kelly Air Force Base, Texas

How much do presidents know about intelligence activities? Which American presidents have made efficient use of intelligence information?

As you might suspect, American presidents in this century have taken a variety of approaches to intelligence.

The variety is as diversified as the personalities of those occupying the White House.

Gerald Ford stands as one who developed a very close association with American intelligence.

Before becoming president, Ford served as a member of the intelligence subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee from 1957 to 1965.

In this period, he took his assignment on the committee seriously and closely followed briefings presented by the Central Intelligence Agency.

He followed developments in IMINT and paid particular attention to SIGINT reports.

Indeed, Ford was one of the few on Capitol Hill to know of the early U-2 overflights of the Soviet Union.

When the CIA came under public scrutiny for its role in the ill-fated Bay of Pigs operation early in the Kennedy presidency, Ford defended Allen Dulles and the Agency. He felt the need for such an organization amounted to a political necessity.

When Ford became vice president in December 1973, William Colby recalled that the intelligence briefings provided to him by the CIA excluded nothing.

Unlike Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, Ford paid careful attention to the daily intelligence briefings and relied heavily on the interpretations of them by his staff, and by Secretary of

State Henry Kissinger, particularly. This close association with intelligence soon proved fortuitous.

On his second day in the White House in August 1974, President Ford found himself faced with having to make a decision on Project Jennifer.

The project involved an unprecedented attempt to raise a sunken Soviet submarine from a depth of 16,000 feet in the Pacific.

The potential cost of the operation could exceed 300 million dollars and prompt unfavorable review by the U.S. Congress.

If the operation using the "Glomar Explorer" was successful, the United States could gain valuable information about Soviet weapon systems.

Billionaire Howard Hughes owned the "Glomar Explorer," a vessel equipped with giant claws and designed to operate at great depths in the ocean. On August 11, 1974, President Ford authorized the operation to proceed.

He knew a Soviet trawler intended to monitor the entire salvage effort. He also knew that strong Soviet objections to the operation could well create an international incident with serious consequences.

As the Soviet sub, on its way to the surface, reached the level of 5,000 feet, it broke apart.

Despite this setback, the United States acquired two nuclear torpedoes and important data on the ship's technology. The salvage effort also came up with the nuclear weapons officer's journal.

The bodies of 30 Soviet sailors recovered from the sub received secret burials near Hawaii with full military honors.

Gerald Ford's first priority in stepping into the White House focused on rehabilitating the presidency in the aftermath of Richard Nixon's resignation.

On the day President Ford pardoned Richard Nixon, he found himself confronted with a major intelligence issue. On September 8, 1974, news leaked to the press about a major covert intelligence operation in Chile.

The New York Times denounced the White House and Congress for having deliberately lied to the press and to the American people.

In the first ever presidential defense of peacetime covert action, President Ford stated that, "...our government does take certain action in the intelligence field to help implement foreign policy and protect national security."

The president, however, implied in his remarks that American covert action had been intended to resist steps by the then-deposed Allende government to destroy opposition to his regime.

Domestic criticism over this issue evaporated as Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon became a major issue of debate in the press and elsewhere across America.

Soon after the brief, public flap over Chile, the role of the CIA became front-page news in the United States. A news story by journalist Seymour Hersh spelled out that the CIA ran illegal operations against the anti-war movement during the Nixon administration.

William Colby reported to the president late in December that the CIA had become involved in domestic surveillance in defiance of the National Security Act of 1947.

That act prohibited the CIA from carrying out internal security functions. The Nixon administration feared that foreign intelligence operatives were directing the anti-war movement.

This fear prompted the involvement. In all, the CIA had established nearly 10,000 files on American citizens including 14 past and present members of Congress. The response from Congress came quickly with the passage of the Hughes-Ryan amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act.

This required the president to state in writing that a covert action was in the security interests of the United States.

President Ford, realizing the seriousness of the issue, appointed a special commission headed by vice president Nelson Rockefeller.

The president asked the Rockefeller Commission to check into potential wrongdoing by the CIA. Speculation on this increased when *Time* reported that the CIA had enlisted Mafia enforcers to assassinate Cuban president Fidel Castro. For a second time, public indignation over real or suspected activities by intelligence organizations blurred under the shadow of another event, the fall of Saigon in April 1975.

In the first year of his presidency, Ford ended up defending publicly the

use of intelligence operations as necessary for the national security of the United States.

Incidentally, this defense brought to the attention of the American people the subject of intelligence and the role it could play, and often did, in American government.

Ford, a supporter and user of intelligence, had to produce its most vigorous defense at a time when public confidence in Washington had fallen to an unhealthy low. His staunch support of the American intelligence community attracted significant attention in a world still dominated by the forces of the Cold War. ■

salutes

MEDALS



Meritorious Service Medal

Master Sgt. Lee, Robert
Capt. Dees, Angela
Capt. Grenier, Kevin
Maj. Gramberg, Linda



Air Force Commendation Medal

Senior Airman Brooks, James Jr.
Senior Airman Sands, Warren
Staff Sgt. Bejger, David
Staff Sgt. Harrison, Alexander
Tech. Sgt. Slaughter, Tracy
Senior Master Sgt. Duck, Zachary
Capt. Coy, Steven
Capt. Parish, Gerald
Capt. Shurman, Mark
Maj. Kaminski, Michael
Lt. Col. Wise, James



Air Force Achievement Medal

Senior Airman Nettles, Shaneen
Staff Sgt. Deien, Josie
Staff Sgt. Stantiford, Patrick

AWARDS

Yearly

Reserves

Tech Sgt. Sandoval, Marchetta
Junior NCO

Master Sgt. Laboy, Efrain Jr.
Senior NCO

Capt. Layne, Steven
Company Grade Officer

Maj. Miller, Raymond
Field Grade Officer

Tech. Sgt. Carlos, Michelle
Contributor

Active Duty

Communications and Information Professionalism Award

3AXXX
Senior Airman King, Timothy
Airman

Staff Sgt. Reddic, Kevin
NCO

Master Sgt. Watters, Michael
Senior NCO

3CXXX
Senior Airman Bray, Travis
Airman

Staff Sgt. Hildebrand, David
NCO

2nd Lt. Gulick, Kevin
Company Grade Officer

26th IG
2nd Lt. Ruel, Stacey
Company Grade Officer

26th ISS
Senior Airman Bray, Travis
Airman

Tech. Sgt. Houghton, Carl
NCO

Senior Master Sgt. Beck, Michael
Senior NCO

690th ISS
Senior Airman Sands, Warren Jr.
Airman

Staff Sgt. Brown, Charles III
NCO

Master Sgt. Tabler, Richard
Senior NCO

Capt. Shepherd, Michael
Company Grade Officer

Winters, Jill
Civilian

HQ AIA level
Senior Airman Gwartney, John
Personnel Specialist

Staff Sgt. Puller, Donald
Personnel Technician

Senior Master Sgt. Young, Timothy
Personnel Superintendent

Capt. Young, Seanta
Junior Personnel Manager

Byler, Velma
Senior Personnel Manager

Fort Meade
Senior Airman Houston, Melody
Personnel Specialist

Staff Sgt. Thompson, Brenda
Personnel Technician

Master Sgt. Rhinehart, Dennis
Personnel Superintendent

2nd Lt. Jensen, Gregory
Junior Personnel Manager

Maj. Goodman, Gayle
Senior Personnel Manager

AIAsquadron level
Senior Airman Sims, Stanford
Personnel Specialist

Staff Sgt. Simanek, Dean
Personnel Technician

Master Sgt. VanHuss, Mark
Personnel Superintendent

Tech Sgt. Longfritz, Elizabeth
Enlisted PME Achievement Award

Staff Sgt. Jones, Trina
Junior Education and Training Manager

Master Sgt. Gomez, Angela
Senior Education and Training Manager

Quarterly

26th IG
Senior Airman Anderson, George
Airman

Staff Sgt. Melander, David
NCO

Master Sgt. Knapp, Timothy
Senior NCO

2nd Lt. Ruel, Stacey
Company Grade Officer

301st IS
Senior Airman Roberts, Jodi
Airman

Staff Sgt. Morgan, Michael
NCO

Master Sgt. Richardson, Urlene
Senior NCO

1st Lt. Harrison, Louis
Company Grade Officer

Misawa Cryptologic Operations Center Technicians
Airman 1st Class Williams, Jason
Support Junior Technician

Staff Sgt. Wagle, Richard
Support Senior Technician

Airman 1st Class Watler, Cheryl
Operations Junior Technician

Staff Sgt. Belser, Marcella
Operations Senior Technician

544th IG
Senior Airman Tschanz, Debbie
Airman