

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

A/CDC

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Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

Change to \_\_\_\_\_

Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny ( ) Declassify

Exemptions b ( ) ( ) E.O. 13526 25x ( ) ( )

Declassify after \_\_\_\_\_

With concurrence of \_\_\_\_\_

IPS by obtained CIA Date 10/22/80

Mr. David F. Trask  
The Historian  
Office of the Historian, SA 1, 3100  
Bureau of Public Affairs  
Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Trask:

This is in response to your letter of 6 February 1980 to Mr. Gale Allen concerning our policies with respect to classification decisions made on material requested for publication in the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series. I apologize for the delay in responding but I hasten to point out that it is incumbent upon all of us to insure the full exploration of matters such as these before making decisions the effect of which might have long lasting and unforeseen repercussions. Thus, you can be assured that this response is being made only after lengthy, in-depth discussions here at CIA.

I also want to assure you that we consider the FRUS series extremely important and have and will cooperate with the Department of State in its publication to the fullest extent possible consistent with the responsibilities to protect intelligence sources, methods and activities levied upon the Director of Central Intelligence by statute, Executive order and other directives.

At the outset, I want to state that in order to be able to freely contribute to FRUS, all final decisions with respect to the declassification or the continued classification of information concerning CIA and its activities, whether contained in CIA originated documents or documents of other Government departments and agencies, must be made by officials of this Agency who have been delegated such authority by the Director of Central Intelligence. The intelligence business is unique and such decisions can only be made, if we are to avoid damage to national security, by persons fully knowledgeable of all relevant facts in any given instance. We will of course be willing to discuss the reasoning behind any of our decisions which you are not happy with, but the final decision must be based on what we feel is necessary to fulfill our responsibilities. This rationale is recognized in law and especially throughout Executive Order 12065, particularly Section 3 thereof. Your

[REDACTED]

Having said the above, I want now to state our views regarding the points you raise in your letter. We are aware of the mandated role of the FRUS and its importance as the official history of United States foreign policy. It is this role however which causes us particular concern since anything appearing in the FRUS is official Executive disclosure of United States Government information. As such, it leaves no doubt as to its veracity. Hence, we must be extremely careful that information regarding CIA appearing therein not be such as to damage the national security of the United States. As pointed out in your letter, information may become desensitized with the passage of time. While that proposition may often be valid, it is much less so in the case of information concerning intelligence agencies and their activities. Individuals may serve as intelligence sources for many years. They have the right to expect that their clandestine relationship with the United States Government will not redound against them or their families. The period of potential repercussion will normally last many years beyond their active association with the intelligence process. The premature release of information regarding intelligence sources creates the impression that such sources will not be protected and deters others from serving in an intelligence capacity. Indeed, changes in the world situation over time may in fact increase the degree of damage which could be done even when all of the actors have long since departed the scene.

We cannot accept your position that any information already in the public domain has lost its sensitivity and that its omission from the series would weaken the credibility thereof. Such matters must be explored on a case-by-case basis. However, unless information in the public domain has been placed there through official release, as a general rule we will not permit its re-release based on that principle alone. To do so would be to recognize the validity of everything that has been published regarding the intelligence process over the years whether right or wrong, sensitive or not, and we simply cannot take this position.

Finally, with respect to your penultimate paragraph, we cannot accept your interpretation of the meaning of "intelligence sources and methods." Your statement that the location of Agency facilities, general Agency activities, foreign liaison relationships and intelligence reports are not included under the term "intelligence sources and methods" is so narrow that were it true we would be unable under our charter to protect a vast area that is vital to our objectives and without which we would be rendered useless to a great extent. Even if we could accept

your interpretation, the final sentence of that paragraph sets forth additional reasons which would justify the withholding of the kind of information mentioned in the paragraph. And the decision as to whether identifiable damage may result from any particular release can only be made by officers of this Agency authorized to do so based on knowledge of the damage that would occur as a result of such release.

I will be happy to discuss this matter with you further. If you so desire, let me know and I will arrange to meet with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas H. White

Thomas H. White  
Chief, Information Services Staff  
Directorate of Administration

cc: