

CIA Today

What is the CIA

Today's CIA—What We Do:

History of the CIA:

CIA's main job is to keep top US officials aware of key intelligence issues. To do this is a very involved process. First, we have to identify a problem or an issue of national security concern to the US government. In some cases, CIA is directed to study an intelligence issue—such as what activities terrorist organizations are planning or how countries that have biological or chemical weapons plan to use these weapons—then we look for a way to collect information about the problem.

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Overview of CIA's organization:



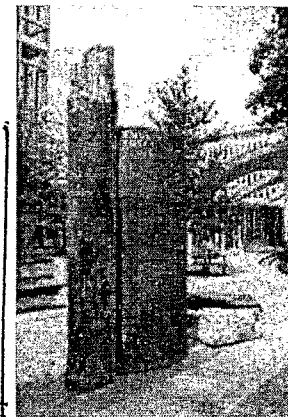
There are several ways to collect information. Translating foreign newspaper and magazine articles and radio and television broadcasts provides open source intelligence. Imagery satellites take pictures from space and imagery analysts write reports about what they see—for example, how many airplanes are at a foreign military base. Signals analysts work to decrypt coded messages that other countries send.

How information gets classified:

Operations officers recruit foreigners to give information about their country to the US.

Different kinds of intelligence:

After the information is collected, intelligence analysts look it over and write reports that go to top-level US government officials in the White House, the Pentagon, State Department, Congress, and other government organizations. One of these reports is the President's Daily Brief (PDB), which the US President and other senior officials receive each day. It is important to know that CIA's analysts only report the information and DO NOT make policy recommendations—making policy is left to the executive branch of the government, such as the State Department or the Defense Department. These policymakers use the information that CIA provides to help them make US policy toward other countries. It is also important to know that CIA is **NOT** a law



Frequently Asked Questions:

enforcement organization. That is the job of the FBI. However, the CIA and the FBI cooperate on a number of issues, such as counterintelligence.

Some good books relating to CIA and American intelligence:

CIA Publications

The US Congress has had oversight responsibilities over the CIA since 1947. However, prior to the mid-1970's, oversight was less formal. The 1980 Intelligence Oversight Act charged the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) with authorizing the programs of the intelligence agencies and overseeing their activities.