

## Senate intelligence to evaluate CIA's role in Middle East

By Joseph Schuman  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate intelligence committee will hold hearings on the CIA's mediating role in the Middle East land-for-security accord to determine the cost of tracking Palestinian anti-terror efforts and whether American agents are at risk.

Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., the committee's chairman, said Sunday he is troubled because the CIA, within the agreement, would play "a visible role."

"What is the role of the CIA? Is it to enforce a policy? Is it to be an arbitrator? Is it to be bodyguards? I think not," Shelby said on "Fox News Sunday." "I think we have to look at this."

But Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said the agency is no stranger to providing

on-the-ground intelligence support to diplomacy.

"The CIA has played roles previously in terms of monitoring and verifying other agreements ... in the region," Albright said on CBS's "Face the Nation." She said the CIA has been fighting terrorism there since the 1996 anti-terrorism conference at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

Meanwhile, White House spokesman Barry Toiv said President Clinton telephoned King Hassan of Morocco, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia on Sunday while on a political fund-raising trip to California.

He said Clinton "explained the benefits of the agreement to both sides, and he talked with them to build on the agreement and on the

partnership between the Israelis and the Palestinians by the Wye talks to create a new atmosphere not only between the two parties but also between Israel and the wider Arab world."

The three Arab leaders were "overwhelmingly positive" in their support, the spokesman said.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, a member of the intelligence committee, disagreed with Shelby's apprehensions about expanding the CIA's role. On CNN's "Late Edition," Hatch said the spy agency can play "a constructive role in making sure that these two sides get along and live up to these agreements."

Within the U.S.-brokered agreement concluded Friday between Israel and the Palestinians, the CIA would keep track of Palestin-

ian efforts to arrest and punish terrorists as a way of assuaging Israeli security concerns. The deal would create a three-party mediation system in which Palestinian and Israeli security officials could present disputes to a CIA arbiter.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on CNN that the CIA would be there to ensure "that the things are done, ... that terrorists do not come in and go into ... Palestinian jails and then leave by the proverbial revolving door."

Albright said the agency will work in a "role which assists, to try to deal with these issues without being personally involved. ... We're there, as we are in the peace talks, always as the honest broker as assisting in this."

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence does not have

power to directly change the Israeli-Palestinian agreement, though it has some authority over U.S. intelligence spending.

Shelby said, "We want to know how it is going to work, how long the CIA will be involved, how much it's going to cost and what are the dangers to the American lives here."

He said he also will discuss the matter with Tenet, who has traveled to Israel and the Palestinian territories four times since 1996. The agency maintains offices in the West Bank cities of Hebron, Ramallah and Nablus, as well as one in the Gaza Strip.

Tenet, in this week's Time magazine, said the CIA's Middle East work "can have an enormous impact on the future, but the fact is that we have to become a more agile institution."

## Typhoon Babs devastates Taiwan, heads toward Hong Kong

The Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Typhoon Babs brought torrential rain and landslides to Taiwan on Sunday after killing at least 156 people in the Philippines and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless.

The typhoon was centered about 185 miles southeast of Hong Kong by evening with gusts already lashing the territory. The storm was moving at about 6 mph toward the south China coast with sustained winds of 81 mph, expected to come closest to Hong Kong on Tuesday.

Babs caused torrential rain over the whole island of Taiwan, with Hualien and several other eastern towns recording more than 20 inches of rain in 24 hours. Authorities evacuated hundreds of people from their homes near flooded rivers.

In Taipei, the Keelung River swelled its banks. Parts of Hsichih town were flooded in waist-high water, and much of nearby Wutu was also inundated. Rescuers used rubber boats and trucks to evacuate residents from apartment blocks, officials said.

In eastern Ilan, a man was swept into the sea while fishing in rough waters. Nine people were injured when their van was hit by rockslides in eastern Taitung, police said.

Several domestic airports were closed, and landslides halted traffic and trapped hundreds in mountains in central Taiwan.

In Hong Kong, authorities warned residents to take precautions as gusts of 64 mph were recorded. The government opened shelters, beaches were closed, and fishing boats took

refuge in the harbor.

In the Philippines, President Joseph Estrada declared four provinces and a city in the worst hit area on the southern tip of Luzon under a state of calamity, meaning that officials will be able to use emergency funds and freeze prices of commodities.

The Philippine government's Office of Civil Defense said the death toll from Babs rose to 156 on Sunday. The fatalities included 71 people who died in landslides in hard-hit Catanduanes Island and 41 people who

drowned, were electrocuted or died in landslides in nearby Camarines Sur province.

Local officials said entire families died in the town of San Miguel in Catanduanes, where almost every house was damaged. Residents began burying their dead in two mass graves Saturday.

Nearly 400,000 people were forced out of their homes, disaster relief officials said. Tens of thousands more were stranded as ports were shut and ships forbidden to sail.

## Cuba is not ready for more American news bureaus, President Castro says

By Anita Snow  
The Associated Press

HAVANA — Cuban President Fidel Castro has told top American editors he is not ready to allow U.S. journalists to operate permanently on the island.

"Once they are established it is hard to remove them," Castro told the top leadership of the American Society of Newspaper Editors during a six-hour meet-

ing on Saturday.

Editors quoted Castro as saying that granting permission for a bureau "is a matter of confidence to be built step by step ... We have had a lot of experience with [American] journalists who are biased."

Still, Edward L. Seaton, ASNE president and editor of The Manhattan (Kan.) Mercury, said he thought Castro listened to the

group's arguments for letting American journalists open offices in the country.

"I think we got across quite well our message: that they need to have print journalists from the United States in Cuba," Seaton said. ASNE has 870 members from newspapers across the United States.

Cuba grants U.S. reporters work visas for a week or two.

The only U.S. news organization that has Cuban government approval to operate a permanent office in the country is Cable News Network. CNN opened its Havana bureau, headed by correspondent Lucia Newman, in March 1997.

The network is the first American news organization to operate a bureau in the country since The Associated Press was

expelled in 1969.

The 32-member ASNE delegation, made up of the board of directors and other top leaders, arrived in Cuba on Wednesday and returned to the United States early Sunday after a four-day visit.

Besides Castro, the editors met with Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina, Vice President Carlos Lage and Ricardo Alarcon, president of Cuba's parliament.

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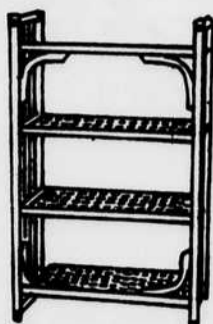
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