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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON  
January 15, 1976

Dear Mr. Chairman:

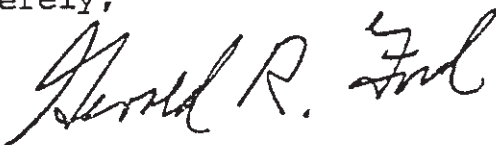
In reply to your letter of December 22 and in keeping with our agreement, I have reviewed the House Select Committee documents on covert action. I have concluded that the publication at this time of these documents would be detrimental to the national security.

It would be damaging to the effective conduct of foreign affairs if one branch of the United States Government officially and formally acknowledged a program that was conceived of and executed as a covert effort. To establish the practice of revealing such operations would lead to a situation where they are effectively precluded in the future, if only because no group or government would have any confidence in collaborating with the United States in clandestine programs -- many of which have been generally endorsed by the Congress and have proceeded for many years without serious criticism or objection.

The question of whether the U.S. should, in fact, engage in covert action can be debated, but it should not be resolved by a systematic exposure of past and current programs. The fact that many details of the two programs in question have appeared in the press does not alter the principle involved. There still is a serious difference between press speculation, however informed, and a Report issued by a Congressional Committee.

I believe that the fact that the Committee has had access to considerable documentation on covert operations as well as expert testimony, should enable the Committee to draw up an informed, final report without revealing the existence of, or details concerning, programs that should, in the national interest, remain unacknowledged.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Otis G. Pike  
Chairman  
Select Committee on Intelligence  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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WH: Ltr. Pres Gerald Ford - Rep Otis Pike (chmn. HSC)

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Jan 15, 1976

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