

CHAPTER TWELVE COVERT ACTION

Most U.S. presidents have made use of covert action as an instrument of foreign policy; under appropriate and limited circumstances, it serves as a more subtle and surgical tool than acknowledged employment of U.S. power and influence. In the future, when the threats of proliferation and terrorism loom large, covert action may play an increasingly important role. The Commission conducted a careful study of U.S. covert action capabilities, with attention to the changing national security landscape and the special category of missions that involve both CIA and U.S. Special Operations Forces. Because even the most general statements about the Intelligence Community's capabilities in this area are classified, the Commission's assessments and four specific findings cannot be discussed in this report. The Commission has, however, incorporated the lessons learned from its study of covert action in all of our recommendations for reform of the Intelligence Community.

