

# Intelligence and the American Founding

*How Secrecy Became Part of a Free Republic*

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## us The Revolutionary Problem

How do you defend a republic without becoming a tyranny?

During the American Revolution, George Washington learned a hard truth: **armies cannot fight effectively without information.**

- Spies, informants, codes, and deception were essential
  - The Culper Ring operated behind British lines in New York
  - Intelligence failures could be fatal—even without losing a battle
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## Intelligence Came First

Before the Constitution, there was espionage.

- No laws authorized intelligence during the Revolution
- Congress funded it quietly
- Washington exercised personal discretion

Intelligence was treated as a **practical necessity**, not a legal innovation.

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## The Constitution's Quiet Design

No mention of intelligence—on purpose.

The Constitution never uses the word *intelligence* or *espionage*. Instead, it grants powers that **cannot function without secrecy**:

- Common defense
- Commander-in-Chief authority
- Foreign diplomacy
- Discretionary funding

## The Federalist Papers Explained

### Secrecy defended—without apology

- **Federalist No. 23 (Hamilton):**  
Defense requires *all necessary means*
- **Federalist No. 64 (Jay):**  
Diplomacy demands “perfect secrecy”
- **Federalist No. 70 (Hamilton):**  
A single executive can act discreetly and decisively

Secrecy was framed as **essential to liberty**, not hostile to it.

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## From Washington to Today

Modern intelligence agencies did not break with the Founders’ vision—they **institutionalized it**.

The core belief endures:

*A free republic must sometimes act unseen to remain secure.*

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