

## Spy Kids

Where does the CIA go to find its next generation of agents? Career fairs at MIT and Tufts for starters. And unlike the counterculture days of old, students today are lining up to get their license to kill.

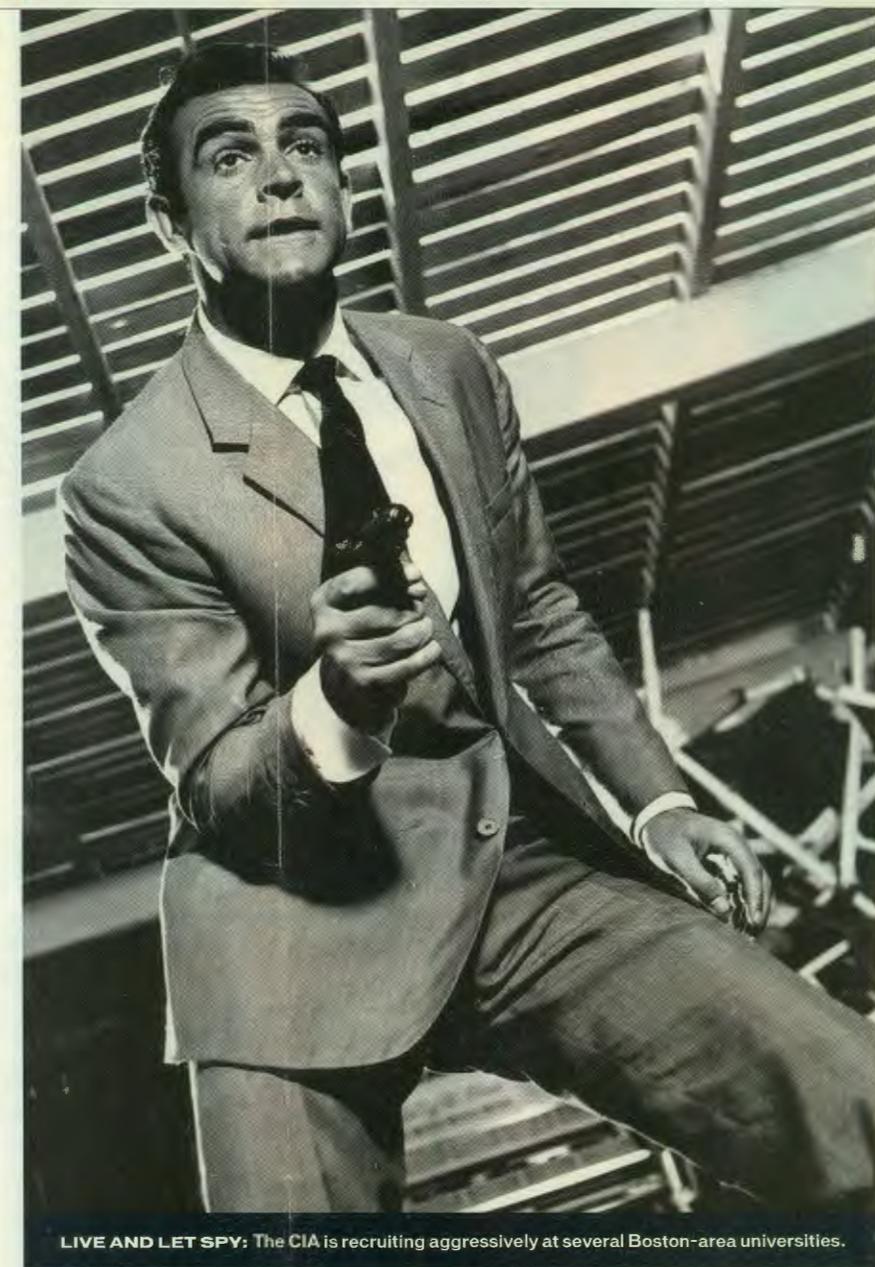
**S**OMEHOW, YOU JUST don't expect to find the CIA recruiting at a college career fair. You know, right out there in the open in MIT's DuPont Gymnasium alongside Verizon, Microsoft, and other prospective employers schmoozing with prospective hires.

If the CIA does any college recruiting at all, you imagine it to be mysterious. Like in the movie *The Recruit*, when Al Pacino pops up from behind a column—at an MIT career fair, no less—and then vanishes, only to reappear in a dark nightclub later on where he accosts his target by circling the letters "CIA" in a newspaper.

But on the gleaming hardwood floors of the DuPont Gym basketball court, three smiling CIA officers greet passing students and hand out colorful brochures and cool gifts: CIA mousepads, pens, notepaper, and key-chain flashlights, plus sporty plastic bags with the CIA logo to carry them in.

"It's pretty hard to be covert and recruit," explains Bryan Peters, chief of CIA recruiting in the Northeast, a cheery fellow in a business suit who talks a mile a minute and pitches his exotic wares like a Ferrari salesman. "We *do* have business cards."

Eager kids surround Peters and his two middle-aged colleagues, a man in a white shirt and a tie and a staid-looking woman who reveals she spent two years undercover in



**LIVE AND LET SPY:** The CIA is recruiting aggressively at several Boston-area universities.

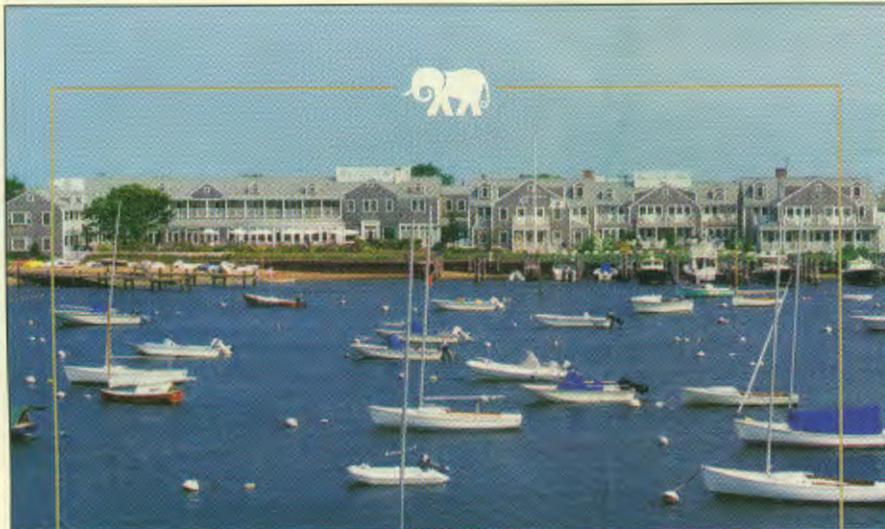
Laos in the '70s. Representatives from private companies at the fair also beeline for the booth, grabbing the free paraphernalia and cornering the CIA officers with inquiries about employment—for themselves.

The CIA is happy to talk to them. Unlike other employers in this beleaguered economy, the agency is hiring in record numbers around town. Its manpower requirements have increased by at least 80 percent since the September 11 terrorist attacks, says Bob Rebelo, who until March was chief of the CIA Recruitment Center at the agency's headquarters in Virginia. Though Rebelo won't reveal any exact recruiting figures, one thing is for sure: Given the political climate and the growing threat of terrorist cells that could be lurking anywhere, the demand for new hires

will continue to grow. And Boston and Cambridge are prime sources of supply, thanks to the area's stock of smart students willing to move to Washington—or wherever else they're sent. Turns out there's "a rich heritage" of CIA recruiting here, as Peters puts it.

Patriotic Americans with foreign language ability (especially in Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Urdu, and Chinese), technological acumen, expertise in economics, engineering, hard sciences: The CIA needs them. Lots of them. That's why it's so aggressively recruiting, especially at schools that graduate the kinds of candidates it wants.

Preeminent among those schools are MIT, Harvard, and the Fletcher School at Tufts, which has a graduate program in international security studies. These three



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## Ivory Tower

"historically have produced the academic curriculums that fit with our needs," says Peters. "It's the curriculum and the overall quality of the students. An MIT student—whether they're in economics or computer science—has certain talents," especially technological and mathematical capabilities essential to intelligence work. Harvard undergrads who major in languages, economics, and Middle Eastern studies are turned into analysts who

**The biggest challenge is dispelling myths about the agency—like, if you've smoked pot, you're automatically disqualified.**

can evaluate the economic (and, therefore, political) stability of foreign nations—and sniff out companies that are fronts for terrorist organizations.

Rebello says he's on the phone "a couple of times a month" with Richard Shultz Jr., director of the International Security Studies program at Fletcher, looking for promising candidates. In return, the CIA sends officers to lecture to students on counterterrorism.

"The program at Fletcher is attractive because it has a high potential to yield the caliber of student we need," Rebello says. "The program focuses on national security-related issues, which is what we do."

**B**LAME TV SHOWS LIKE *THE Agency* or movies like *Patriot Games* and *The Bourne Identity*. Credit the war on terrorism, which has elicited a sense of patriotism unprecedented in recent history. Whatever the reasons, the CIA couldn't be hotter right now. Young people are lining up to apply.

Job applications to the nation's "front-line source of clandestine information on current events and critical developments abroad" (as the recruiting brochure puts it) more than doubled immediately after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Last year, the CIA got 135,000 résumés. At one point this year, it was being flooded with 4,000 résumés a week, according to Rebello.

At least once a day, students seek his advice on joining the agency, says Boston University associate professor Arthur S. Hulnick, a 28-year CIA veteran who teaches such immensely popular courses as "Intelligence in a Democratic Society" and "Problems in Strategic Intelligence."

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At MIT, 200 students have submitted résumés to the CIA in the past two years through the university, says Elizabeth Reed, director of MIT's Career Office. Countless others dropped off résumés at the career fair or have applied online.

At the MIT college fair, students hover around the CIA booth, eager for a job that combines patriotic fervor with spy-game mystique. "I want to have a profound influence with my career. I'm not interested in making video games," explains a 25-year-old graduate student in signal processing, who—mere coincidence?—resembles a young Dame Judi Dench, the actress who plays "M" in the newest James Bond movies.

How about covert operations? "That would be fun!" she gushes. Any qualms about a government agency that, in the not-so-distant past, was booed off college campuses? "I think it's kinda cool to work for the CIA," she answers.

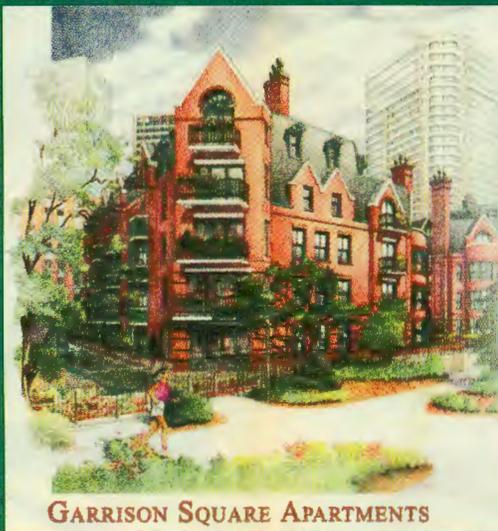
Reactions like this make his job easy right now, says Peters. His biggest challenge is dispelling myths about the agency—like, if you've ever smoked pot, you're automatically disqualified. As long as you haven't used drugs in the past year—and you *will* have to take a polygraph—you're still in the running. "Our pool was drying up, so we had to modify" the drug policy, he says. But don't bother applying if you have a felony conviction, aren't a U.S. citizen, or won't move to the Washington, DC, area—or anywhere else the agency wants to send you.

**LOCATION:** A CROWDED STARBUCKS IN Boston. Target: stunning blond coed, with dazzling smile, who sips a latte while discreetly scanning the room. Dossier: major in international relations. Lived in Africa in a communal setting; studied difficult dialect. Did a semester in a European country in whose language she's fluent. Plans on a graduate degree in security studies and on learning Arabic.

"I think it's absolutely necessary to be put outside your comfort zone," says the woman, who says she has dreamed for years of becoming a CIA agent and has tailored her schooling accordingly. She's dressed in an elegant camel overcoat and color-coordinated shirt and slacks. She looks—dare you think it?—like a Bond girl. "It changes your perceptions about your own life. I would move *anywhere*."

Why the burning desire for a woman in her 20s to join the agency, especially given the climate overseas? The fear of an ordinary life, she says. Her parents

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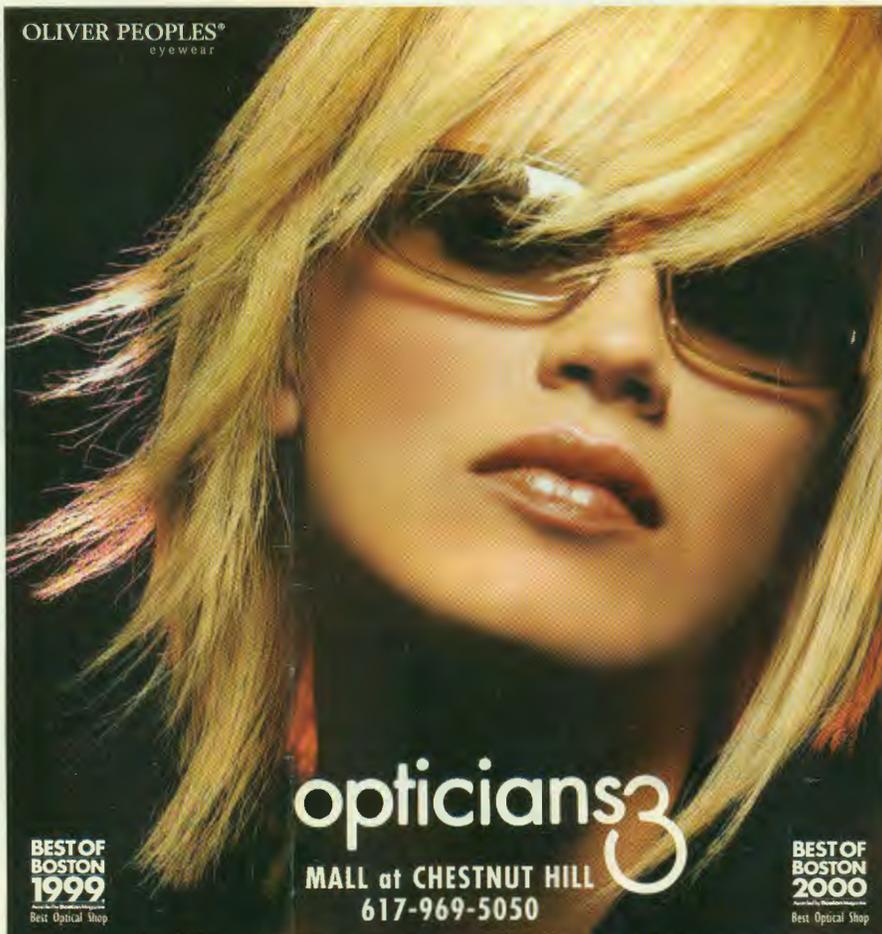
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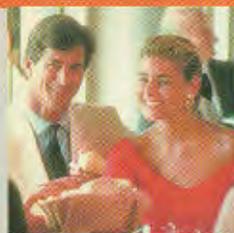
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## Ivory Tower

brought her up on international travel and gave her a taste for adventure.

But wait. She suddenly worries that sharing the details of her life with a reporter might kill her chances of becoming a covert operative. Quick phone call to Rebelo at CIA headquarters.

"Oh, no," Rebelo warns. "You can't identify her in any way. We couldn't even consider her if you did."

Rebelo asks about her qualifications. He requests her phone number and immediately contacts her to invite her to a CIA information session for promising Boston candidates.

"This," he says, "is the first referral we've ever gotten from the media."

**F**OR ITS PRIMARY ROLE IN INTELLIGENCE gathering, the agency has three departments, which can be illustrated with characters from James Bond: operations, which collects intelligence (007); intelligence, which analyzes the information ("M," the Judi Dench character); and science and technology, which creates systems to collect information ("Q," the old guy who invents the gadgets Bond toys with).

Officers who work in analysis or S&T usually live in the United States, while operations officers may spend 70 percent of their careers undercover in foreign nations. "It's not for everyone," says

**Operatives must be able to react to "fast-moving, ambiguous, unstructured situations," as the CIA brochure puts it.**

Rebelo. Operatives are an unusual breed, able to react to "fast-moving, ambiguous, unstructured situations," as the brochure puts it. They have street smarts, if you will. "A lot of what we hire for is intangible," says Rebelo. "It's attitude, the ability to be on the ground overseas where there are no mosquito nets and no running water."

Which explains why Peters is standing in a gym at MIT, scouring the crowd for students with that special something. "I have an eye for talent," he says.

Almost the precise words uttered by Al Pacino in *The Recruit*: "I am a scary judge of talent." Is that what Peters means?

He laughs. "I know a proper fit when I see one," he says. "When I say, 'From one to 10, how much do you want to work for us?' I want to hear, '11.' I want to hear, 'This is my life's ambition.'" **B**