

REMARKS OF
HONORABLE CLARK M. CLIFFORD
FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
BEFORE THE
FEDERAL POWER BAR ASSOCIATION

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April 24, 1969
Mayflower Hotel
Washington, D.C.

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Mr. Clifford: Mr. Roach, members of the Power Commission, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is with a sense of some gratification that I listened to Mr. Roach pick out that one particular piece that had been written. There are a number of others that are substantially less commendatory.

(Laughter)

I think one has a certain temerity today in addressing a group, particularly a group of lawyers who maintain a lively interest in the events of the day, because you are deluged with newspapers and weekly magazines and radio and TV. Sometimes I wonder if there is anything left to say.

Also, my concern is accentuated by an incident that happened in the lifetime of Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great English lexicographer. A writer of that day was known for his massive egotism and his enormous self-confidence. He sent a manuscript to Dr. Johnson and asked for his opinion. Dr. Johnson replied and said, "I have read your manuscript; it is both good and original. The trouble is the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good."

(Laughter)

I trust that at the conclusion of my brief remarks that no one feels

that I have fallen within the last description.

In considering what might be of interest and value to you and to those with whom you come into contact, I selected a subject that is a matter of deep concern to the American people today. It is the question of how shall we conduct ourselves in the world of today with reference to the problem of intelligence. This has been dramatized by the recent shooting down of the EC-121.

It seems to me that there is a great deal of misunderstanding and misinterpretation on the part of the public generally. And those of us who have been in the Defense Department and in the whole field of intelligence, will wish to utilize every opportunity we can to appear before groups of thoughtful citizens and impart this message to them so that, in turn, they might pass it on to those with whom they come into contact.

I believe that it is wise at this time for the American people to be giving attention to this entire problem as we find ourselves in the mid-twentieth century.

I might take but a minute and give you a little background. Each time a man speaks on a subject, you're interested in what his credentials are. It is a rather interesting story and takes but a few moments to tell.

It was in the spring of 1961, after the debacle of the Bay of Pigs, that I had a call from President John F. Kennedy, and I went over to see him. And it was an interesting and, in some respects, disturbing conversation. He said, "I have just made an extremely serious mistake. Now", he said,

"the reason I made the mistake was that my advice was bad, and the reason my advice was bad was that the intelligence upon which it was based was so poor." And he said, "I could not survive another tragedy of this kind." So he said, "I'm appointing a group of nine men from different types of backgrounds, all of whom have had some experience in this field. I'm going to call it the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and I want you nine men," then under the chairmanship of the head of MIT, "to investigate the whole field of intelligence, make recommendations to me with reference to the changes that you think are necessary, and then stay in business as an operating board to be sure that the recommendations that you make and that are put into effect are actually carried out." He said, "I have seen too many commissions come to Washington, file a report, leave and go home and have nothing come from it." But he said, "We must develop our foreign intelligence activities to the point where we will never again go through this type of disaster."

Now, the Board assembled then and for some seven years I was a member of the Board. Two years and a half as a member, and then I served four and a half years as chairman of the Board, so that I remained in contact with our intelligence posture, and it was of inestimable value to me when the time came for me to go into the Defense Department.

With that brief background, let us turn to the incident that has caused such an impact on the public consciousness, that is the shooting down of the EC-121.

Now, these flights had been going on since 1950. This type of plane, or its predecessor, had been flying this type of flight. It is what is known as an intelligence gathering mission. This plane has many types of sophisticated electronic equipment upon it which picks up signals and electronic messages from the ether, translates them to our experts, and many of those signals provide them with interesting information.

It is routine. It is done all over the world. We do it in a number of other places, other nations do it, the Soviets do it, it is a recognized form of legal activity. In the three months of this year, 190 similar missions of this kind have been flown. So there was nothing unusual. It was known. These flights appear on various radar screens in certain countries in that part of the world.

Suddenly, on April 14th, with no warning whatsoever, two North Korean MIGs flew out, shot down this unarmed plane, engaged in perfectly legal activity over international waters, causing the death of thirty-one Americans in the process.

The reaction here has been interesting to follow. A few have said that there must be some type of retaliation. President Nixon, I thought, handled himself with great wisdom and maturity, saying let's get all the facts first before we begin to reach any opinions on it. There have been a number of editorials and a number of articles that have indicated that we would do well to cease this type of activity, because these flights prove provocative to other nations. This flight has been compared, and properly so, to the incident of

the Pueblo. And so the claim is made that we should cease this type of activity because it is dangerous, and in some instances it might bring us closer to a wider war than we are already in.

This is, I am sure, an erroneous concept.

Let me discuss with you briefly why we must, as a nation, continue to obtain intelligence of this kind. One of the main reasons is that there has been an enormous change in the whole process of intelligence. You will recall the day when intelligence was recognized as a dangerous but quite glamorous occupation. There was Mata Hari, who was the famous spy. She would get information from her friends --

(Laughter)

And she would send it back to whichever country she was employed by at the time. And you've heard stories about James Bond and those fascinating experiences that he has. That has all changed now. This is a mean, difficult, onerous, dangerous, twenty-four-hour-a-day business. And we are in it because we have to be, from the standpoint of our survival.

Part of the reason it has become so incredibly difficult is that the countries with whom we are dealing in this period of our Nation's history are totalitarian countries and they have the most incredible control over their people. Penetration is the word. Penetration is a practical impossibility today through the use of the human agent.

A quick illustration: Let us look at Cuba today, which is but ninety miles from our shores. We have been friends with Cuba since the turn of the

century and have been their greatest benefactor. They have an organization now, however, that would perhaps correspond to some extent to a political organization. There is a top man who heads up the whole counter-espionage system. He has a top group of advisers. There is a sub-head in each county. He, in turn, has a man in each town or city. Under that agent is a man in each block, and underneath that even the blocks are broken down. So that any time a new face, some new development, a new dog comes into that particular area, it is noticed at once and the information is passed on up the chain.

We must have the information. We must keep informed, so we have been under the compulsion of finding other ways and means in which to accomplish it. I will come to that later.

Now, let's look at North Korea. North Korea is one of the deeply troubled spots in the world today. The North Koreans have shown a resurgence of belligerency. There have been any number of forays over the DMZ from North Korea into South Korea. Within the last two years, a group of operatives were sent over from North Korea into South Korea for the purpose of murdering the President of South Korea. They are constantly sending men south by boat and putting them ashore at night in an effort to create disturbances in South Korea.

We have 55,000 American troops stationed there in an effort to try to protect the peace in South Korea. And, although we all deplore the fact that we have to maintain that type of troop level, at least since 1953, we have

been able to keep the peace in that part of the world.

Now, with the existence of these facts, we cannot live in a vacuum with reference to what is going on in North Korea. If an important mobilization takes place, if there is a significant troop movement up to the border of South Korea, if there is a movement of planes up to the airfields that are close by, we have to know. We cannot just sit and wait and hope that nothing will happen. We must be sure that we keep up with the developments that take place there in North Korea.

Now, in order to do that, we choose to do it in the least provocative manner. So at one stage we had a ship out in international waters. First, it was a ship called the Banner, which was a sister ship of the Pueblo. Then the Pueblo moved up. So let me speak very briefly about the Pueblo.

A ship of any nation has the right to be in international waters. That is the settled law of nations from time immemorial. The legal fact is that, if by chance a nation's ship should intrude into another country's territorial waters, the remedy is for that country to notify the master of the vessel that he has invaded their territorial waters and they ask him to leave. If he does not leave, the next step, under international law, is that they may dispatch a warship and escort the offending ship out of their territorial waters. This is a very different situation, of course, than that which we know happened.

We know that the Pueblo was in international waters at the time that it was apprehended. It was engaged in a perfectly legal and legitimate activity, that is of studying the various electronic messages that go through the air; the air is international, every nation has the right to intercept any

kind of message that the air, over international waters, contains.

The reason we know that the Pueblo was seventeen miles away from North Korea, when it was apprehended, is (a) our own skipper, Commander Bucher, placed it there, and then we know from certain intelligence information obtained from the North Koreans that they placed it in exactly the same location as our skipper of the ship placed it. The curious part is that the ship had been there for a substantial period of time, as had its sister ship, the Banner, without having been attacked before.

On this one day, with no provocation, with no excuse, with no previous warning, the Pueblo was attacked and apprehended and the crew was captured.

Now, this plane was in very much the same capacity as the Pueblo was. It had instructions not to go closer than fifty miles from the North Korean land mass. Now the air space over a nation, over its land mass, is privileged. That belongs to that nation. And the air space over its territorial waters belongs to that nation. The territorial water limit claimed by Korea was twelve miles. So, for that reason, the captain of this plane was instructed not to go closer than fifty miles from North Korea.

The fact is, at the time that this plane was shot down, the debris and the bodies of the two men that were recovered were approximately ninety-five miles away from North Korea. Now, one interesting point: The Pueblo from time to time is referred to as a spy ship; and this plane, I've noticed in some newspaper articles, is referred to as a spy ship. I believe that this is an erroneous designation.

There have been spy planes. We have utilized them in the past. I will come to that a little later. You will remember, for instance, the U-2 that was shot down over the Soviet Union back in 1960. Now, we felt it was so important at that time to gain certain information within the Soviet Union, that we took the risk of overflying the Soviet land mass with the plane that took photographs of what lay below. But that plane was actually in the process of spying. It was over the Soviet Union.

This plane was ninety-five miles away from North Korea. It was where it had an absolute right to be. It was engaged in an activity in which it had a perfect right to engage. And when the two North Korean MIGs came out and shot that plane down, they engaged in an act of international piracy. There is no known basis in international law for their action, other than that they chose to violate every law of international relations and every element of decency that exists between the nations of the world.

I might say that the same situation existed with reference to the Pueblo.

Now, after the Pueblo and again after this plane, a number of Americans asked the question, why don't we protect these missions? You say we have to have them, why don't we protect them? Well, that is an appropriate question to ask, and one that must be answered only after some thought, and the answer I suggest and submit takes a certain amount of consideration upon your part.

Take this plane: Since 1950 we have been flying these flights, not one of them has ever been intercepted, not one of them has ever been in

difficulty -- that is nineteen years, day after day after day, we flew this type of flight. I wish to repeat, that in the first three months of 1968 this plane and its associated planes flew 190 flights in three months; none of them were intercepted until this one day the MIGs came out and shot it down.

Sometime ago, when someone asked this question -- I said it might be compared, for instance, to your wife going to the grocery store each day. Let us say that she has walked to the grocery store every day for the last nineteen years and has had no trouble at all. She was engaged in a perfectly legal occupation, where she ought to be, and doing what she ought to do. And, then, one day a man steps out from behind a building, attacks her, strikes her, takes her bag away from her and disappears.

And then the question comes up: well, shouldn't she be protected as she walks from her home to the grocery store? I submit that in choosing this illustration, there is an element of hyperbole in it, but at the same time it seems to me that the principle is a relevant one.

After these attacks occur, then the suggestion is made that there should have been protection. But the fact is that when you perform them for nineteen years, and then suddenly an unlawful act of international piracy takes place, I think it helps put the whole incident and the series of incidents into better perspective.

Another profound and paramount need for intelligence concerns the Soviet Union. We have to know what point in its development of deadly weapons the Soviet Union has reached, we have to know how many ICBMs the

Soviet Union has. Those are Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. We have to know how sophisticated they are. We have to know what type of planes they have. Do they have a plane that can reach the United States either with refueling or without refueling? We have to know what kind of submarines they have. Do they have submarines that can get offshore from the United States and launch a nuclear weapon into targets within the Continental United States?

Another phase of knowledge we must have is the testing that is always going on within the Soviet Union of new weapons. We must know to what extent they are progressing along a certain line. They are engaged now, for instance, in testing a new type of ICBM which, as it gets over the United States, instead of it just having one warhead that zeroes in on one of our cities, multiple warheads fly from the one missile and strike a number of different cities. We know they are working on that. We don't know whether or not they have perfected it.

The fact is we are working on that and working very assiduously. But we cannot live in a vacuum as far as the Soviet Union is concerned. We would have no way of gauging what defensive measures we should take. We have no way of knowing how many missiles we should have. What we have now reached, substantially, with the Soviet Union is a balance of power. They know that if they should strike us first with their intercontinental missiles, they can do enormous damage in this country. But they also know that they will practically be destroyed by our retaliatory power. And in order to gauge

the adequacy of our retaliatory power, we must have this kind of information.

Another quick illustration that you all will remember, because it was so dramatic. We became suspicious in 1962 that there might be offensive missiles placed in Cuba by the Soviet Union. If that were so, it was a matter of deepest concern to us. Here, ninety miles from our eastern coast, there would be Russian offensive nuclear missiles.

The Cubans denied that they had any offensive missiles. I recall that Mr. Gromyko denied at the time personally to President Kennedy and stated that it was absurd that we would think they would consider any such course of action. Well, he made it pretty convincing. But those who had the responsibility for the safety of our Nation can't proceed on that. They have to know. So flights were conducted, every time that the cloud cover would permit, to try to keep up with developments within Cuba.

I recall very well the day that the first photograph came in, because we had a special meeting of the Intelligence Board that day, as soon as the photographs came in. It appeared as though it was entirely possible that offensive weapons had been placed in Cuba, despite the protestations of the Soviets to the contrary. Other photos came in shortly after the first photograph. About the third or fourth day, it was absolutely certain - there was no doubt whatsoever. The pictures were enlarged a hundred times, and you could see the offensive missiles in place, ready to be fired. And, as you may remember, Governor Adlai Stevenson, as our Representative at the United Nations, showed some of those photographs to the U.N. And I submit to you that, as the Chinese say, a picture is worth a thousand words. No one could see those

photographs without knowing that those offensive missiles were there. That proof would never have been obtained, unless we had kept right at the procurement of the most sophisticated intelligence that we could get.

I want to leave one major thought with you. It is a conclusion that I reached sometime ago and I believe in it deeply and I would hope that our country would come to understand it better. The thought is this: Intelligence collection stabilizes the relationship among nations. Intelligence gathering is an aid toward peace and not a hindrance. It is a step in the direction that can ultimately lead to a better world than we have now. It is not a hindrance to our goal in that regard.

We are engaged in this on a daily basis. The Soviets are also engaged, as of today, in different parts of the world. There are some thirty Russian trawlers -- they are called trawlers, that is a euphemism -- they are engaged in intelligence gathering. They are off our shores. There are some off our eastern shores and some off the western shores. They stay outside of our three-mile limit. They have a perfect right to be there. And some of their equipment, we believe, is really very sophisticated. We are engaged in it also all over the world.

Now, the fact is that, as they gather information and as we gather information, I think it probably has two major benefits, and I think those two benefits help insure the peace of the world. First, if a nation is getting reasonably accurate intelligence, it is less likely blindly to strike out at some other country which it thinks is its enemy. It is less likely to be disturbed by rumors and guesswork and so, in a moment of hysteria and concern,

launch an all-out effort.

In the second place, a nation that has aggressive designs, will be deterred because of the knowledge that such nation has that other major countries in the world are well informed regarding a would-be aggressor's strength. By being well informed, such other countries are then in position to defend themselves against any possible onslaught. Also, a would-be aggressor could not depend, to any substantial extent, upon the element of surprise because of the constant monitoring that would be conducted by other countries who were diligent in keeping themselves informed.

Let me give you an illustration: In the war in 1967 between the Arabs and the Israelis, on either the first or the second day, Nasser and Hussein both announced publicly that American planes were taking part in the bombing of the Arab nations. They both stated it as a flat matter of fact.

There was grave concern here that this charge might bring the Soviets into the war. The Soviets had a very substantial fleet at the time in the Mediterranean. But the Soviets weren't disturbed at all because their intelligence gathering activities in the Mediterranean showed that not one single plane had left the carrier deck of any of our ships in the Mediterranean. So when Moscow sent the message to the commander of the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean asking if American planes were in this; the message went back saying that not one American plane was involved in any type of action of any sort. It had a wonderfully dampening effect, and prevented what could have

been an exceedingly serious situation at the time.

We are preparing, I hope, in these next few months, to have a series of meetings that could mean more to this Nation and the people in the world than any meetings that have been held in a long time. I refer to the possibility of discussions with the Soviet Union on the limitation and ultimate reduction of strategic nuclear weapons.

We cannot go into those talks, we cannot reach agreement with the Soviets without maintaining the highest degree of intelligence gathering capability. Every agreement we make with them, to some extent, will depend upon the ability that we have to be sure that they adhere to the agreements that they make with us. So our intelligence gathering ability forms one of the very real foundations upon which I hope we can base a successful series of conferences.

Today, in the world in which we live, which is a highly imperfect world, and a dangerous world, the American people have the right to expect that their government will be proceeding upon the best information which human minds can obtain before our leaders make policy decisions.

Also, curiously enough, sometimes those people who are the first to criticize our intelligence activities, when a Pueblo incident or the EC-121 incident occurs, are also the first to criticize their government in the event some event takes place that surprises us. And what we hope to do is to prevent surprises. We hope to be able to keep so well informed that we have a good

idea of what is going on in the different parts of the world at all times.

As I conclude, let me say that the men engaged in this work are engaged in the most sensitive, the most hazardous kind of duty that we can give them. They are men who are dedicated, whose patriotism is certainly above and beyond the demand of duty. These men serve to a great extent without any publicity. They don't expect any. They know that the kind of work they do demands anonymity, and yet year after year they do it.

Sometimes some of our men, sometimes some of our agents will disappear and we never know what has happened. They understand that this danger exists. This is as loyal and dedicated a band of Americans as there is.

It seems to me that when you speak of them you must extend to them the kind of respect that I believe Thomas Jefferson had in mind when he used those shining words that these men are willing to pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)