

25 September 1984

Dear John,

I was disappointed at the report I read of your speech in the Portland Press Herald because it seems to me your public disclosure of a discussion involving conflicting views in the Intelligence Community was inconsistent with your professional obligations. I thought also that the implication about my wanting the estimates to come out a certain way, and that this had a policy purpose, was a distortion, or hopefully a misunderstanding, of the way things work, as well as of the relations between us. I must say that in reading your draft speech I was stunned by the very unflattering references to a magazine editor and a scholar, whom you call a writer, and "rich friends." All of these people are knowledgeable, have quite a bit of experience, and are dedicated to helping our country with analysis and information and I find it rather unfair to slough them off by affixing labels to them.

A fair account of the estimate I believe you are concerned with would be that there were differences of opinion thrashed out over a period of many months as to the likelihood of serious instability in the country. I and others felt it was something like one chance out of five; you and others felt it was more remote. These two opinions were clearly indicated on the first page of the Key Judgments along with a unanimous judgment that, despite these differences, the country would suffer a series of incidents and crises which would need to be monitored closely to protect U.S. interests. There was no policy urged or to be supported except one of vigilance. The prevailing view at the meeting is expressed in the minutes with this statement by a member of the National Foreign Intelligence Board: "The Intelligence Community has an obligation to prepare the U.S. policymakers for the possibility that the country concerned will come apart."

This episode, rather than an example of pushing on the Intelligence Community an assessment designed to support policy, seems to me to be a good illustration of how we have gone to pains to see that all elements are encouraged to formulate and articulate views and to see that all well-substantiated views are reflected in each national estimate going to policymakers.

It seems to me that your speech, as reported, also reflected that estimates were fashioned to support policy views. John, if you reflect, I think you will remember that you urged me to take action in support of your policy views more than once. Your memoranda dated 28 September 1983, 7 March 1984, and 28 March 1984, urged pressing for negotiations with the Sandinistas and the Salvadoran guerrillas and other policy initiatives. These memoranda went well beyond the intelligence assessments which we are charged with providing. As you are aware, the possibilities of negotiations had been discussed and considered in the interdepartmental committee with which you sat and in other fora.

I really hope that on reflection you feel that all those concerned were seeking to reflect their honest judgment, to discharge their responsibilities as they saw them, and were engaged in a process which is designed to gather and reflect the full range of views on difficult intelligence assessments, and that we take considerable pains to make it work that way.

Sincerely,



William J. Casey

Mr. John Horton

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