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Question & Answer
DCI Address Before
American Society of Newspaper Editors
9 April 1986
Washington, D.C.

(Question from the audience)

John Dille: COULD NOT HEAR QUESTION ON TAPE

CASEY: We have a process which enables the intelligence committees of Congress, the House and the Senate to get such information as they require, and a member of Congress who has that kind of a question, the usual way to do it is to go to the committees, the committees will ask us about them, and we will tell them. Now there are some things where lives, sources, and methods are involved where we will only tell a limited number of people. But there is a process which we cooperate with fully to which we devote some of our best people and quite a lot of resources to keep the Congress informed about our activities, to legitimate them in that way, to brief them, and to respond to inquiries.

Moderator: Mr. Casey do you have any questions to Mr. Simon?

Casey: Well, I don't have any questions. I don't have very much to disagree with what Mr. Simon had to say.

SIMON: I may rewrite the speech. (Much audience laughter)

CASEY: He raked up a lot of things for which, unfortunately, the Agency has been criticized. I assure you that all of the things we have done have been fully authorized by the Executive Branch, by laws, and by reporting and briefing the Congress. Now there have been times when maybe something somebody thought should have been reported, we thought something was authorized--and already authorized--and we have had disagreements of that kind, but they are very rare. Sometimes somebody out there in a large organization will make a mistake, and it will reflect on us and embarrass us, but I think that on the whole the Intelligence Community operates in a very careful manner authorized under the law and under the scrutiny of both the Executive and the Congress.

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QUESTION TO MR. CASEY--FROM NARRATOR?: Mr. Casey you mentioned the question of satellites. On April 27, Spot Image, a French-launched satellite will start operating, and they are offering to any person in the world, news organizations and others, telemetry with a 10 millimeter resolution. I am told that this is the Model T of what is coming in the next couple three years. In other words, you can photograph anything on earth from out there and that means literally anything. What is the CIA going to do about that?

CASEY: Well, I don't think there is anything we can do about it. Anybody can go out and get whatever information they can get, the press and anybody else, any other country. I expect that large news organizations will have one of those satellites themselves one of these days. They do have long-range cameras. We don't try to stop that. We are not resisting the most energetic effort on your part to get information. All we are saying, and all I am saying here, is that when information is put out, particularly when it is put out illegally by people in the government, it is our responsibility to stop that, but when it does get out, we think there is some responsibility on the part of the media and we think that cooperation in the interest of our security and our country should allow for a dialogue in which we can say to you, and I am not talking about waste or corruption--I have no objection to disclosing waste, inefficiency, or any of the kinds of things Mr. Simon dwelled on--but I do think when I can prove--when I can show that public disclosure of this which means sending it to our adversaries whether they are terrorists or whoever they are can jeopardize lives, jeopardize our interests, or deprive us of important capabilities critical to our national security, I think, and I have had a good experience as I said, that the press has a responsibility and should listen, consider, and take whatever steps can be done to eliminate or mitigate the damage.

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DAILY NEWS

Long View, Washington

QUESTION TO MR. CASEY: I wonder, sir, if you could help us out with what appears to me to be a problem in the Intelligence Community, insofar as terrorism is concerned. It seems, at least out on the West Coast, that the United States is a good bit like a three hundred pound gorilla in terms of being able to track down some of these fellows who hijack airplanes and capture ships and things like that. How is it that our allies seem to be so much better at ferreting out where terrorists are hiding and who they are while we have this vast apparatus that you head and we don't seem to be able to run on the same kind of a track as they do. Is that a misperception, are we better at it than it appears?

CASEY: I think it is a misperception. I think your analogy of the gorilla, other than that, is a pretty good one. The terrorists are very difficult targets, very difficult to penetrate. They behave as small groups and in a secret manner. I will say that some of our allies are better at it because they have had more experience at it and that particularly some intelligence

services in the Middle East, the Israelis and others, and they have had more experience in Europe too. But the fact is that we are the leaders in this fight--it is a global fight--we are the leaders because we are the only country that has a global organization. Nobody else operates around the world. This terrorist phenomenon, one of the difficulties is that people cross borders, they are moving all around the world, and we don't have the resources, despite our huge apparatus as you call it, to cover all that territory and to watch what may be happening in France, Germany, wherever. The work on the ground has to be done by the local police and the local security and intelligence services, but because it is a moving operation--apparatus--because we have the data banks and the nationwide--worldwide--organization, we are very important in training, helping, and supporting them, providing them new capabilities and kind of exchanging and moving around the intelligence that each acquires and getting it where it needs to be. I think we have made vast improvements. We are not perfect and we have a long way to go. But to say that we can't fight our way out of a paper bag isn't quite true.