

Terrorism

An Interview with William Casey

"I would like to think the interception . . . will be a turning point"



In a wide-ranging interview with TIME Correspondent David Halevy, CIA Director William Casey expressed somber but generally optimistic views on the fight against worldwide terrorism and other matters. Excerpts:

On capture of the Achille Lauro terrorists. We had exact, accurate and timely intelligence. We knew where to go and where to act. That is the outcome of the past five years, during which we have had more resources and more experience. Not less important, we have very good relationships with the rest of the Government. The teamwork, the relationships within the intelligence community, with the National Security Council and the White House, are very good. We were all working round the clock, and it paid off.

On international cooperation against terrorism. I would like to think that the interception of the Egyptian plane with the four terrorists on board will turn out to be a turning point in getting the civilized countries to cooperate. We have now in operation, and working, a worldwide counterterrorist network. A number of countries provided help and information in capturing the ship's hijackers, though I am not at liberty to tell you which ones. This year alone, we managed to force the terrorists to abort 80 other terror operations that were planned or under way; this we were able to achieve through the cooperation of hundreds of intelligence, security and police organizations. We have a lot to do in establishing the legal framework for automatic extradition, or in moving against nations that provide terrorists with passports and safe haven. Terrorists are pretty quick learners; they are smart, sophisticated people, believe me. They will come back and hit us again.

On terrorist organizations. There is no one person, there is no one capital in the world that controls terrorism. There is an apparatus made up of about 50 major terrorist organizations. Some of them will be hired by one country to carry out a job, some by another. But these states also have their own apparatus: Iran has the Revolutionary Guards; Libya has its own gang of thugs. So the entire structure is very mixed up and highly complicated. It is very important that sanctions be imposed on these states, that they be economically squeezed and that their diplomatic apparatus be prevented from facilitating the movement, cover and sup-



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port of terrorists. This is a war without borders, without clear enemies.

On the Soviet role in terrorism. I don't think the Soviets are the masterminds of terrorism or that they control it. But they have for a long time provided support that was vital for the terror organizations. For years, the Soviets have brought young people from non-Communist countries into Moscow to be trained in the arts of conducting wars of national liberation and inflicting violence. And the training camps for terrorists are primarily in the Soviet bloc and the countries they support: Cuba, Nicaragua, Libya and so on. Now, in Beirut, there has been a specific terrorist act against the Soviets themselves. So far they have handled it in a very quiet and cool way. It is too early to tell whether, because of it, they will change their basic policy toward the terror organizations. They have created a monster, but they got a lot of advantages out of it. With this and other instruments of destabilization and subversion, they managed to convert their continental power into a worldwide power. In little more than ten years, they have extended their reach from South Yemen to Angola, from Nicaragua to Ethiopia.

On U.S. vs. Soviet intelligence. I happen to think that in the intelligence arena we are probably ahead. We had to develop technical capabilities in order to penetrate their closed society. I don't think they have been notably successful in their operations in this country. They have had successes, but most of these were with people who volunteered to work for them.

They were individuals at low levels within Government organizations who, after they left, for money or revenge reasons, gave information to the Soviets. We don't think we have moles within our own system. Over the past three years, the Soviets have lost 200 of their intelligence officers, arrested or expelled from 20 to 25 countries. A number of their most senior people gave up and turned against them. What rating do you give that combination of factors? I wouldn't mark it very high.

On Soviet world problems. Five years ago, ordinary people were joining up with Communist guerrilla movements and throwing over governments. Today there are ordinary people around the world who have taken up arms to resist Communist-imposed governments in Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Cambodia and Nicaragua. That forced them and their allies to deploy 300,000 of their troops to occupy other countries. The Soviets spend some \$12 billion a year around the world to assist their allies in military and economic aid: \$4 billion goes to Cuba every year, Afghanistan costs them \$4 billion and Viet Nam, Cambodia, Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua take the rest. Since 1979 they have lost 750 planes in Afghanistan, mainly on the ground. The guerrillas now control twice as large a portion of Afghanistan as they did when they started, and the Soviets are taking a heavy toll. They know they would have to put an additional 400,000 soldiers into the country in order to pacify it, and they are slowly increasing their troops from 100,000 to 200,000. They are searching for ways to get out, have some kind of accommodation.

On Soviet goals. Mikhail Gorbachev would like to come back from the Geneva summit with some kind of détente. They need some restrictions on their massive defense projects, which have become a burden on their economy. Even so, they not only have a missile-defense system that encircles Moscow; they have a production line ready to build the components to extend that system around the country, rather rapidly.

On U.S. intelligence preparedness. We are well protected against another Pearl Harbor. I am confident we are not likely to miss any such major preparation. We have learned the lesson of Iran and established a team of people who study the factors of instability in various countries. We look at the world on a daily basis. It is hard work, but we are doing fine. ■