

Conservative Digest

John Rees
P. O. Box 1523
Washington, D.C. 20013
1-800-638-2086

March 8, 1986

Mr. George Lauder
Director of Public Affairs
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, DC 20505

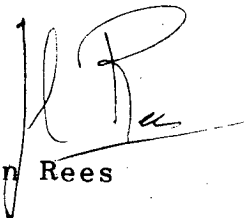
Dear Mr. Lauder:

As we discussed, I enclose some questions which I would like to include in my interview with Director Casey.

Should it be convenient for the replies to these questions to be written in advance, it might serve to reduce the time that I will be bothering him! From the earlier issues of Conservative Digest that you have, you will see that our interviews tend to call for rather long answers.

I've also enclosed a copy of a newsletter with which I am associated. It circulates to some offices in your establishment and may be of interest.

Sincerely,



John Rees

JR:na
Encls.

DCI INTERVIEW WITH JOHN REES

1. Overall, how has morale of the CIA's intelligence officers and employees changed since you took charge?

DCI: I think morale has risen greatly in the past five years. You can see this just walking the halls, or talking with Agency officers at home and overseas. Two years ago, I asked everyone to submit ideas about a search for excellence, and the response was terrific--that kind of outpouring only takes place in an organization with high morale. Our retention rate is well above that of a similarly sized organization in the private sector, and better than the government average. We've been able to rekindle a spirit of professionalism and you can see that professionalism in the high quality of the information we collect, analyze, and deliver to policymakers.

2. What are some of the major misunderstandings that the general public holds regarding the CIA's fundamental mission and activities?

DCI: I'm afraid the public tends to be misled about our mission by the huge variety of "spy fiction" that is available in books, films and on TV, and by what I can only describe as biased

reporting about the Agency in the media. We are in the information business. The overwhelming majority of our effort is devoted to the collection, analysis and delivery of intelligence information to key policymakers and to counterintelligence abroad. Unfortunately, almost all the public attention is focused on what is only a small part of our charter--what we now call covert action, the application of US foreign policy by clandestine means. Some people still believe the CIA carries out all sorts of illegal activities without any constraints--in truth, we are one of the most carefully scrutinized and regulated agencies in the government. Everything we do is done at the direction of the President and the National Security Council, we keep the Congress well informed, and we scrupulously observe U.S. laws and Presidential directives that regulate our activities..

3. Are intelligence operations alien to the American tradition?

DCI: Quite the contrary--we've always had some kind of intelligence activity in this country. Even before the Revolutionary War, George Washington was involved in collecting intelligence for his British masters about the French and their Indian allies. During the Revolutionary period, John Jay operated an intelligence net, and after the war of 1812, Secretary of State

Daniel Webster regularly used spies against the British. Both sides used spies in the Civil War, and the Union forces took advantage of new techniques as well--observers in aerial balloons were sent up to see what was going on behind Confederate lines, for example. I could document a great deal more about the role of intelligence in our history--the Agency maintains a collection of more than 20,000 volumes about the history of intelligence in our library.

4. What is the state of relations with the US media and the academic foreign policy community?

DCI: Our relations with the media can sometimes be contentious, because we obviously cannot say too much about what goes on inside the Agency. We need to protect our sources of information and intelligence mechanisms. We attempt to obtain the media's voluntary cooperation in that regard. After all, we protect their freedom as well as our own and that of all Americans. We also work against hostile intelligence services overseas that are constantly trying to penetrate our organization and our government. We have to be circumspect about our capabilities in that area. Nevertheless, we try to be as forthcoming as we can with the media and the public within the constraints under which we operate. We never lie to the press or try to mislead the media. And we have no desire to impinge on freedom of the press. We do have to be protective of the lives of sources and our sensitive and expensive collection systems if we are going to be able to carry out our mission.

Relations with the academic community are really quite good. We rely on scholars around the US to help us interpret world events, and give us advice on a variety of technical issues and to challenge us constructively and offer different perspectives. Some academics have expressed reservations about working with the Agency--and some are clearly hostile--but we are not going to twist anyone's arm to work with us. Our Director of Intelligence, Bob Gates, who has been nominated by the President to be Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, made a speech at Harvard in February outlining the ways in which we deal with academics, and the response on the part of scholars has largely been positive. We have no desire to restrict or censor the work academics do for us, except that we must protect any secret information to which they may have had access. We also must bear in mind the impact some types of research may have on U.S. foreign policy if CIA's interest is revealed. The best academics seem to understand that without CIA and others out there defending the American way of life, their own academic freedom would vanish in a hurry.

5. How can CIA respond to critics when fundamentally everything it undertakes is secret?

DCI: What is secret about intelligence, basically, are the sources and methods we use to obtain information. This means that much of what we do contains at least some classified elements. But, the Agency can seldom answer its critics because for security

reasons it can rarely tell the whole story. Much of the criticism is ill-founded, and some of it is so "far-out" that it doesn't even deserve a response. There is a tradition in intelligence that we are supposed to be a silent service, so for the most part we have to rely on others to take up cudgels in our defense.

6. To what extent has trust and cooperation with allied intelligence changed?

DCI: I'm not going to discuss relations with our allies--this is a sensitive subject and should remain under wraps. I can say that relations with our friends continue to be good, as they always have.

7. How do you view the adversarial positions taken in the House and Senate overall? Are criticisms of CIA related more to questions of administration policy, or are they more on fundamental concepts of intelligence such as covert action?

DCI: We've usually had good relations with the Congress. We provide both Houses with an enormous amount of intelligence because they are highly interested in foreign policy matters. Our relations with the Oversight Committees are also good, in spite of what you may have read in some press accounts. We recognize that many things that go on on the Hill are due to partisan political activity, and that some of the criticism of the Agency is really aimed at the White House. I believe the Members of the Oversight Committees have generally been responsible and helpful colleagues--there have been some exceptions, however, and some material has gotten into the public media that should have remained in the vaults up there. We don't like the political posturing and we certainly don't approve of using the press as a forum to debate intelligence issues. Nonetheless, I think I can say that our relations with the Congress generally remain useful and productive.

8. In the field of combatting international terrorism, what is your agency's role? With respect to states that sponsor terrorist groups, what are the key problems besides Libya?

DCI: CIA's role in combatting terrorism involves providing information to our national leaders about who the terrorists are, where they are, how they operate, and what they intend to do, if we can. This is a tough nut to crack, because these groups tend to be hard to penetrate, and they operate outside the bounds of normal international affairs. As you may know, the State Department has the lead in dealing with efforts to stop or interdict terrorists, and we provide our information to State and the military, both of which would be involved if the President decided that some sort of counterterrorist activity was necessary.

You are correct in stating that Libya is heavily involved in supporting and training terrorists--but it is not alone. In fact, state-sponsored terrorism is one of the more frightening developments in international relations in recent years. A number of countries have provided training sites and operational bases for terrorists--Iran, Cuba, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia come to mind--and we also have learned that the proceeds from narcotics traffic from South and Central America as well as from the Far East is helping to provide funding for terrorist groups.

9. Has the US effort to combat terrorism been a factor in the way CIA campus recruiters are regarded by college students? How do students now regard a career in intelligence? What's the most basic requirement--foreign language skill, political science degree?

DCI: Our recruiting program both on and off college campuses has been a real success story in the last few years. Our recruiters have faced a certain amount of disruption at certain schools, but this has not deterred those who are seeking a career with us. In fact, some students have told us that the demonstrators do not represent the mainstream of student opinion, by any means, and that many of the demonstrators are not even students. College students today are increasingly interested in careers in government or in military service, and the response to our campus presentations, and other recruiting drives have really been overwhelming. Young people today bring us some different skills than in the past--technological and scientific backgrounds, or computer capability. Their enthusiasm is inspiring. We recruit people from all sorts of disciplines, and with all sorts of backgrounds. We are looking primarily for people who are interested in work related to the affairs of the United States in the foreign environment. I should

point out that we are extremely selective in our hiring procedures, and that only about one percent of serious applicants make it through the process.

10. How do you hope your term as Director will be remembered?

DCI: I'm not sure how long people will remember me personally, but there are some things that I will be able to look back on with considerable pride: the rebuilding of our capabilities abroad has been very important. We have also been able to establish a new sense of mission during my tenure as DCI, and our new building, due to be completed next year, is a symbol of the general upgrading of our resources and the support we have from both the President and the Congress. But the people are the most critical ingredient in intelligence. In some ways, I feel like the conductor of a highly professional and competent symphony orchestra--I can give the beat and perhaps lead the orchestra to play a bit louder or softer, but in the end the quality of the music depends on the musicians. Americans can be proud of the fact that its intelligence "musicians" are the best in the world.