

KALB: Good day from Washington. I am Marvin Kalb inviting you to Meet the Press with Admiral Stansfield Turner, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

ANNOUNCER: Meet the Press, an unrehearsed press conference, is a public affairs presentation of NBC News.

KALB: Our guest today on Meet the Press is Adm. Stansfield Turner, who directed the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies during the Carter administration. A one-time Rhodes Scholar, Admiral. Turner formerly commanded the U.S. Second Fleet and the southern sector of NATO. His book, entitled 'Secrecy in Democracy', is due to be published early next year. Our reporters today are Haynes\Johnson of The Washington Post; David\Ignatius of the Wall Street Journal; Georgie\Anne\Geyer of Universal Syndicate; and to open the questioning, our regular panelist, Bill\Monroe, of NBC News.

MONROE: Admiral, attacks by airplanes of Iran and Iraq on oil tankers threatened to shut down the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. What should the U.S., what can the U.S. do about that? ADM.\STANSFIELD\TURNER (Former CIA Director): Bill, let's first put it in perspective. Iraq is harassing shipping going into the Iranian oil terminals. Iran is harassing shipping going into the Saudi, Bahraini, Kuwaiti and other oil terminals on the other side of the gulf. Despite this harassment, the price of oil has not gone up. That means the oil people feel there's enough coming out and probably will be for some time to come. Where the United States' interest is involved, is in not letting that...(next 15 seconds missing due to technical difficulty)

MONROE: The Saudi Arabians and some of their neighbors seem to be blaming Iran for events. There is talk that the United States is tilting against Iran. And The New York Times this morning quotes unnamed administration officials as believing that a successful and low-cost operation against Iran might be even more popular at home than the Grenada strike was. What is your comment on that? TURNER : I don't think that latter point is valid at all. To try to take out Iran and its capability for harassing shipping in the gulf would be a costly operation. You'd have to bomb all the Iranian air force bases, all the Iranian naval bases. They would retreat with the airplanes deep into Iran, and so on. It would become a difficult operation.

MONROE: But isn't Iran, in fact, chiefly responsible, at this point, for prolonging that war? TURNER : No, it's a two-sided problem. The Iraqis started the war; the Iranians responded. Iraq now is the one really initiating this war at sea. I think what the Saudis are trying to do, under our encouragement, is to pressure Iraq to cease its attacks on Iranian shipping. Iran has promised in the United Nations then to cease attacks on other shipping. If the Saudis cannot do that, it's because Iraq is pretty desperate right now, and that may well be the case. Then the Saudis have to fall back on their second plan, which they're trying sort of half-heartedly now, and that's to take information from the American AWACS aircraft over the gulf about when the Iranian planes are coming out to attack, and use it to send their own Saudi

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Arabian fighters out to intercept those Iranian attack aircraft. That isn't working right now, but it may, in the future, be better.

KALB: Thank you, Admiral. We'll be back with more questions for Admiral Turner.

KALB: Our guest on Meet the Press, the former director of the CIA, Adm. Stansfield Turner. We'll resume the questioning with Miss Geyer.

GEYER: Admiral Turner, there seem to be two schools of thought in Washington right now about Iran and Iraq. One group is applauding the administration for, in effect, not doing anything, being cautious; the other group is almost taking a position, well, that, there is nothing we can do. Is it true that we really don't have the resources to respond in the gulf? How would you think about those two schools of thought? TURNER : We do have the resources to respond in the gulf if the Saudi efforts to calm this down fail and if, as a result, the price of oil begins to go up. Then I think we should intervene, and we can. There are two ways of doing it. One is to introduce land-based aircraft onto Saudi Arabian bases and provide air cover and support for the ships going through the gulf. The other is to do the same thing with aircraft from United States Navy aircraft carriers. You might be surprised to find I favor the naval option. Why? The biggest threat to United States long-term interests in the Persian Gulf region is instability in the moderate Arab states that produce oil. And that stability is today threatened primarily by what's known as Islamic fundamentalism, partly Khomeini's efforts to impose an Islamic rule on that area of the world, but partly indigenous movements. Those movements criticize the moderate Arab states because they've become polluted, as they would say, by being too closely associated with the Western World, with America. If we start a big military move into Saudi Arabia, I think it will be injurious to the Saudi Arabians. The Navy's reluctant to send carriers into that small a region. But if the carriers can't defend themselves against a second-rate Iranian air force, they'll never be able to stand up to the Soviets in a real war. It's a risk, but I think it's one that's quite acceptable and the Navy could handle well.

GEYER: How do you see what the West could do to the United States and the European countries to contain the Islamic revolution, or would it be best for us simply to do nothing, to not exacerbate it? TURNER : First of all, we must understand that being too forward, associating ourselves too closely with those countries, doesn't help them. Trying to get bases there, which we've been doing every since Mr. Carter declared the Persian Gulf a vital area for us, is not a good move. It's going to be detrimental in the long run. Secondly, we need to get back to the real fundamental, we've got to help solve the problem between the Arab world and Israel. That's a cancer that's going to cause problems between us and the Arabs for a long time to come. They'd blame it on us, rightly or wrongly. We've got to protect Israel's interests at the same time. But we must make more progress on that issue than we've done in the last three years.

GEYER: Well, have...? KALB: Mr. Ignatius?

IGNATIUS: Admiral Turner, President Reagan last week praised your successor as CIA director, Mr. Casey, as an inspiration to Americans. Do you share that assessment? Could you give us an evaluation of Mr. Casey's performance as CIA director? TURNER : I said on this program on the first of January, David, that

the appointment of Mr. Casey to that position was a mistake, not because of any impugning of Mr. Casey's character or capabilities, but because it's inadvisable to have a highly partisan political person in a job like that of director Central Intelligence where you have to be apolitical, where you have to be willing to stand up to a president and say, 'I'm sorry, Mr. President, that's improper, that's illegal, or that's for political purposes, not for national security purposes and I won't do it.' Lots of partisan political people can do that and Mr. Casey may well be doing that. But, it's more difficult when you have those partisan ties. The fact that Mr. Casey is in some difficulties today are (sic) reflective of his past partisan political activities before he came into the CIA. It's short of, it sort of shows me that oil and water don't mix here. It's a bad arrangement.

IGNATIUS: Do you think that Mr. Casey's reported brief comments to the Senate Intelligence Committee, informing them in a few words only about the CIA's assistance, role in the mining of Nicaraguan harbors, met the legal requirement to keep the Intelligence Committee fully and currently informed of all intelligence activities? TURNER : It met the legal requirement, I believe, but I don't think in any way it met the spirit of cooperation with the Congress in oversight of intelligence. I am very concerned today, not because of the mining thing in particular, but because of the entire way the White House has been flaunting the Congress with respect to the whole covert action program in Nicaragua. It could have two very serious results that would impede our intelligence for years to come.

KALB: Mr. Johnson?

TURNER : Can I make those two points?

KALB: If you'll review those, please. Go ahead. TURNER : Quickly. First one is that we have a democracy in our country, and the will of the people and the will of the Congress can't be flaunted over the long run. If the Congress gets its back up, it'll pass a law tightening controls, forcing more information, maybe to the point that we can't do good intelligence. And secondly, today, unfortunately, when you pick up a newspaper or you turn on the TV, you almost always hear something about the CIA that's derogatory. We're going back to where public confidence in the CIA is waning. I was there just after it hit a real low in 1975 and 1976 and I can tell you that was a serious problem. That important organization can't operate without public support, and it's losing it today because of the way we're pushing this covert action onto the people and the Congress.

KALB: Good. Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON: Admiral, I want to follow up very quickly on Mr. Casey, just what Mr. Ignatius asked you. Should he resign, then? If you say oil and water don't mix and you're critical of him, should he step out, for the good of the CIA? TURNER : I think that was... my complaint is with the appointment. I don't think partisan people should be appointed to begin with. Whether he should resign or not today is a domestic political issue I don't really feel I'm qualified to be part of.

JOHNSON: All right. On the question of covert actions in Central America, do you think there's a role at all for covert actions in this society that we have?

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TURNER : Oh, yes. I think covert action is an important element of our diplomatic tools. What you have to consider though, is is it going to succeed, first, and I don't think there's any evidence that it has succeeded in stopping the flow of arms to El Salvador in two and a half years. Secondly, you have to concern yourself with, is it within the limits of decency that the United States public would support if they knew about it? And public reaction to the mining of Nicaraguan harbors, I think, indicates clearly that this is not within the those limits. I think we have a problem with conscience and the public, because last October, we criticized the Syrians and Iranians for supporting what we called state-supported terrorism in Beirut. It's difficult to say that the CIA support mining of innocent passage ships into Nicaragua wasn't state-supported terrorism.

JOHNSON: Then Admiral, what should our role be? Should we put direct military force into Central America, or is that not a problem? TURNER : I think the thing we should be doing in Central America is giving genuine support to the Contadora Group of Mexico, Panama, Venezuela and Columbia. Those countries have more ability to put pressure on Nicaragua than do we. They're their neighbors and they're much bigger than Nicaragua and they can do something about this. But, as long as we're supporting contras, as long as we're emphasizing U.S. military presence in Central America, we are distancing ourselves from the Contadora people. We're making it difficult for them to work with us.

KALB: Admiral, the question about the president's 'Star Wars' proposal, about which a great deal of money is already going, is it possible for the United States, in your view, to build an invulnerable defense against incoming Soviet missiles without at the same time creating enormous insecurities within the Soviet Union that would, in effect, produce a totally unstable nuclear arrangement? TURNER : Well, there would be a very critical moment if we got way ahead of the Soviets in the direction of an invulnerable defense, because when they saw that we were about to achieve that, if they didn't have it, they might feel it was the time to strike. That doesn't mean, though, that we shouldn't be proceeding with the president's proposal. Because if we...

KALB: You favor the proposal? TURNER : ...Because we could be in the same, on the same problem on the other side if the Soviets got it and we did not. I favor it to the extent of doing a moderate, not an accelerated, level of research. We've got to develop that capability and see what happens. But where I am concerned is, I believe the president and others have given the country the impression that perhaps we can relax on offensive weapons, on our normal deterrent posture, because we're going to hope for 'Star Wars'. That's unrealistic. We've got to maintain our present kind of deterrent capability until we really know we've got a 'Star Wars,' and that's decades away.

KALB: Mr. Monroe?

MONROE: Admiral, some people connected with this administration might feel that you're advocating policies in Central America they would look on as rather timid and representative of the Carter administration, the way they look at it. In terms of covert action against Nicaragua, they feel they are making some headway, that they're imposing costs on Nicaragua; they're making it difficult for the Nicaraguans to support the rebels in El Salvador. Are you offering a better way to make it hard for the Nicaraguans to help the rebels in El Salvador? TURNER : I think I really am. I think the Contadora process is the

only effective one to slow down the Nicaraguans. Bill, we heard this same story in Vietnam over and over again, 'We're making it costly for the Viet Cong.' A couple of years ago I went to Namibia in southern Africa, and what did the South Africans tell me? 'We're making it costly for the *Z^WAPC^{PC} guerrillas.' Both of those were bad evaluations; so is this one that we're making in it costly for Nicaragua. You're making it costly not only for the government of Nicaragua, but for the people of Nicaragua, and you don't win the hearts and minds of those people and get them to want to throw the communists out when you cut off their fuel supplies and their oil and kill the Cuban doctors that are treating their children and the other kinds of things that we are doing down there.

MONROE: Are you going to stop the Nicaraguans from exporting revolution in the direction of El Salvador by a vague process of talks and negotiations, something aimed at power sharing? TURNER : Let me go back to your premise. I don't believe that Nicaraguan support for the El Salvadoran guerrillas is the critical factor in that guerrilla movement. You're only talking 6- or 8,000 guerrillas. They don't need a box load of arms coming in once a week in order to support that, Bill. It's a small support that they need, and they're going to get that, whether it comes from Nicaragua or someplace else.

KALB: Miss Geyer?

GEYER: Admiral, some analysts are saying that really, since World War II, which was the last traditional war that we have fought, conventional war, that our intelligence, our diplomacy, our military, have basically misunderstood the nature of modern warfare, which is irregular guerrilla warfare, terrorist warfare, etc. First of all, do you accept that analysis? And, if you do, do you think that our intelligence has analyzed it accurately or that it is doing so today? TURNER : Well, you either have a very broad and double-barreled question, here, Georgie Anne. But let me try to tackle first, the military aspect of it. I do agree that we in the military have not paid enough attention to lower threshold-type conventional wars, largely in the Third World. The only place we have fought, since World War II, we're hypnotized with nuclear deterrence and the defense of Europe. Those are very important, but we have not done well in performance in these other areas, Vietnam, Korea, the Iranian hostage rescue operation. Only against Grenada did we really do well when the odds were stacked against the Grenadians. As far as intelligence is concerned, I think we have a good ways to go in adapting to more sensitivity towards what we call societal change. How rapidly are countries like the Philippines going to undergo revolutionary trends today, because there are obviously very strong undercurrents there. It takes a different kind of analyst. It takes a different kind of sensitivity out in the fields to detect that sort of thing. It isn't always cloak-and-dagger spying. It's frequently just sitting in bars or cafes and talking with people and getting a sense for the country. We need to learn to do that better.

GEYER: Do you see that we are creating those people in the CIA today? TURNER : I think so. Yes. I think we started a move in that direction. But you're forcing some major changes on a well-established institution. It takes time, just like with the military or almost any other organization.

KALB: Mr. Ignatius?

IGNATIUS: Admiral Turner, I want to return to the Persian Gulf for a moment. Do you believe that the Saudi Monarchy is currently seriously vulnerable to internal subversion? And if so, what do you think the United States should do about it? TURNER : I don't think they are seriously vulnerable today, but I think there are a lot of signs that they're quite concerned about this Islamic fundamentalist movement. And it exists not only in the Shia Moslems of Iran, but it exists in the Suni Moslems of Saudi Arabia, so they do feel vulnerable to that. We need to be careful that we don't try to get too close to them. We need to help solve the Arap...Arab-Israeli problem and we need to be sure that we don't let Iraq fall to Iran in this present conflict. We don't want to commit ourselves anymore than we have to because we have long-term interests in Iran, but if it does look like Iraq is going to fall, we'd better be careful. And I think lastly, that we have to prevent the price of oil going up, not only because of the economic impact on the world, but because of our credibility. We've said we're going to keep the Straits of Hormuz open. We lost a lot of credibility in our pullout from Beirut. If we stumble again, the Saudis and others are not going to be very anxious to count on us in the future.

IGNATIUS: Given the difficulties that you've described and the general difficulties of projecting American military power abroad, do you think it was a mistake for the Carter administration that you were a member of to announce that you were prepared to use American military power to defend the Persian Gulf in some broad sense? TURNER : No, I don't think so, because I think it is a vital national interest of the United States, as contrasted with some of the other things we've done, like put a label of vital national interest on El Salvador and on Lebanon. The Persian Gulf, with that tremendous reservoir of oil on which the Free World is going to depend for years to come, despite the so-called temporary oil glut we're now in. And therefore we have to mark that out as a vital national interest. And we have to begin to build a different kind of military force that can operate there effectively.

KALB: You've got about two minutes to go. Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON: Earlier, you said in answer to a question of Mr. Monroe's about the Persian Gulf, we should wait until the price of oil goes up before taking action, if I understood you correctly, and described the acts of sinking ships as harassment, which might be called war in other descriptions. My question to you is, isn't there a long-term problem? Do we have to just sit and wait? This is the Achilles' heel of the Western World, as one of your predecessors, Mr. Schelsinger, said this morning. TURNER : Well, I use the word 'harassment' because we ought to be clear in our minds that the shipping is not stopped. Some of it is being harassed and maybe sunk or damaged, but, shipping does still flow. I think that it would be unwise for us, because there are so many contrary interests in that area, to get way out in front with the military action there unless we have some important interest. I don't think you want to wait 'til the price of oil is \$40 instead of \$30. But as soon as you anticipate that it is beginning to move towards that, then we want to take some firm action.

JOHNSON: Another question on terrorism. Do you have any thoughts on how you deal with a threat such as Mr. Khadafy's of Libya, when he says that there are going to be assassinations, hit squads, aimed at Western leaders? What do you do about that? TURNER : Well, you do have to step up your intelligence efforts against him. You do have to get your allied and friendly countries to back with

you in measures to curb his activities. I think we ought to be doing something together today about these so-called embassies that he has, which aren't really embassies, as we saw in Great Britain recently. We ought to enforce the rules of diplomacy here against him right now before we have another such incident.