

PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

Admiral Stansfield Turner

"The CIA and National Security"

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NEWPORT R.I. SPEECH

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: Thank you very much for this marvelously warm welcome back to Newport. Pat and I couldn't be more thrilled to be in one of our favorite places.

And may I say a special welcome to all of you in Pringle Hall. I understand they have a video over there. And I wish we could all be together in the same room.

This is very touching to me. It reminds me, of course, of that first Spruance lecture just a little over ten years ago tonight. It was also the evening that we dedicated this hall in the honor of Admiral Raymond Spruance. And what a galaxy of stars we had on the platform that evening. Over there was Samuel Eliot Morison, the great naval historian who wrote so much about Spruance. And next to him was Commander Tom Buell, here at the War College writing at that time the definitive biography of Spruance. And Mr. Herman Wouk, then writing the book, the novel "War and Remembrance," in which Spruance figures so prominently, and who then was the first Spruance lecturer.

But the star of the evening, the height of the whole thing for all of us was a wonderful, charming, dignified lady, Mrs. Raymond Spruance. She just took the stars away from all of the other eminent people. And all of us who had never met Admiral Spruance came away from that evening feeling that we had had some small contact with him through his lovely lady.

I can remember that as the eulogy poured out for Admiral Spruance, I was concerned at whether it would be too emotional for her. And as I looked over, there was nothing was going to spoil the poise and the dignity of this wonderful lady. She was the epitome of what the Admiral stood for.

And we all know that Tom Buell, in his book, called Admiral Spruance, in the title of the book, a quiet warrior. He eschewed flamboyancy like Halsey. He gave the credit for his victory at Midway to his chief of staff and other officers in much greater degree than they deserved.

And today we should think about that quality of Admiral Spruance, because our present senior military leaders may not have the opportunity to be as self-effacing as Raymond Spruance because they are forced into the fishbowl of public limelight. But let's hope that some of you here, as military officers heading into senior positions, can try, at least, to emulate Spruance in the quietness, the dignity, and yet the professionalism with which he did his job.

There's one other characteristic of Spruance that I suggest to you officers that you try to emulate, and that's the very breadth of his understanding of our profession. Here was a man who was trained as a surface officer who on almost no notice went to sea in command of a carrier task force that fought successfully at the Battle of Midway the most significant navy aviation battle in history. There are few officers of any service today who make that extra effort to escape from the bonds of specialization which so necessarily confront us in the military profession today. So few officers try to learn even the full component of their own military service, let alone the other military services. And yet this country is going to need in the future leaders with the depth and breadth of Raymond Spruance.

He was a great man, and I'm honored to be able to honor him tonight.

I would also like to pay tribute to another naval officer who demonstrated much of what we admire in Raymond Spruance. Captain Hugh Knott (?) came to the War College as chief of staff in 1972 and remained here in either a full- or part-time capacity until his untimely death last January. If there was ever an officer with whom I've had the privilege of working who had that same broad view of the profession, it was Hugh Knott. Whatever was being done, he kept into perspective. If it were junior officers coming to him pressing for something, if it was myself coming and proposing some wild scheme, Hugh always knew how to keep us pointed in the right direction.

I believe sincerely that Hugh's contribution for the good of this college over the 10 1/2 years that he remained here has been greater than that of any other single individual since World War II. He is and will be sorely missed.

Now, I can't stand behind this podium tonight without remembering that it may well have been from behind this podium that my naval career began to come to an end. It came to an end because in 1974 I invited a classmate of mine, the then-Governor of Georgia, Jimmy Carter, to come here and stand behind the podium and address the student body.

Now, the reason I say this may have been the beginning of the end is because I hadn't really remembered this classmate from Annapolis all that well.

[Laughter]

But 2 1/2 years later, President Carter woke up one morning, I'm told, and remembered me. I was on duty in Naples, Italy. I received a phone call that said the President of the United States wants to see you tomorrow. Well, I called in my

three closest advisers, two Navy commanders and an Army lieutenant general -- about equivalent.

[Laughter]

And as they made preparations to get me on an airplane, I said, "What do I think about across the Atlantic? What's the President going to talk to me about or ask me to do?" We went over a lot of possibilities. In the middle of it, I said, "Let's ask about the CIA. I read in the paper two weeks ago that the President's original nominee for the position withdrew after the Senate objected to him."

So we discussed, very briefly, the possibility that I might go to the CIA. But the discussion terminated when the lieutenant general said, "Stan, the President is your classmate and friend. He wouldn't do that to you."

[Laughter]

Well, the next morning he did. And when I walked out of the Oval Office, not much more than 24 hours from the time I had been alerted, I knew that 31 1/2 years of a naval career were behind me. I was in a new career as chief of the spies.

Initially, I found it really wasn't very different. The CIA has a lot of military characteristics. The people are very dedicated. You never worry about calling them in at twelve o'clock on Saturday night. The organization is very operationally-oriented. I am as proud of some of the secret operational accomplishment in my time at the CIA as I am of any military operational accomplishment in which I've participated. And the CIA has very high standards of professionalism and very high-quality people. So, in these respects, I did feel at home.

It was not very long, however, before I began to appreciate that the CIA was different, quite different from the military or from any other element of our government. It's unique in three ways.

First, it operates outside the normal process of our democratic governmental system.

Secondly, it's not really one CIA, it's three semi-autonomous agencies in one.

And thirdly, it is, and it should be, more independent of higher authority in the government than any other agency.

Let me look at each of those, starting with the fact that the CIA has to be an exception in our democratic process.

Our government is run on the principle that the citizens are the ultimate authority of what the government will and will not do. Citizens, though, simply cannot see enough of what the CIA is doing to exercise that ultimate control, through the Congress, through their President. This is a price of the secrecy that is essential to so much of what the CIA does for us.

Now, the secrecy in the CIA, though, is different than the secrecy in the military. In the CIA, it is the core, the basic activity of the agency that is kept secret. In the military, it's really something on the periphery, the characteristics of our weapons systems, except in wartime, not the basic principles of how we're planning to defend the country.

Thus, from its founding in 1947, the CIA was implicitly given authority to operate outside the normal checks and balances of our governmental process. That is a fundamentally unsound situation. Unaccountable power is subject to misuse. How any individual is apt to be less careful, less thorough when he believes that what he is deciding to do will not be subject to outside scrutiny, that he will not be held accountable. And the record shows, unfortunately, that the CIA made some mistakes of not being thorough.

There were some ill-advised intelligence efforts that were fruitless: the Bay of Pigs, the opening of U.S. mail, the administering drugs to unwitting Americans. When actions like these were uncovered in the investigations of intelligence in 1975, the country decided to set up a series of oversight and control procedures for intelligence. In effect, we established surrogates for the citizens as the ultimate control. The surrogate of the Congress, the surrogate of the White House, or, really, the National Security Council, the NSC.

Now, oversight was a revolution for the intelligence professionals to accept. I believe, however, that it worked well and that it has achieved two objectives for our country.

First, it has reduced the possibility of abuse of this special trust of being allowed to operate with less control and supervision than any other element of government. It is less likely today, for instance, that someone in the CIA may run off on his own initiative and undertake some ill-considered operation without the Director's approval. To begin with, he would know that he would be disobeying an explicit presidential order to clear sensitive operations with the NSC. Beyond that, he would know that he might have to testify under oath before Congress about what he has done, and he would not want to have to disclose to the Congress what he might have withheld deliberately from his Director.

The second objective that oversight has achieved is that

it forces the CIA into a greater judiciousness in planning what it is going to do. This can make our intelligence more effective.

I found, for instance, that when proposals came to me for risky secret operations, they were better thought out when the staff believed that I was going to have to take those and sell them to the NSC. And I, too, prepared better and insisted on thorough preparation, because I knew I was going to have to do that job of salesmanship.

So there are benefits to the quality of our intelligence from having an oversight process, from having accountability.

Some of the staunchest supporters of intelligence today, however, do not understand this. They have paid attention only to the fact that oversight can lead to leaks of secrets, though I don't believe it has led to serious ones. Thus, some of these supporters want today to relax all controls, to unleash the CIA, to go back to the good old days.

For instance, when the Reagan Administration came into office, they tried to weaken the presidential executive order on intelligence written originally by President Ford, strengthened somewhat by President Carter. The changes they proposed were so substantial that even Senator Barry Goldwater, a marvelous man and a strong supporter of intelligence, hardly a flaming liberal, objected to these changes. The Administration ended up loosening control around the periphery, on the fringes; but even then, quite unnecessarily.

At the other end of the spectrum today, though, there are still some civil libertarians who want to tighten those controls even more. Fortunately, they're quiescent for the moment. But there is, I believe, a deep latent distrust of the CIA in a significant segment of our society. And that distrust could erupt at the least excuse.

It is time for us, as a country, to abandon either of these extreme attitudes. The one side needs to recognize that we do have oversight, that it is effective, though it will never be one hundred percent insurance against excesses or mistakes. The other side must recognize that oversight is a strength to intelligence, not just a risk to secrecy. Too little oversight could risk reoccurrence of improper or illegal actions. And that, in turn, could unleash that latent distrust on the left.

I happen to believe that another round of intense public criticism of the CIA could be fatal.

Unfortunately, the second unique characteristic of the

CIA leaves it less well prepared to avoid errors of the past or to produce the best intelligence that we can have. that characteristic is that it is three agencies, not one. Why? Because there are incompatibilities in the five basic functions assigned to the CIA: spying, or human intelligence; technical collection, like photographs or electronic eavesdropping; analysis or interpretation of this information collected; counterintelligence overseas -- that is, preventing there being so-called moles inside our intelligence organizations -- and covert action, really not strictly an intelligence function, but one assigned to the CIA, influencing events in foreign countries without it being known who's doing the influencing.

Now, if we look at the first three of these, which are the basic functions of intelligence -- spying, technical collection, and analysis -- we can see their incompatibilities. Spying demands great secrecy. You've got to protect the identity of your agents. Secrecy, though, has historically led to abuse and has generated the demand for oversight.

In contrast, analysis has very little risk. There's very little need for oversight. It does need some secrets, of course. But on the other hand, it needs a great deal of openness. The analysts must be able to interchange with people in the academic world, the business community, and even the public, or you find they will get very cloistered, they will get very self-centered and very overconfident of their analyses. In sum, the needs, the outlooks of the analysts are quite different from those of the spies.

Now, the technical-collection people come out somewhere in between. Yes, they need secrecy for their inanimate inventions, their devices. Not quite as vital as protecting human life. Yes, they need some oversight because these technical devices can intrude into the lives of Americans improperly. So the needs and the outlooks of the technical-collection people are closer to those of the spies than the analysts, but they're not coincident with either.

It is because of these differing requirements that the three departments of the CIA have grown up over 30 years with an intense desire to protect their special interests. They have built a vast network of bureaucratic rules to protect their independence from each other and their independence from the Director of the CIA, lest he adjudicate between them. They prefer to take their chances on compromising their differences than in having them adjudicated in favor of one or the other. They're accustomed to having a Director who manages the external relations, relations with the Congress, the President, the public, but who leaves the management of the CIA to the three department heads.

This, it seemed to me, was an unworkable and unwise position, particularly to have decentralized and divided authority when we were in a new era of oversight. The CIA needs well-coordinated planning to insure that its resources are being used to the best advantage of the country, not to one of these departments. Spies must dovetail with the technical collectors, and both of them must be sure they're collecting what the analysts need to interpret. If they don't have this kind of planning, the Congress, which now, under oversight, does review the CIA's budget very carefully, is not going to give them the resources that they need.

The CIA also needs to insure that these three departments are not so independent that any they pass judgment on whether what they are doing is within the bounds of propriety and legality. The Congress and the National Security Council are going to find out if they are doing things they should not much sooner than they would have in the past.

To correct this situation, I brought into the CIA an excellent administrator as the Deputy Director, Ambassador Frank Carlucci, later the Deputy Secretary of Defense. We attempted to establish sufficient centralized control and planning mechanisms to give us the assurances we felt we needed. We made a lot of progress, but the bureaucrats resisted pretty hard. Not really out of willfulness or spite, but out of a conviction that good intelligence demands decentralization.

Now, as hard as I could search, I could not find evidence to support that. I could not find anything that really told me that the wild schemes of the past, under inadequate supervision, had actually produced significant intelligence.

What I did find was that the secrecy of spying engenders a mystique, a mystique that misleads people into believing that you can only spy if you are totally unsupervised. And that just is not so.

Some Director of the CIA needs to complete this transition to one agency instead of three, and soon, if the CIA is to achieve the effectiveness that it should. It's important to our national security interest that this be done, because the United States has built its entire intelligence operation around the CIA as the cornerstone. The reason for that is that the CIA is the only element of our intelligence community that is not associated with a policymaking department of our government.

Our intelligence community, as we call it, is made up of the intelligence components of a number of different departments of government. There is the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the State Department. There is an intelligence element in the

FBI. You are well aware that the Department of Defense has a Defense Intelligence Agency, the DIA; the four service intelligence organizations, and the National Security Agency. The Departments of Treasury and Energy also have intelligence operations.

Note, though, that all of the parent organizations here are very much a part of the policymaking, decision-making process in our government. Now, that raises problems. The very worst kind of intelligence is that in which the policymaker is told only what he wants to hear.

There's a strong ethic in American intelligence that even those intelligence organizations that are a part of a policymaking department must stand tall, must be willing to tell it like it is, even if they can't support their department's policies. That's nice in theory. It's not always easy in practice.

One way, then, that we try to buttress that ethic and try to insure there is not bias in our intelligence is to have competition in analysis or interpretation of the intelligence information. We never want only one agency to do all the interpretation on a given topic, lest it be influenced by its policymakers.

So, for instance, if we're going to study a political issue, some political trend in the world, the lead will probably be done by the State Department. The CIA has a very strong political element. And the DIA will also participate. If it's an economic issue, the CIA has the greatest strength here. The State Department does respectable economic work. And, of course, the Treasury Department will come in to. If it's a military subject, the DIA will take the lead, normally, and the CIA will play a very, very important role as well.

But there are several weaknesses in this system of back-up intelligence analysis. The first is that the State Department, while it does excellent intelligence work and is very seldom influenced by policy considerations, is such a small intelligence operation that it can't do justice to everything that we'd like to have it participate in.

But the major weakness of this back-up system is the inability of military intelligence to provide truly competitive analysis. There are two reasons for this. One is a lack of capability and the other is an inability to divorce from policy.

The lack of capability goes back to the origins of the DIA. Mr. McNamara simply took people from the service intelligence organizations and put them in the DIA. Now, there were

lots of exceptions, but in general, the services didn't give up their best people. And much of that attitude prevails today. A service military intelligence officer would always prefer to be assigned to his basic service intelligence organization than to the DIA. It's more career-enhancing. As long, in fact, as we have four separate service intelligence organizations, we're not going to have a really solid DIA.

Parenthetically, I happen to think that we don't need four service intelligence organizations, at least above the tactical level.

The problems of conflicts between Defense Intelligence and policy influence are even more serious issues than those of the competence of the DIA. As I've said, the ethic of intelligence is independent from policy. But look, the ethic of the military profession is responsiveness to command. The commander once he's made up his mind and enunciated his decision. Supporting him is a must, if we're not going to have chaos on the battlefield. And thus, the intelligence officer who tries to buck the system with unpopular conclusions is often looked on poorly in a military environment. And whether deliberately or not, the military hierarchy can impose enormous pressures to conform.

Let me give an example. Every year the intelligence community produces a number of what are called national intelligence estimates. These are studies or interpretations of one or several major issues facing the country. They're done by the entire intelligence community, with everyone who's concerned participating. Now, of course, with that many participants there are seldom total agreement. So we come to a big issue of how do we present the disagreements, the differing views, which is, of course, the essence of having competitive analysis.

If you put too much emphasis on the dissenting views, you end up confusing the policymaker who reads the study. If you put in too few, maybe you've overlooked that dissenting view which really is the important one. I felt that what was important was to put in as many views in these estimates as could explain exactly why they disagreed with the majority view, so the decision-maker could clearly see the contrast and the reasoning between the different outlooks. The weakness, however, was that I could seldom get the Defense Intelligence Agency to produce a meaningful explanation of its position. They believed what they believed, and they believed it very strongly, but they couldn't give reasons for it. Sometimes that was due to a lack of competence, sometimes it was due to the pressures not to produce anything that would endanger some military policy, would endanger some military program what was up before the Congress for decision.

What this has unfortunately meant, then, is that United States military estimates today are built on CIA analysis much more than they should be. The DIA should be our best source of military analysis. The good professional officer today who wants unbiased intelligence, then, should appreciate the benefits of using the CIA as a foil by calling on them for a second option.

Why is it important that you and I, as citizens, understand these three points of uniqueness of the CIA? Because I think it should be obvious to all of us that intelligence is of growing importance to our defense and foreign policy in this country.

Look just 13 days ago, when we had the unfortunate incident of the Korean airliner. Twenty years ago, if that had happened, the Russians would have got away with it. Our intelligence would not have been capable of giving the specific evidence that we have adduced in this case.

Look, for instance, at the fact that for well over a decade we've been engaged in serious arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. We simply could not even countenance that did we not have superb intelligence systems that can peer into the Soviet Union and check on whether they are fulfilling the obligations of a treaty.

Look, for instance, at the fact that for 38 years now we have lived with a delicate balance of nuclear terror between us and the Soviet Union, and yet we have somehow found that tolerable, because it's our confidence that our intelligence will prevent the Soviets from pulling some surprise that could put us at a disadvantage.

If the United States is going to continue to have the benefit of such intelligence, it needs a more sophisticated approach to how to manage our intelligence systems.

The attitudes of the American public tend to swing from one extreme to the other, from drumbeat condemnation of the CIA to not being able to do enough for the boys in the spy cloaks. Neither is a sensible attitude if we try to understand the nature of the responsibilities that we have placed on the intelligence professionals in the CIA. First we ask them to operate largely outside the checks and balances of our governmental system. That permits them unusual freedom and subjects them to temptations that no other government agency has. Next we assign them five intelligence functions, each of which drives them to react in a somewhat different manner. And third, we make the CIA the cornerstone of our intelligence activity, expecting it not only to carry out much of the production of intelligence, but also to keep the entire system honest, to free it from improper influence

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by policymakers.

The professionals of the Central Intelligence Agency deserve great credit, in my view, for having done as well as they have done since its inception in 1947. These 36 years are ones in which we needed a centralized intelligence service, which we did not have ever before. We learned that from the unfortunate lessons of our failure to predict the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Today we have a centralized intelligence service, and it's a good one. But after giving the CIA that deserved credit, I want to add that we must also recognize that these three hazards of doing intelligence the American way will continue to exist, to one extent or another, into the indefinite future. If the eternal vigilance is the motto of the United States Navy, something akin to that should be our approach to American intelligence. Not because we should mistrust the CIA or its people, but because we should recognize that we have given them an exceptional challenge to meet. And we should each want, very much, that they continue to meet that challenge every bit as well in the future as in the past.

Thank you.

[Applause]

I'd be happy to entertain your questions.

Q: What is your opinion of why Admiral Inman may have left CIA?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The question was what is my opinion of why Admiral Inman left the CIA.

I have not spoken to Bobby about that, so I have no firsthand knowledge. I do know that Bobby Inman, very sincerely, wanted to leave the government at the end of the Carter Administration. Not because of the change of Administrations, but because of that point in his particular life and career.

And I'll tell you an interesting story of how he became to be the Deputy Director of the CIA. Because one day, my deputy, Frank Carlucci, in the waning days of the Carter Administration, had been designated to be Mr. Weinberger's deputy at Defense. And he came and mentioned to me that he had asked Bobby Inman to take a job in intelligence inside the Pentagon rather than over at the National Security Agency, where he was.

The next day, Mr. Casey and I were having a meeting during the turnover phase, and he said, "Carlucci tried to steal Inman from me." He said, "I topped him one. I went to the

President and got the President to call Inman to keep in as Deputy Director of the CIA."

So, I think it was the sense of rivalry here, and poor Bobby was trapped. Because when a President calls you, as I told you earlier in the evening, it's hard to say no. So I think he was there under something of duress. And I don't think there was great friction or such forth. I think he genuinely wanted to get out into the business world.

[Asides about use of microphone]

Q: Admiral, could you comment the pros and cons of having a permanently-appointed Director in lieu of a political appointee, with particular regard to the goals of having that continuity of supervision and insulating the agency from the political pull and tug in Washington?

[Asides about use of microphone]

ADMIRAL TURNER: I do not believe it would be wise to have a set term of appointment for the Director of Central Intelligence, as there is for the Director of the FBI. The reason is that the Director of Central Intelligence is an immediate adviser to the President of the United States. If you do not have a personal rapport with the President, you're not going to be very effective. The President deserves to have someone in whom he has full confidence in that position.

Having said that, I certainly agree that there is too little continuity in the office. And that is very injurious to the kinds of things I have been suggesting.

I believe, therefore, that it would be desirable if new Presidents would try to tolerate the old Director for maybe six months and see if they could get along. But I don't think there should be any implacable rule here that requires a President to keep a Director on.

And finally, I will say, in all candor, but not with criticism of George Bush or Bill Casey, that they were bad appointments. Not because of the men and their capabilities, but because they were political figures, highly partisan political figures. There was no way that Jimmy Carter could keep George Bush, who asked to stay on and eschewed any further political office, if he could. But there was no way Jimmy Carter could keep him in his inner councils, as former Chairman of the Republican National Committee. There is no way a future Democratic President will keep Bill Casey, the former campaign manager of President Ronald Reagan.

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They're good men. I'm not criticizing them. But I am urging that we understand that we should find people of less political stripe. Jim Schlesinger was a good example, John McCone, of non-CIA professionals who held the job and stayed where they could shift with different Presidents, and so on.

Q: Admiral, do you feel we've compromised any of our intelligence sources or capability in the recent disclosure of some of the information during the Korean airplane situation?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes, we certainly have. We have never given out information about our intercept capabilities in this kind of specific detail. It, ironically, came the very day that President Reagan sent a memorandum to 2.6 million governmental employees saying, "Keep the secrets better."

[Laughter]

I'm not saying that, though, in full criticism. I think it's too early to tell -- and in point of fact, you and I will never know -- whether this was worthwhile or not, because you have to take two factors into account. One, how much harm will this do the Soviets? How long will this opprobrium last? I happen to think not long and not much damage, but that remains to be seen. Secondly, you and I will never know how much harm it really does. The Japanese have revealed that they only get 60 percent of the intercepts today that they received before the 1st of September because the Soviets have taken countermeasures.

And what really is more serious is not what we gave away, but what now oozes out around the fringes. People, like me, start talking when they shouldn't. The Secretary of State has talked. They've had recordings in the United Nations. Other intelligence officers then begin to feel, "Well, we can talk about this," but they get a little bit over the line and something comes out that should not. It already has. I won't invite your attention to it because there might be a Russian spy in the audience.

Q: Admiral, how would you, if you can do so diplomatically, assess the intelligence capability of our principal NATO allies as being reliable partners with us in this line of work?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Oh, it's the first time anybody expected me to be diplomatic. Thank you.

A very interesting element here is to recognize that there are only two complete intelligence services in the world, the KGB in the Soviet Union and the CIA and the rest of the intelligence community in the United States. Only those two,

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for instance, have satellites, have all the plethora of listening stations around the world, have all this capability. Only those two even attempt to have total worldwide coverage of intelligence matters.

Now, beyond that, to address your question, some of the European countries have quite good intelligence services within the limits of their physical capability, of their resources. I would say, however, I don't believe any compare in quality, let alone size, with that of the United States.

Q: Would you say that the United States CIA, as it is now, with its present restrictions, is capable of [inaudible].

ADMIRAL TURNER: The microphone may not have worked. Is the CIA, with its present restrictions, capable of competing with the KGB, the Soviet intelligence service?

Undoubtedly. There are the three elements of intelligence that I mentioned: human spying -- it's hard to measure this. You never can measure it very accurately. The KGB does a lot more than we do. They get caught at it now and then. We do a good bit. We get caught at it once in a while. But I think, on balance, in my opinion, we're as clever, as astute as they are. That's a very subjective qualitative judgment.

Much less subjective is the fact that we have superior technology in the United States, and therefore our technical systems for collecting intelligence are far superior to those of the Soviet Union.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the Soviet Union is a totalitarian society. If you analyze the intelligence information collected incorrectly, in accordance with Soviet doctrine or policy, you may find yourself in serious trouble. I have emphasized to you tonight that we have trouble with policymaking influencing intelligence, but that it is the basic ethic, the basic foundation of our intelligence operations in this country that intelligence analysis must be able to say the truth as it sees it. That is a tremendous strength for our intelligence and a weakness for the Soviets. It makes no difference how many spies you have. If you can't interpret what they're telling you right, you're not going to be very well off.

Q: Admiral, should the CIA be in the covert action business? And if so, why?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Covert action has, of course, got the CIA into more trouble and criticism than probably anything else. I think it has to be in the covert action business because you don't want to create a new agency to do covert action, because

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then it will certainly want to do it. At least if you keep it in an existing organization, it can go up and down in accordance with the needs of the country; not like the Corps of Engineers, that has to build more dams every year because the Corps exists.

Boy, I'm giving the Army a hard time tonight. I'm sorry.

[Laughter]

I really love them, but.

And I do think that there is a role for cover action in our arsenal of diplomatic tools. You don't want to skip from diplomacy to war if you can accomplish your means by covert techniques. There's nothing immoral with trying to influence events in another country. We do it by not doing anything, sometimes. We are too important in the world, too influential in the world not to bear lots of influence, whether we want to or not.

So the question is, how deliberately do we want to do that influence, and what kinds of things do we want to do?

One principle that has been violated recently is that with the oversight procedures that I've described to you, you cannot do a covert action that is highly controversial, because it is going to leak out. And that is one limitation, that is one sacrifice that we have made in this country to have oversight of intelligence. It's the only serious one that I know of. And I don't think it's too serious, at that. But it is a definite limitation.

We should never have gone into Nicaragua on a covert basis, because we were supporting, or at least appearing to support, supporters of former dictator Somoza. That was going to be controversial. It was going to turn a covert action into a non-covert action by the publicity it was bound to receive. And the CIA is going to end up the fall guy for the United States in this situation if that covert action isn't totally successful. And I doubt very much that it will be or can be.

So, we have a limitation today, because of oversight, to smaller-scale covert actions that can be kept covert because they are not highly controversial.

Q: Admiral, now that you have a chance to reflect, why do you think Khomeni released our prisoners on the last day of the Carter Administration?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Because he's an S.O.B.

[Laughter and applause]

ADMIRAL TURNER: In September of 1980, in reflection, it appears to me that the Iranians -- whether Khomeini himself was involved, we'll never know -- the Iranians made up their minds it was time to get rid of the hostages. Why? Because during the whole process of the hostage issue, from November 4th, 1979 to September 1980, the Iranian revolution was still a revolution. They had not settled their internal power structure, and they were using the hostages as a ploy in that. Any faction that came about "let's get rid of the hostages" was labeled un-American [sic], so that they could build up power within Iran by criticizing the "Great Satan" and so on.

But by September, they'd got their parliament, they'd got their president, they'd got their structure organized. And this now was a petard around their own neck, and they were willing to get rid of it. They were so incompetent that they wanted to do it before the election, thinking they could get more out of Mr. Carter as a pre-election affair, but they couldn't pull it off. So they stumbled around and we just barely missed it.

Then they didn't know what to do, 'cause who was really the President of the United States, from their point of view? And then, because I think he is an S.O.B., they decided to do it in this ignominious way, waiting until one minute after President Carter was out of office.

Q: Admiral, could you comment on the problem of technology transfer to the Soviet Union?

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's a very tough one. It's easy to stand up, wave your arms and say, "Let's stop all this technology transfer. They're building up their military."

My personal feeling is that we absolutely must stop the transfer of the capability to manufacture high-technology materials. But it's almost impossible to stop the sale of some of those materials themselves: components, tubes, chips, and so on. I mean when we put the kind of chips we do into a video game, how can you, you know, keep those out of the Soviet Union? But you can keep out the machines that make the chips.

I think that's about the best we can do, except for those rare items where we have a near monopoly on the capability to manufacture them. When the Japanese and the Europeans and others get it, we're up the creek.

In addition, you do want to be careful that you don't shackle our own industry, our own inventiveness, our own momentum

to move ahead in all of these areas in order to deny the Soviets something that they're probably going to get by an end run.

Q: Admiral, is it inconceivable to think that that Korean airliner could have had spying equipment on board?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, it's not inconceivable. It's inconceivable to me that the United States, in any way, would have participated in such an activity. I can't tell you on a stack of bibles that the Koreans weren't doing it. I see no reason that they would. One has trouble being sure you understand the logic of another country well enough to even surmise that that is certainly true.

It would have been totally irresponsible for an American intelligence officer to use an airplane with 269 people as bait for intelligence collection. It just would not have been done, particularly with these oversights and controls that I've told you about. So I can't see that. Plus we have alternative ways of getting that kind of -- the information that an airplane presumably would be able to get. So I doubt it very, very much.

I can't explain why the airplane was off course, more than anyone else, I don't believe. But I think the fact that they had the other incident five years before and that this is a very regimented society and one in which discipline and accountability is exercised meant that when they had this incident, the commander on the scene didn't want to end up in the same hoosegow as his buddy was five years before. And I think their system went into reaction and I think they've told us the truth, that the man on the spot made the decision. Two and a half hours, he undoubtedly let Moscow know something was going on. But he didn't get a veto. He went a head in a rather mechanistic way, which certainly was foolish from the Soviet point of view in terms of the cost that it did cause them.

Q: Admiral, given your comments this evening regarding the problems of having a political appointee as head of the agency, and given that the agency is not part of a political -- or a policymaking body, and theoretically should be totally removed from politics, what is your feeling of having the Director of the agency being a professional from within the discipline or someone who's come up through the ranks of the agency?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Oh, that's fine at its right time. I believe the agency is the kind of organization where it is very desirable to have outsiders from time to time. But I think you also have to be sure you have intelligence professionals from time to time. It's got to be that carrot that sits out there for them. And they are very well qualified, in some cases, for it.

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I would say to you that I don't think -- I don't want to sound egotistical, because I'm not talking about me, I'm talking about my being an outsider. I don't think an intelligence professional could have brought the CIA through the period of shakedown of oversight as well as an outsider. It happened to be my fate to have to do that. But it's hard for an insider to reform his native organization. If he moves in this direction he's accused of favoring whatever was his element in that organization -- analysis, spying, whatever -- before. If he moves in that direction he's accused of doing something else.

In my personal view, some of the most important reforms in the United States Navy, well back into history, have come only because of civilian direction and interference. We cannot reform ourselves.

I hope they're having you read....

[Cassette turned]

ADMIRAL TURNER: ...adapt to filling in where the technical systems cannot serve you. The illustration I always give is if you suddenly on your photograph see a new factory on the outskirts of the capital of Country X and you think that has some characteristics of a nuclear processing facility, the next thing you do is you take the eavesdropping people and you turn them loose and you say, "With whom is that factory communicating in the capital of the country? Listen to the radio signals." And you find it is the Ministry of Nuclear Affairs. At that point, you hire a spy and you send him into that building and you say, "I want to know whether that factory is tied to the right-hand end, which is nuclear power, or the left-hand end, which is nuclear weapons."

Now, what you have done is you've made the spy more important. He is really focused on what you want, rather than the old days that he had to get all of the intelligence that there was. He's more valuable to you in this mode than he was before. So you don't neglect him.

And, sir, I fired 17 spies. And they were terribly overstaffed before that. And the people of your age were complaining to me they couldn't move anywhere because there were so many people overlooking them. And as a naval officer, I knew that oversupervision is the one thing that will demoralize a junior officer.

So, we lost nothing in terms of great skill, and so on. All of them who left the CIA under my aegis -- because there were others who were asked to retire early, 150 or something, a couple years early. Those in the 17 were all in the bottom five percent

on the fitness reports. And they told the world that we'd lost the great [unintelligible] memory of the Central Intelligence Agency. Hardly so.

There is a place for both. But I will tell you the real problem -- [inaudible].

[Laughter]

ADMIRAL TURNER: The real problem that the human-intelligence people have not been willing to recognize these facts and adapt. They are behind the times.

If you're going to do what I described to you, when you go out and recruit spies, you don't go recruit the first guy you can get. You go out and find a nuclear physicist. You go out and find, when you recruit, somebody whom you think is going to help you fill that blank in what the technical intelligence systems are going to get you. It's a whole retooling of the approach to human intelligence.

Those people prefer to complain they're being neglected than to adapt.

Finally, I'd like to say not only thank you for having asked me here, but I want to compliment you on the improved technology at the Naval War College. All of the two years that I was here, I never could get these two clocks to run in sync.

[Laughter and applause]