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SUBJECT Interview With ^{CAVE-} Brown and Colby

CAROL RANDOLPH: And we're also going to talk to right now -- Ed has joined Anthony Cave-Brown (?) and former CIA Director William Colby for a discussion of the development of the CIA.

Ed.

EDWARD MUTTER (?): As Carol mentioned we do have with us today the former head of the CIA, William Colby, and Anthony Cave Brown who has written a very interesting book about the CIA, at least the origins of the CIA, called "The Official War Report of the OSS."

ANTHONY CAVE-BROWN: Yes, I edited it and put an introduction. The actual volume was written by Kermit Roosevelt who was then with the OSS in '48.

MUTTER: Let's talk about that just for a moment. Basically what that is it traces the origins of the CIA and how it began from the...

CAVE-BROWN: Well in a certain sense, of course, the OSS was a wartime agency and was formed for the purposes of war and when the war was over the OSS was dissolved. However, it's perfectly true to say that there were certain elements of the CIA buried in that organization.

MUTTER: How did it develop into the CIA -- into the organization that we know and that some of us love and hate today?

CAVE-BROWN: Well the OSS when it was dissolved spun off

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a large number of highly qualified men. Now there was also a bureaucracy and a system of acquiring intelligence on a global basis.

And so, when President Truman decided to establish the Central Intelligence Agency -- I think it was in '47 or '48 --

WILLIAM COLBY: Seven.

CAVE-BROWN: ...yes, as a result of the Cold War, the fact that the Russians were misbehaving on rather a large scale. When the organization was established, then they decided to pick up most of the senior officers of the OSS.

MUTTER: Has it always had this history of secrecy that we know of today?

CAVE-BROWN: Oh, yes. I mean Alan Dulles made it very explicit when he said, that in order to be effective a secret service must be secret. You can't go around telling the hostile elements in the world what you propose to do, the nature of your operations and intentions.

MUTTER: There's a -- when you're talking about the OSS, there are reports that, for instance, the United States Government knew that Pearl Harbor was going to be bombed and that we did not do anything about it because at the time there really wasn't an American intelligence operation.

CAVE-BROWN: Yes, I mean, well Mr. Colby, no doubt, knows a good deal more about this than I do, but the fact is this, that it's extremely likely and all the evidence shows that there were fragments of intelligence all over Washington indicating that the Japanese main fleet was somewhere at sea and evidently had hostile intentions. There were certain indications from London, at the Japanese Embassy in London, that there might be an attack.

But the trouble was that there was no central intelligence board, no single person to which all that information came so that he could directly keep the President informed.

I think it's perfectly true to say that had the Central Intelligence Agency or the OSS or some similar organization existed at that time, there would have been a good deal less of the element of surprise in Pearl Harbor.

COLBY: The Japanese admiral had orders that if the fleet were discovered at sea, it was to turn around and go back to Japan. All it needed was one long range

reconnaissance aircraft.

MUTTER: Did we know that there was going to be Pearl Harbor?

COLBY: There was information, as Cave-Brown says, in the Navy. There was other information in the State Department. There was other information elsewhere in the government, but nobody had put it together and made a really cautious and careful estimate of what the Japanese might do.

We knew that there was a critical period with Japan, but we didn't really put together the possibilities.

MUTTER: During World War II, what was the greatest deception?

CAVE-BROWN: Oh it was unquestionably "Bodyguard". I mean "Bodyguard" goes down in history as the Trojan Horse of modern times. Plan "Bodyguard" which was...

MUTTER: Why don't you explain that...

CAVE-BROWN: Yes, I will. Plan "Bodyguard" was the cover and deception plan, strategic and tactical, to mislead Hitler about the date, time and place of the invasion. The invasion itself was the emotional and strategical climax of the Second World War. If it failed history would go one way. If it succeeded history would go quite another way.

As it turned out, of course, because Hitler was mislead totally, 6,300 ships, the greatest armada of all times, was able to enter the Bay of Biscay and the Germans with a few exceptions were really not aware of the size and power of the invasion until daybreak came up and they could see it for themselves.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Colby, I think, was involved in that operation, weren't you at one time?

COLBY: No, it was a little later.

Alright. The point was that the British in Britain had seized control of the entire Germany spy network and they were feeding the intelligence to Hitler, which he believed.

MUTTER: Before we move on to modern history, which is what I really want to get into, one final question on this: Why were these files kept classified for so long?

CAVE-BROWN: Well this is the traditional British attitude. They believe it's necessary to conceal so long as is possible the methods, the motus apparenti, of various intelligence

services. Moreover, of course, they were very anxious at all times to protect their identities and even the identities of the families of people who were of service to the United States and the British Government over this most critical issue.

Most important of all, there were American or British or both agents in very high places in Germany and were capable of doing Hitler and the German general staff great disservice.

But I think above all things, the anxiety was to protect the sanctity of a thing called Ultra, which was of course the code and cipher breaking organization that existed in Britain at that time.

MUTTER: Mr. Colby...

COLBY: Why is it secret?

MUTTER: Why. Why. Why is this whole thing, everything, is secret? We don't know anything about the CIA.

COLBY: No, you do know -- some -- quite a lot now. But the answer to your question is the long tradition of secrecy in intelligence, ever since Moses sent a spy from each tribe to spy out the land of Israel.

MUTTER: But we are a democracy.

COLBY: Well. And that's the point, I think, that nobody really questioned the secrecy of intelligence until really in recent years. America has revolutionized intelligence. It's brought technology into intelligence. It's brought academic research in mass into intelligence and it's insisted that American intelligence operate under the law.

Now obviously intelligence breaks laws. Most countries have laws against espionage.

MUTTER: Which is very interesting. Where is the final line? Where does it border on national security? What can we do? Can we do anything for the security of the country? Is that basically the motto of the CIA?

COLBY: No. I think the point is, the point that we've made very clear and have made clear in CIA and before all this excitement occurred in 1973, is that CIA would operate under the law. Now that means it operates under American law.

MUTTER: Yes.

COLBY: And since 1973 the directives have been very clear that that would be the case.

MUTTER: That's fine. You say you operate under the law, but is it not true that if you determine or if somebody in the Central Intelligence Agency determines that whatever we want to do, whether it be murder or a break-in, if it is necessary for the national security, then we can do it?

COLBY: No, that's not so. That's my point. That the earlier philosophy was very much that way, yes. The philosophy over the centuries was very much that way.

MUTTER: Then when did we stop this?

COLBY: In the last five years.

MUTTER: The last five years.

COLBY: That's the point. CIA saw the effects of Vietnam and Watergate, knew that the American people would insist, once they turned their mind to it, that American intelligence operate under the law, so CIA arranged itself so that it would operate under the law.

MUTTER: Alright. Are you telling me, therefore, then for the last five years the Central Intelligence Agency has committed no murders, no illegal break-ins and has operated under the law completely?

COLBY: I say that since 1973 we've put out clear directives that we would not do anything improper under the law that is assigned CIA.

MUTTER: Has anybody been...?

COLBY: And as for murder. Now let's get that very clear because that's a very sensational subject.

MUTTER: Yes it is.

CAVE-BROWN: And a serious one too.

COLBY: And a very serious one. Now I have turned down suggestions for assassination over my career. I've issued directives against assassination. The Senate committee spent six months looking into the story of CIA assassinations and they discovered that there were two occasions in which CIA started, and in one case, Mr. Castro, tried very much to bring about his death.

But aside from those two cases of attempts, CIA never murdered anybody, never assassinated anybody.

MUTTER: Then what we're talking about is assassination plans?

COLBY: Those two. Those two cases were plans of assassinations.

MUTTER: At least -- this is the information that -- we have made -- that has been made public. Are you saying...

COLBY: No this is the result of a six month study by the Senate committee who had access to all of CIA's information and background.

MUTTER: Are you saying, then, as far as you know and being a career man going back several years with the Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA has never killed a...?

COLBY: Killed is a different word. CIA has been involved in a lot of wars, and a lot of quiet wars.

MUTTER: Kill is a different word from what then?

COLBY: From murder or from assassinate. That is a very different word. Obviously you kill in self-defense, that's not murder.

And then in certain situations, in wartime situations or quasi-war situations, people have been killed.

MUTTER: Non-war situations.

COLBY: But in non-war situations...

MUTTER: The CIA has never murdered anybody?

COLBY: No.

MUTTER: Alright.

COLBY: Right.

MUTTER: Let's move on to something very recent.

COLBY: Alright, let's get that one very straight.

MUTTER: Alright we're going to spend a little time...

CAVE-BROWN: Yes, I think it's true that on a question of philosophy that assassination in peacetime as an instrument to statecraft really isn't a terribly effective weapon. There are other ways of skinning a cat.

COLBY: Well I think it's wrong in the first place.

CAVE-BROWN: Of course.

COLBY: And secondly, I think...

CAVE-BROWN: It's against the law.

COLBY: ...it's a mistake.

CAVE-BROWN: But as an instrument of statecraft...

MUTTER: I think first of all just because it's the law doesn't mean the people have to obey it. We've gone through...

COLBY: Yes, it does. I beg your pardon.

MUTTER: Well I'm saying -- wait a minute -- I'm saying let's establish something. I mean it's very idealistic to say that, but -- we have -- we went through an administration where we had a number of people at the top...

COLBY: Who did break laws every day, certainly...

MUTTER: Certainly. And that's what we're saying.

COLBY: ...but they are punished for breaking laws too.

MUTTER: Sometimes they are. Alright let's -- we were talking about the assassination plot of Fidel Castro.

The information that was made public by the Church Committee. Some of the plans to kill Castro, they're almost comic.

COLBY: Some of them weren't to the extent of plans, they were thoughts...

MUTTER: They were thoughts.

COLBY: ...by various experts. The brilliant thought which is worthy of Maxwell Smart, I think, of putting powder in his shoes so his beard would fall off. That's just nonsense. And it was the result of some fellow sitting in a laboratory, thinking this might be possible. But no steps were taken to carry that out.

MUTTER: Why was Fidel Castro -- Why did we want to kill Fidel Castro?

COLBY: Well there was a very large effort to overthrow Mr. Castro called the Bay of Pigs.

MUTTER: That's right.

COLBY: It failed. There was a very large threat to the

United States which came from Fidel Castro's country, the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which the Eastern United States was almost put under nuclear threat.

MUTTER: But we're talking about...

COLBY: And the government of the United States took a very hostile position toward Mr. Castro and his ideas of extending Castro's control, influence and revolution throughout Latin America.

And therefore, several administrations -- Eisenhower administration, the Kennedy administration, the Johnson administration...

MUTTER: Now what year are we talking about?

COLBY: ...all were hostile to Mr. Castro.

MUTTER: The assassination plots, what year are we talking about?

COLBY: 1960 under Mr. Eisenhower, 1962 under President Kennedy and 1964 under President Johnson.

MUTTER: What you're saying then is in those years the Central Intelligence Agency met with the President of the United States and jointly determined -- that Mr. Castro -- it would be best if Mr. Castro was assassinated?

COLBY: I'm not saying that. I'm saying, as I've said for a year and a half now, that the evidence as to who knew about it and who approved it is very, very murky, that it does not very clearly indicate at exactly what level or with what degree of precision the directives were given.

MUTTER: To the best of your ability...

COLBY: To the best of my knowledge of the agency...

MUTTER: ...would you say...

COLBY: ...I would say the agency would not have ventured out on such a remarkably venturesome project without a clear indication of presidential interest, authority or presidential desire that something be done. May be something unstated, but in the old Shakespearean thing, rid me of this troublesome man.

CAVE-BROWN: Yes. Now the threat was very real. I mean you must remember the great tensions that existed at that time. I can well remember them because I was here for my newspaper in London, and the tensions were very akin to the eve of war. And

when you're on the brink of war, as for example as Pearl Harbor is a classic example, you do the most dramatic and positive measures that you can visualize.

But it is impossible, isn't it, for the Central Intelligence Agency to act without presidential authority or without the authority of the National Security Council?

COLBY: That's right. The point is really that the Senate committee, again, after first wondering whether there was a rogue elephant at loose, it's conclusion was that CIA was not out of control...

MUTTER: Alright.

COLBY: ...that CIA, if anything, was too closely controlled by our Presidents.

MUTTER: Gentlemen, we're going to talk about who controls the CIA, who you answer to. We're going to talk about the Watergate break-in and the CIA and some other plots against John Kennedy, at least rumors or theory, right after this message.

MUTTER: You're on "Nine in the Morning" and we're talking with William Colby and Anthony Cave-Brown.

Mr. Colby, when we broke, we were talking about who the CIA is responsible to. Who do they report to? Who has ultimate control? Or is the CIA a totally independent autonomous organization?

COLBY: The statute very clearly says that the CIA reports to the National Security Council. The National Security Council is the President, Vice President, Secretaries of State and Defense.

Actually that means that the CIA in effect reports to the President. However, the CIA, like any other organ of government, depends upon Congress for its legislation and for its appropriations. And consequently it reports to the Congress in the degree to which Congress wants it to report to it. They have arranged a special committee of the Senate to oversee CIA somewhat more vigorously than perhaps it was done in the past. CIA will respond to that committee.

MUTTER: If it was determined at this moment that we should do away with Fidel Castro, if there should be assassination plot, would that congressional committee know about it -- the Senate committee?

COLBY: I think today it would, yes, certainly. I think the relationship with the committees today is one of no surprises, that the CIA has to keep the committees informed of what its activities are.

Under a law passed in 1974, CIA cannot do anything outside of pure intelligence collection abroad without reporting to the appropriate committees of the Congress.

MUTTER: Okay. Am I correct in the understanding that the Central Intelligence Agency is really dealing with American intelligence abroad. We're talking about...

COLBY: Oh, certainly.

MUTTER: Right. Why is it that there's so much domestic activity then? Is it because we cannot -- define -- draw the line, or what? Or is somebody abusing power?

COLBY: No, there isn't very much. There was some steps taken over the last 25 years in which CIA stepped over the edge; in the concern of two presidents about the anti-war movement and whether it might be receiving foreign help. In the process it gathered more material than it needed to and it put three agents into the anti-war movement to go abroad who reported on activities here.

Now three agents is not a massive operation. CIA did acquire and accumulate too much information from the FBI, from press reports and so forth, which was none of its business.

So there were mistakes made over the past 25 years, yes. But in essence the CIA job is foreign intelligence, and the FBI takes care of internal security, and they work together these days.

MUTTER: There are several new reports out about the Central Intelligence Agency, documented evidence apparently by some former agents -- and I'm sure you've read some of them. One of them says strongly that the Central Intelligence Agency and Howard Hughes were very, very closely linked and that the CIA basically used Howard Hughes as a fronting organization or vice versa.

COLBY: Howard Hughes ran a very large commercial and industrial empire. With certain pieces of that empire CIA did business. One of them that I'm not permitted to talk about came out to public knowledge and is the subject of great public interest, in which CIA asked Mr. Hughes to make something appear as a commercial adventure which actually was a CIA intelligence operation. And he did so and there was a collaboration in that sense. But there...

MUTTER: Do you deny...?

COLBY: ...there were other respects in which CIA used some of Mr. Hughes' empire's capability, in technology and research, things of that nature.

MUTTER: Do you deny the report that it has been virtually impossible to tell where the CIA left off and the Hughes organization began, and they are so closely intertwined that...?

COLBY: Yes, I deny that. Obviously the whole purpose of getting Mr. Hughes to front for some of these operations was to conceal the government intelligence interest in them, make them appear to be a natural and commercial venture. And one did, very clearly, run across very well...

MUTTER: We talked earlier...

COLBY: ...till it was exposed and unfortunately stopped.

MUTTER: We talked earlier about murder and about killing. Over the weekend there was a murder of a gangster, Roselli -- Johnny Roselli. The new report that comes out, or at least a theory -- I would say report, I think we should say that, there is some documented evidence.

COLBY: Some reports are theories.

MUTTER: It is coming out in -- alright, fine. It is coming out in the new Playboy magazine, that says that Sam Giancana (?), another mobster who was oddly enough killed, and...

COLBY: Roselli.

MUTTER: ...Roselli, both were involved in a plot to kill Castro. Oddly enough both have been killed before they've had a chance to talk. A coincidence?

COLBY: I don't think they were killed before they had a chance to talk, Roselli's been around here for a year or so.

MUTTER: Before they've had a chance to testify...

COLBY: Well I think the same would be said. I mean the investigations are finished. I don't know whether I talked to Roselli or not.

MUTTER: Well let me put it this way. Is it a coincidence that these two men, who were involved, admittedly so...?

COLBY: I think it is a coincidence. If you're implying that CIA had something to do with their deaths...

MUTTER: Yes.

COLBY: ...I haven't been in CIA for the last six months or so, but I can guarantee you flatly that CIA had nothing to do with the death of either of those two men.

CAVE-BROWN: One of the extraordinary factors about the Central Intelligence Agency that -- there's a segment of the American population which absolutely refuses to believe that their first line of defense -- which is what intelligence is -- is manned largely by honorable people, responsible to the President and the National Security Council. They refuse to accept that the people at the top are extremely honorable people.

MUTTER: I think that the reason is that because, one, we don't know very much about the CIA, and everything we hear turns into a big ugly nightmare.

COLBY: Well there I'll -- I think you're right, and I think that we in intelligence have been too secret.

MUTTER: That's right.

COLBY: And over the past year or two, three actually, when I was in there, we were trying to bring CIA out of the shadows. We were trying to publicize somewhat more its real functions. And we had a very deliberate program of educating the American people as to what CIA was really all about.

The sensational quality of some of the accusations, however, has so dominated the public press that it's been unable to get that sensible explanation out.

MUTTER: Another theory. The theory about Watergate and the Watergate break-in and the Watergate cover-up and all of the information that was fed to the press. One theory is that the source that Bernstein and Woodward used for all of the expose on Watergate was -- Deep Throat was actually a CIA agent that was feeding information to them to take the heat off of the CIA investigation and to tilt it toward Richard Nixon.

COLBY: That is nonsense. I don't know who Deep Throat is, you'll have to ask Mr. Woodward and Bernstein on that.

MUTTER: But a CIA...

COLBY: But the fact is that CIA, if anything, kept itself clear of Watergate. And Mr. Helms put considerable

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effort on his part to keep CIA from being involved in Watergate.

The Washington Post once characterized CIA as the only agency in town that said no when asked to interfere in Watergate. And I think that these recent suggestions by people who were very high in the Nixon Administration that CIA somehow was behind Mr. Butterfield -- Mr. Haldeman said that --

MUTTER: Yes.

COLBY: Or that Director Helms under a pseudonym in a novel, somehow blackmailed the President of the United States...

MUTTER: Yes.

COLBY: ...are absolute, arrogant nonsense.

MUTTER: One final question. Was the Watergate break-in a CIA plot?

COLBY: No.

MUTTER: Definitely not.

COLBY: Definitely not. That's absolutely absurd. It's a typical absurd theory, just as absurd as the theory that CIA somehow assassinated President Kennedy, which is an absolute lie.

MUTTER: Alright. Gentlemen, thank you for being with us.

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