

ADMIRAL TURNER'S REMARKS  
TO  
NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS ASSOCIATION  
CIA AUDITORIUM  
1530-1630, 9 March 1978

Good afternoon, I hope you enjoyed the film clip. I'd like to say that it is indicative of some of the new things going on around here that we have that available, because it was originally intended, when we made it, to be part of what you've heard of as the famous public tours of the Central Intelligence Agency that never took place. What happened was we wanted to open up to the public more so we decided we would explore this possibility. Some of your co-freres in the media community got hold of that information and published it as an established fact before it was in fact decided by us. We went ahead, developed the film, developed the procedures to have tours, experimented with families from the CIA, and found it was really just impossible in the space we had available and without tying our working operation here up completely to do that. But we have wanted to open up more and decided what we would do instead of having open public tours for everybody, was to be more receptive to inviting groups like yours here to be with us and we are delighted you're one of the first to share in this new program of greater openness, greater hospitality out here. I think it is important that we do share more of our intelligence community's activities with the public today than ever before. For

several reasons--one is that intelligence is more important to all of us as a country and as citizens of the United States today than it has ever been. If you look back, we have come from an era of total military superiority to one of parity--or close to parity, something like that. Under these circumstances intelligence, the ability to know what the other fellow is doing, building, planning, is just much more important than when you had so much military power relative to anyone else in the world, it wasn't critical that you be at the right place at the right time, with the right thing. If you look back at the end of World War II, we were also the dominant political power in the world. Most everybody else in the smaller nations followed our lead. Today, can you think of even the most insignificant little nation in the United Nations taking the lead from anybody else? That is just not the tenor of the times. They are all independent and properly so. I'm not complaining about either of these changes, I'm just acknowledging the facts. We have to know more about what the attitudes, the outlooks, the aspirations of many other nations are if we are going to do the job our country needs to do as, of course, one of the leading powers in the world.

Thirty years ago we were economically independent. Today I hardly need mention that we are interdependent economically, as each of us looks at the temperature on our thermostat and thinks about the conditions in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere. There is another reason we want to be more open and that is that

in the last three and a quarter years, the intelligence community of our country has gone under a lot of public scrutiny and criticism, mainly in the media. Some of it justified, some of it probably not. But today, having been exposed so much by this period of investigations of the Church Committee, the Pike Committee, the Rockefeller Commission, and the many stories in the media. There are more questions in the American public's mind about what we are doing, how we are doing it, whether we are doing it well. I think it is up to us as part of the democratic institutions of our country to respond to those questions.

I'd like to respond to them today for you, by trying to describe four ways in which our intelligence activities in this country are evolving, are changing today from what they have traditionally been. I hope that in the process of doing this we'll get some flavor as to how we do go about our business, and then I would really like to stop and respond to your questions.

But first, and quickly, the product of intelligence is different today than it was 30 years ago last September when this Agency was founded. Look back. In those days we were primarily interested in military intelligence about the Soviet Union. We were concerned with their Eastern European satellites, and with China, and we paid attention every time they made a foray out in the Third World and attempted to establish a new position. But basically, what we were interested in, what our product was, was determined by where the Soviets were doing things and what they were doing.

There was one other characteristic of it then which carried on for quite some time, because when the Soviets did make a foray out in the Third World this country turned to its intelligence community not only for information--intelligence about what was going on--but also they asked the intelligence community to do something about it; to help influence those events, and that's what we call covert political action. The Central Intelligence Agency was there in 1953 when the government changed from communist to democratic in Iran; in 1954 similarly in Guatemala; we were there as you all know in the 1960s in Cuba; we played an important and positive role in Vietnam and as recently as 1975 we were conducting political action in Angola, until the Congress decided that was not what the country wanted and ordered a cessation. But now look at how the world has changed since those early days, when our intelligence was driven largely by Soviet military considerations, to today.

Today, we can't be limited to the Soviet Union and a dozen or so other countries of primary intelligence focus. We have interchange, important relations of one sort or another, with most of the 150 some nations of the world. With most of those our relationship is not primarily about military matters, but economic and political. So if we are going to serve our decisionmakers, our policymakers in this government well, we in the intelligence community must be able to provide good information about a wide range of geographical areas, a large

number of these 150 some countries and about a diversity of topics, economic, political, as well as military.

Secondly, look at how it has changed with respect to the country's attitude towards covert political action. That is not something that the country feels it wants to do as much today as it did in the past. Beyond that, I would say to you that it is also, in my opinion, not as applicable, it's not as useful a tool in foreign policy today as it may have been in times past. So, there is much less emphasis in the Central Intelligence Agency today on covert political action than there has been heretofore. I don't say we should eschew that capability as a nation. There are times when it may be far preferable to sending in the marines; there are times when it may be the most appropriate vehicle, but it must be used judiciously and it must be used under very proper control. I'll speak a little bit more of those.

Let me move on first to the second major change in American intelligence that is going about today, and that's a new production line. We not only have a new product, but we have to produce it in a different way. Now the traditional intelligence production line has always been the human agent, the spy. You remember, Joshua sent two of them into Jericho before he marched around with his trumpets. The human agent has been the principal tool of intelligence ever since; at least until a decade or decade and a half ago, when we began a technological revolution in intelligence collection--collecting the data, collecting the information on which you build

intelligence estimates. We now have what we call technical means of collecting information that just bring in vast quantities of data. It's unbelievable sometimes how rapidly the data flow is increasing. Sometimes it almost swamps us, but now interestingly, this does not denigrate the role, the importance, the necessity of the traditional human intelligence agent. Because very generally, broadly speaking, what the technical collection systems tell you is what happened in this place or that yesterday or today. But they very seldom tell you what are they going to do tomorrow. When I take some of this vast quantity of data down and talk to one of our policymakers and say, look what just happened over here, they look at me and they say, Stan, why? why did they do that, or what are they going to do tomorrow. That, probing into what people intend to do, what their plans and thoughts are, is the forte of the human intelligence agent. So, the more we collect from the technical systems the more we must complement that with the traditional human intelligence systems.

But let me go back. The production line is different. It's now a meshing of a number of different types of intelligence collection machinery that must be kept well-oiled, must be well-organized, must be times and integrated, as distinct from a single piece of machinery that was the production line in the past. It takes different skills, different bureaucratic organizations, different outlooks, and we are in the process of adjusting to some of those changes. I know that in the

newspaper business it is always easy to make organizational changes, nobody resists any changes in the structure of your organizations or their titles, or roles, or salaries or anything else. But in the government bureaucracy it isn't quite like that. We have some problems when we want to make changes.

The third change, also causes us problems, because it is a starkly different one, it's what I started out by saying and that is the policy of openness. I think we have no choice but to be more open today. But there are risks in this, particularly when you remember that we are working against an implacable and secretive enemy, the KGB. But there are benefits in being more open because we are a democracy, and this organization, the rest of the intelligence organizations of our country, simply cannot survive, cannot obtain the support they need, unless the American people are behind them. The American people accepted intelligence five years ago, they accepted its necessity and its secrecy. But due to the questioning we've had, that no longer is the case. So we are opening up more, but let me not mislead you, there is no way we can open up totally. In intelligence, there are things you must do in order to collect the information you need, that simply can't be done if they are announced or known in advance. So we must retain a lot of secrecy.

There are two basic functions in intelligence, one is collecting information and the other is analyzing it, and

drawing conclusions from it because the best spy in the world seldom goes to the blackboard and says, I just got the following information and it's all there, it's absolutely incisive, and you believe it completely. No, you have to take that man's clue and this technical intelligence systems clue and your intuition and a few other things and you piece it together like a picture puzzle. That's the estimating, the analytic process. We can't tell you very much about the collection process, because if we have to collect it through intelligence it's generally because the other fellow doesn't want to give it out. So if you tell him how you're getting it, he turns it off. He can't always, but generally speaking there is a countermeasure for every measure in one degree or another. So, we have to be very tight about what we say, about how we collect information. People's lives are at stake, expensive technical collection systems that you and I have paid for as taxpayers are at stake. But when it comes to talking about our analysis, our estimates, our conclusions, we can share more. Now what we can't share is the unique information that gives our President, our cabinet officers, our military commanders, our ambassadors in the field, unique advantage because they have that information and other people don't know that they have that information. If you're sitting down to negotiate a new contract with your labor union and you know their negotiating position, you don't want to tell them that. It's the same way in the intelligence game.



So, we today, when we make an estimate, we look at it carefully and we say, if we took out of that the information about how we got the data, that we cannot afford to disclose, and we took out those pieces of intelligence that are very uniquely important to our country, would the estimate have enough substance left, would it be of enough value if published to help improve the quality of the national debate on this topic. Would it aid the general public. If it does, we publish it. We have published about two studies, estimates a week in the past year. Did you hear about the one on our prediction of the world energy crisis situation last March that we published, which said that in the next four or five years we believe the world will want to take out of the ground more oil than it will be able to. We didn't say there isn't enough oil down there, we didn't say we were going to run out of oil. We just said that sometime between now and the mid-1980s there is going to be pressure on prices because the curve of demand is going up more steeply than the curve of supply can be made to go up in that time frame. If you look further out, that's another story. We published a study last spring about the world steel situation. It said, for instance, that there is no major steel producing country that is working at more than 75% capacity today. Many countries, particularly lesser developed countries, are bringing new steel producing capacity on to line and we do not see in the four or five years any prospect that demand is going to rise sufficiently to take

advantage of the capacity that exists today, let alone that which is being added to the world's capacity. So, there is an interesting situation in the steel world. We have done one on international terrorism and its effect on American interests overseas, American business overseas. And we've done one just recently on the comparative costs of Soviet military expenditures, American military expenditures, and so on. We think all of these, we hope, are of some value and interest to the American public.

In addition, in a sort of Machiavellian way, I hope that publishing more of these studies is going to help us with the problem of security of the information we must keep secretive. Because obviously the risk in going to a policy of greater openness is that you will overstep the bounds, you will open the door a crack and secrets will leak out that you don't want leaked out. But another problem in keeping secrets, is when you have too many secrets it is difficult to keep them, because people don't respect that label. You know we label the top of the paper SECRET, TOP SECRET, CONFIDENTIAL, BURN BEFORE READING, people don't respect those labels when everything is labeled something like that. So by reducing the corpus of classified information I hope to generate greater respect for what remains and a greater tightness which is very critical to our overall intelligence operation.

The fourth change is what is known as greater oversight. Now here we have a paradox, because when you have to operate

partially in secrecy you cannot at the same time have the kind of public oversight that we like as Americans over our national institutions. We want to be able to check on what's being done in the Department of Commerce or Department of Labor, or elsewhere, so that we know the government is being run in accordance with the constitution and the standards that have been established. You can't quite have that with intelligence. So what we have generated, I believe, out of these last three years of criticism, out of the crucible of this criticism, has been a process I label surrogate public oversight. You can't all oversee us completely, but you have surrogates; the President and the Vice President, very active participants in the intelligence process today. You have under the President a special board called the Intelligence Oversight Board, three distinguished citizens who report only to the President and whose only function is to check on me, to check on the intelligence operations, they are not beholden to me. Anyone in the intelligence community can go to them directly and say look, Turner is doing something wrong. They are very important as a reassurance. But most importantly perhaps we also have established in the last two years, two new committees in the Congress; one in each chamber, each dedicated to the oversight process. I report to them regularly and quite fully about our intelligence activities. There are new rules in this Executive Order Herb described to you which regulate this whole process, and establish checkpoints in which

I must go through the Attorney General and other checkpoints where I must go through the National Security Council in order to be sure there is a harmony between the national policy and the intelligence activities; in order to ensure that these intelligence activities are conducted with the full regard for the rights and privileges and the privacy of the American citizen. I think the process is a good one. It's still evolving, the Congress is now working on legislative charters for the intelligence community. They will codify some of the things that are in the Executive Order that the President recently signed and they will set forth, in law, the rules for operating our intelligence community.

Now, there are clearly risks in this. If there is too much oversight, too many people get in the act, there is too great a risk that there will be leaks of important information. If there is too much detailed oversight there will be risks that we will not be able to do the things that need to be done, we will be hamstrung. I would say to you in all candor, that I can't assure you today that those risks will not come true. It will take a year or two of working out this process with the intelligence committees and working with the intelligence oversight board and all these new regulations to find the right level; to find the right amount of oversight to assure the American public the right amount of freedom for us to ensure that we can do the job that is necessary, in my opinion, to protect you, the American public, also. We as citizens all need to be sure that our policymakers have the best information

upon which to make the decisions for all of us. I am confident in my mind that this process will work itself out well, but it isn't there yet and I think you will enjoy over the next several years watching it evolve because it is a very important process for each of us. I can only assure you that I believe we have today the best intelligence activities, the best intelligence capabilities in the world. I assure you I intend to do all I can in the years ahead to keep it that way. Thank you.