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SUBJECT An Interview with Admiral Turner

DAVID HARTMAN: It's 17 minutes after 7:00 right now. If you've been reading the employment section of the Sunday papers in the past month, you might have come across this ad: "We are looking for you special men and women who still have a spirit of adventure." Unquote.

The Central Intelligence Agency has been running that ad in newspapers all across the United States. And this morning Stansfield Turner, who is the Director of the CIA, is in our Washington studio with Steve Bell to talk about the agency's recruitment program. Admiral, welcome back.

DIRECTOR STANSFIELD TURNER: Good morning, David.

HARTMAN: First of all, you're looking, according to the ad, and I'm quoting again, for "bright, self-reliant, self-motivated people." You're looking really, it seems, for the best and the brightest.

In the past ten years, with the reputation, the image of the CIA sullied, damaged, diminished, if you will, in part during this period, why should the young people, the best and the brightest, consider going to work for you?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Because we have tremendous opportunities to offer young people today. We provide opportunities to live overseas, to serve our country, to be involved in the significant events in our country and in our time. And most of all, we provide people an opportunity to serve their country and to serve it well.

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HARTMAN: Are you looking for spies, Admiral, covert spies?

ADMIRAL TURNER: We're looking for several kinds of people, David. We're looking for people to go overseas and collect information for us. But we're looking for people also to be here in our large research department in Washington, D. C. -- research in scientific, political, economic areas. It's a very challenging intellectual environment.

STEVE BELL: Admiral, what if I were a young person who said "Yes, I want to serve my country, and I'm fascinated by these overseas prospects, the excitement, and so forth. But from everything I've heard about the CIA over the ten years as I was growing up, I'm concerned that at some point the CIA might ask me to do something that I wouldn't feel, morally and ethically, I could or should do."

Now if somebody comes to you and expresses that feeling, what would the response of the agency be?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Steve, we are very conscious of our moral and legal responsibilities, and they are very tightly controlled. They're controlled by presidential directives. They're controlled by laws of the Congress. And we have mechanisms to oversee that they're being carried out the way we want. There's an Intelligence Oversight Board, set up by the President. There are two oversight committees of the Congress. And I, for instance, have put out a clear order to all of our employees that if any of them think they see something going on that's wrong, they can either come and see me or communicate with me directly.

BELL: If the person came and expressed those concerns, you wouldn't just say "Well, thank you very much. Don't call us; we'll call you."

ADMIRAL TURNER: Absolutely not. I'm most interested in any allegation of impropriety.

BELL: One other thing that would concern me if I was this young person: you fired more than 800 people just two years ago, many of them the kinds of people you're asking now to join up. Another 250 people, the Post says a month or so ago, have resigned in frustration over the direction of the agency.

Why would a young person want to become a covert operator, make all the sacrifices, family, that go with that, to face that kind of prospect in the longer-run future?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, as usual, the media's got it mixed up, Steve. Those numbers are all wrong. We asked 160 people to leave. And we did so to make opportunity for these

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younger people coming along. The agency's just over 30 years old, and we were a little top-heavy. Now, in the last two years, we've had more promotions; we've advanced the opportunity for the younger people coming along. It's an ideal time to join up.

HARTMAN: Admiral, President Carter, back in January of 1978, called for a reorganization of the CIA, suggesting that perhaps he wasn't totally satisfied with the performance of the agency. On the other hand, you're criticized, as you just suggested, by the press. You're criticized by a lot of people for immoral deeds, for illegal deeds, whatever they might have been, in the past.

What shape is the agency in now? Is it possible for the CIA ever again to really do the job that you've been assigned to do, given the kind of criticism you get from both sides?

ADMIRAL TURNER: It certainly is. And we're doing it. We're doing it well today. And we're doing it with a greater consciousness than ever before of our responsibilities to the country to perform in ways that will not endanger the rights of American citizens, in particular. It's always a difficult, delicate balance between restraints and freedom to collect information. And I think we're finding that balance today in a way that lets us get the information that's vital to conducting the foreign policy of our country and yet gives the people of this country assurance against any possible abuses.

BELL: Do you covertly hire college students these days? I mean secretly hire students. The school doesn't know about it. Their parents might not know about it.

ADMIRAL TURNER: We recruit openly on 300 campuses across this country. And I have particularly emphasized the openness and putting our shingle out with all the other people who recruit on those campuses.

HARTMAN: Admiral Turner, thanks for joining us this morning.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Pleased to be here.

HARTMAN: Thank you, Steve.