Approved For Release 2006/12/19 : CIA-RDP88-01315R000300080029-3

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Excerpts TAKEN from Speech

by

George Bush

Director of Central Intelligence

at

Commemoration of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse

Guilford Courthouse National Military Park

14 March 1976

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Intelligence is a demanding craft. I have not been in this business for very long, but already I can tell you a few things I have learned. One is that the quality of the people I have met -- at the Central Intelligence Agency and in the other parts of the intelligence community -- gives me great confidence. I am impressed with the competence and dedication of the people in our intelligence community. They are professionals in the finest sense of the word. I might add that the spread of academic skills is remarkable. The CIA alone has enough PhDs to stock a university faculty with everything from historians and economists to mathematicians and aeronautical engineers.

Another thing you should know: I am convinced that the CIA and the intelligence community are under control and doing their jobs. The agency indeed made some mistakes in the past. I am not here to defend them. But I am here to tell you that the agency itself rooted out those errors and put an end to them well before they were publicly revealed.

As I am sure most of you know, President Ford has issued a new executive order to ensure that the abuses and mistakes of the past are not repeated. The provisions of that order have already been laid down in agency regulations.

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I know many people may wonder what good regulations may do. Well, let me tell you another thing I have learned about the CIA. Its employees have very deeply ingrained pride and loyalty. They also have an extraordinary sense of duty. It is my belief that the guidelines laid down by the President will be followed to the letter. I have made a personal commitment to see that this is so.

Let me turn for just a moment to some philosophy. Before coming down here to speak with you today, I read a bit about Guilford County and the kind of people who first settled here. They were strong minded, moral, law-abiding, and determined. They also must have known one very important fact: you cannot legislate morality. You can write all the laws, regulations, orders, and anything else you can think of -- and someone else will think of a way to break them or come up with an idea that isn't covered.

There is no substitute for honesty. There is no substitute for conscience. There is no substitute for common sense.

It is not fashionable in these days of tearing down our institutions to say, "trust me." Yet Americans have to have faith and trust in some degree or none of our

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governmental systems will work. I do believe that oversight of the intelligence community is necessary, and I strongly support the new measures set out by the President. I welcome the responsible exercise of oversight by the congress as well.

But it still comes down to a basic fact. You cannot conduct an intelligence agency out in the open. There must be secrecy. Much of what we do can and should be shared with the public and all branches of the government.

In this job I will cooperate as fully as possible with the congress, but there are certain pieces of information that must not be divulged -- and they won't be. I don't think that the American people really want reckless disclosure. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that secrets are respected in many areas of our lives. Americans expect confidentiality at the ballot box. They expect it with their doctors and lawyers and clergymen. We have laws to protect certain business secrets and even to protect Department of Agriculture crop estimates. I am sure that no one in this audience thinks it is in our national interest to make public the war plans of the Department of Defense, or the in-chambers conversations of our Supreme Court.

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I am confident that the vast majority of the American people support the need for protecting real intelligence secrets. I am completely committed to working for such protection. And I do not intend to use the over-worked words "secrecy" and "national security" to hide abuses or cover up mistakes. Under the new executive order I am instructed to do precisely the opposite. I intend to do that.

In fact, if we can find a way to make more information available on CIA, I am confident the people will be even more supportive of our agency and its important work.

There is great misunderstanding about our work. As a result of the past years's revelations, both true and false, our intelligence failures -- and there have been some-- have been widely publicized. But the nature of our work is such that we can seldom talk of our many successes without revealing our "sources and methods." We do battle with kidnappers abroad; we struggle against a network of narcotics peddlers who try to spread their poisons in our country; we get information on the plans of other countries to inflate artificially the prices or control the supplies of vital raw materials; we resist the evils of communist intelligence services abroad. Every one of those things could affect you personally as well as our greater national interests. And it is the real mission of intelligence to see that our policy makers have solid information so they

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can move to frustrate the plans of those who would harm us.

I believe that indeed the intelligence community has been harmed by the revelations and investigations of the past year. Our intelligence people have suffered a vicious battering. Their families have been under great pressure. Many of the charges have not been true. I am relieved that I can stand here today and tell you that American intelligence is remarkably intact. I wish you could all have the chance to feel the spirit and pride I feel in the intelligence community. There is a dedication that is fully compatible with the spirit of Guilford Courthouse.

As I have begun to get out around the country in this job, I have also felt that the American people do understand the need for our intelligence services. Balance and reason are beginning to prevail. The very nature of the abuses -- some real, some contrived -- that occurred was so sensational that it gathered all the attention and masked the very real contributions that intelligence makes to preserving our American way of life.

In closing let me tell you about an incident that occurred shortly before I became the Director of Central Intelligence. A correspondent I know made the remark on a talk show that anyone dumb enough to take this job was too dumb to do it. He got a good laugh out of it among his fellow panelists -- but to me it was a little sick.

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It displayed an appalling insensitivity to our legitimate national security needs.

We at the CIA are trying to conduct foreign intelligence, not to weaken our country, but to strengthen it. It's those who would disclose the names of our agents abroad; it's those who believe they can recklessly reveal classified documents; it's those who would dismantle the CIA, that in reality are damaging our country.

You all know some of the problems I face in this job as Director of Central Intelligence, but I wish you could share in the pride I feel for our intelligence community and the comfort I get, as an American, from seeing the tremendous talent we have in CIA and across the whole intelligence community.

I wish you could talk to some of our employees whose heads are high after a couple of years of enormous attack. They are as vigorously opposed to the mistakes of the past as our strongest critics, but they have retained a perspective, they know the need for strong intelligence, and they are prepared to withstand the attacks, if that is necessary to work for a cause they believe in.

I wish you could have met the son of Richard Welch, our station chief in Greece who was gunned down following disclosure of his name by people bent on destroying CIA.

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This young man knew well that his father had died for a cause in which he deeply believed.

If you could do these things, you would understand much about the fibre of our country in 1976 and you would understand much about the fibre of the patriots at Guilford Courthouse 195 years ago.

They are one. They are the same.

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