

3 June 1947.

Chairman Chen Ourney
Senate Armed Services Committee
Senate Office Building
Washington, 25, D.C.

My dear Senator Ourney:

Through your courtesy, there has been communicated to me for comment the contents of a letter, dated 2 June 1947, which was written to you by Mr. Charles S. Cheston. I had a very pleasant meeting with Mr. Cheston on Memorial Day, and we reached substantial agreement on all matters connected with the Central Intelligence Group.

As he noted in his letter to you, there were three points about which Mr. Cheston felt some concern. I would like to review briefly my position on them.

Mr. Cheston had two arguments for his position that the Central Intelligence Agency should be headed by a civilian. The principal argument was concerned with a lack of permanency and continuity in the position of Director. The second was that the Director must be in such a position that he cannot be influenced by any one department, through fear or favor. We both agreed that there would be no objection to the Director being an officer of the armed services, provided that he serves in a retired status and in a civilian capacity. However, the proposed legislation should specifically provide for this contingency, for the absence of a specified period of service as Director would work an undue hardship upon an officer required to forego his military career to accept this position for an uncertain period of time. This could be remedied by establishing a specific term for the Director. The question of tenure of office seems to have been omitted from the proposed legislation in order that the President might have a free hand in nominating a Director of his own choosing, as he does in the case of other executive positions in the Government.

I informed Mr. Cheston that, were the bill passed and were I appointed to the post of Director of the new Agency, I would be willing to retire from active service and consider the position of Director as a career job. I feel sure that Mr. Cheston understands that in such a case it must be a career job — that is, for a specified period. It would be manifestly unfair for me to retire now, with the idea of making the position of Director my career, and then, perhaps, after the next election, be relieved of my post because of a desire to fill it with a political or personal appointee. If I were thus relieved, I would be without a career in the Central Intelligence Agency and foreclosed from returning to the Navy.