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Director William Casey Speech

Saint Johns University Washington D.C. Alumni Chapter

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DIRECTOR WILLIAM CASEY: Fellow alumni and alumnae, distinguished guests. Thank you very much for that generous introduction and for the very generous reception which you accorded me.

I'm happy to be here because I'm devoted to St. John's and I'm full of admiration for St. John's as an institution for a number of reasons. First, the personal reasons. I went to law school from 6:00 - 8:00. For two and three months I worked, and three summer sessions. And over the years, St. John's in so many areas has provided an education which has been helpful to so many careers, fruitful careers, for so many people who could not otherwise have done it.

As far as I'm concerned -- well, we used to say in those days St. John's had a 1:00 - 3:00 and a 2:00 - 4:00 and a 5:00 - 7:00 and a 6:00 - 8:00 and a 7:00 - 9:00. We used to say they cranked lawyers out like sausages.

But still, as far as I'm concerned, it provided as good a legal education as you can find anywhere. And there're very many fine lawyers around in all parts of the country.

I also appreciate what St. John's did for me. Beyond that I have a strong philosophic faith in my devotion to St. John's. One is a matter of the record. St. John's turned its back on [word unintelligible] and stuck to its guns. [Words unintelligible.] And St. John's refused to sell its soul for \$2,000,000 a year in money aid from New York State. Now I understand it's as high as \$4,000,000. And without government subsidy, it has built the largest Catholic university in the land. And on top of that, it's providing an education for tuition charges far less than those that prevail throughout the city and throughout elsewhere in the country.

So I think that this is an achievement and a record of

which I am proud, and I think we can all be proud.

I'm very happy to be back here in Washington. I tell my friends who don't like Washington that I think Washington is a great place to live, and one of the best things about it is it's only one hour from New York.

[Laughter and applause.]

I'm pleased to be here with the Reagan administration. I hope it serves a purpose. I feel that without that, I wouldn't be here [words unintelligible], and that we're really here to make a difference, to turn the country around. The feeling it was going down in a variety of ways had to be turned around.

[Applause.]

I think that already -- I'm not here to make a political speech. [Laughter.] Half your colleagues have already left. [Laughter.] Nothing partisan here about this. I just think that in such a short time the Reagan administration has already established the basis, established a direction, will certainly establish a leaner, trimmer and, I think, more efficient government. And the very ground of the debate has shifted. It's no longer whether to cut taxes, it's just how much. And the commitment to a stronger defense, commitment to a firmer stance in the world has already encouraged our friends around the world and given new caution to our adversaries, which I believe makes this a safer world.

On top of that, it's an honor to deal with a President that has such a great sense of logic. At a cabinet meeting the other day, we were talking about this Central American economic plan. Somebody said why not call it the Reagan plan? The President sat there and didn't say a thing. About three minutes later he said "I don't think we should call that the Reagan plan. I've already got a bridge in Illinois and a pump in Iowa, and that's about enough."

I had a very tough question about the sale of butter, why we shouldn't sell them butter. And it got very complicated. He said "You know, I'm going to take this under advisement. I'll decide tomorrow. You know, sometimes I wonder how I get out of this job. But as a matter of fact, a couple of months ago I tried it, but I didn't like that either."

[Laughter.]

[Words inaudible.] He told about undergoing his operation. He had a [words unintelligible] that was holding his hand. Someone was holding his hand, and he felt very reassured. So when he got [words inaudible]. And finally he looked at the girl

and said "Does Nancy know about us?"

I was very close to the campaign of Governor Reagan. [Words unintelligible.] And the votes were in. Jimmy Carter called to express his congratulations. He's a pretty good sport. He said "Ron, is there anything I can do for you?" Reagan thought for a minute. He said "Yeah, run again in '84."

[Laughter and applause.]

Well, I'm happy to be at the CIA. I find there a dedicated core of professionals who have made it their lifetime career concerning intelligence, national security, and all the branches, military and civilian. And I've been there about four months examining how well they do their job. I was in the OSS during World War II involved with planning the organization. The CIA is the first permanent peacetime intelligence service. [Words inaudible.] And the American intelligence community has evolved from that embryo.

Over the years my predecessors there have changed intelligence and made it a great deal more than a simple spy service. They developed a great center of scholarship and research, with as many doctors and masters in every kind of art and science as any university campus in the land. They produced a triumph of technology, stretching from the depths of the oceans to the limits of outer space. Using photography, electronics, acoustics and other technological marvels, we learn things totally hidden on the other side of the world. In the SALT debate of a couple years back, for example, Americans all over the country openly discussed the details of Soviet missiles, which are held most secret in the Soviet Union, but are revealed with great precision by our intelligence capabilities.

All this has produced a staggering array of information, a veritable Niagara of facts. But facts confuse; the wrong picture is not worth a thousand words, and no photo, no electronic impulse can substitute for direct, on-the-scene knowledge of the key actors in a given country at a given time. No matter how spectacular a photo can be, it cannot reveal enough about plans, intentions, internal political dynamics, economics and so on. There are simply too many cases where photos are ambiguous or useless, too many cases where electronic intelligence may drown the analyst in partial or conflicting information.

Technical collection, facts, observations, physical observations like sound, vision, is of little help in the most important and difficult problem of all -- political intentions. That's where clandestine human intelligence can make a difference.

We started a clandestine intelligence service in the OSS. Over the years it's developed and expanded. [Words unin-

telligible] remarkable set of relationships around the world, new friends that help us every day. [Words unintelligible.]

We're working with a great reservoir of good will, we of the company, from people around the world who believe that we have the answer, we are the best hope for world peace -- world peace and the extension of freedom, the preservation of freedom, and who therefore want to help meet our needs one way or another.

You know, there's some criticism occasionally of intelligence. Much of the criticism I think is based on unrealistic expectations of what intelligence can do. We produce good current intelligence, good intelligence on military and economic capabilities. But if one reduces all intelligence to the predictive function and then looks for a 1000% batting average, no intelligence organization will measure up. There's no pipeline to God, no powers of prophecy, no crystal ball that can peer into the future with 20/20 sight. We're dealing with uncertainty, with probable developments.

So if we can't expect prophecies from the nation's large investment -- and it is large -- in intelligence, what can we expect? Well, we can expect foresight. We can expect a careful delineation of possibilities. We can expect professional analysis which probes and weighs the probabilities, assesses their implications. We can expect analyses that assist the policy-maker in devising ways to prepare for and to cope with a full range of possibilities, what may happen in the future. And for this the President does not need a single best view, a guru or a prophet. Rather, the nation needs the best analysis and the full range of views it can get.

For that reason, the process of analysis and arriving at estimates needs to be as open and competitive as possible, and we need to resist the bureaucratic urge for consensus.

We don't need analysts spending their time trying to find a middle ground or weasel words to conceal disagreement. The time has come to recognize that policy-makers can easily sort through a wide range of opinions. But they can't consider views and opinions they do not receive. To simply paper them over [words unintelligible] doesn't do anybody much good.

...And we'll need to be even better in the future to cope with the needs, intelligence needs of our increasingly complex and dangerous world as it generates new threats. Back in the OSS we were doing pretty well if we knew where the enemy was and how he was redeploying his forces. For the first twenty years of peacetime intelligence, most of the effort went into understanding production capabilities of weapons on the other side of the world. It is only in the last decade that it has dawned upon us that we've

been threatened and damaged more by coups and subversion and economic aggression than by military force. So while we still devote a large slice of our effort to military estimates and rely very heavily on them in formulating the defense budget and force structures we need, this has to be supplemented by increased efforts to assess economic vulnerabilities and technological breakthroughs and shifts in the balance of power, to identify social and political instabilities and how they can be and are being exploited by propaganda, by subversion, terrorism. To meet these challenges fully, we need to call upon the expertise in the private sector.

So much for the kind of capabilities that we have and need to develop. Let me now give you some of the specifics of the problems we face.

Our first priority is still the Soviet Union. It's been the number one adversary for 35 years. Of course, it's the only country in the world with major weapons systems directly targetted at the United States, which could destroy the United States in half an hour. For that reason alone, it remains the number one target.

However, given the complexity of today's world, there are many other problems intelligence needs to be concerned: nationalism, resource dependency, terrorism. One form of instability we're likely to see more of around the world is terrorism -- hijacking, hostage taking, kidnaping, assassination, bombing and armed attacks, sniping and coercive threats, mindless acts of violence designed to create a political effect, regardless of the innocent victims. Last year for the first time, there were a larger number of deadly threats carried out by individual nations, a very dangerous development. It's one thing for a demented individual or a private group of fanatics to resort to terror. For a nation to resort to it with all the resources it can command is another and much more serious matter.

This subject is very high on the CIA priority list. The hostage rescue in Iran failed because the rescue force never arrived. But for that rescue force to be able to do anything, there had to be people at the point of destination [words inaudible]. It had to be prearranged at once by the intelligence community. And the rescue of hostages in Bogota, Colombia a year or so ago, a hijacked plane at the Bangkok airport. These things were all done by rescue squads with friends in all of the countries around the world.

[Portion inaudible.]

And I'd like to just finish with a quick word about the accountability of intelligence. Some of us have to answer to both the President, Congress, National Security Council, Office

of Management and Budget and the Intelligence Oversight Board. And for the past two years, we have witnessed an expanded oversight role for the Attorney General and the courts.

Today our relationship with the two Senate intelligence committees is excellent. They reduced them from eight committees to two committees because Congress realized it's very hard to keep something secret when up to 200 people have to be cut in on it. Now we're down to about 20.

Now a word on the legislative agenda. We have loose in the world self-appointed -- self-appointed groups that go around to other countries publishing the names of individuals, American folks around the world whom they label intelligence officers, either correctly or incorrectly; it doesn't make much difference. Of course they become targets. We lost an officer in Greece, shot; another family attacked. The Congress has taken steps to make this wanton disclosure of intelligence identities for the purpose of destroying our national intelligence system, to make that a criminal act.

Finally, we want to be exempted from the Freedom of Information Act. Too much information is leaked that should remain secret. It's a poor law. Anyone can request information on the activities of our intelligence agencies. It costs the agencies millions of dollars and ties up people who could and should be doing intelligence work. It takes up something like 6% of our operational [words inaudible].

Recently we spent \$300,000 for one single Freedom of Information Act request. It came from Philip Agee, the renegade from the CIA who goes around exposing those he thinks are CIA people. And if the KGB writes us, and we assume they do, we have to respond in ten days. So the question is, do we really want to turn the CIA into a purveyor of information for the world rather than a supplier of intelligence to our policy-makers.

Secrecy is essential to any intelligence organization. Ironically, secrecy is accepted, without protest, in many areas of our society. Physicians, lawyers, clergymen, grand juries, journalists, income tax returns, crop futures: all have confidential aspects that are specifically protected by law. And why should national security information be any different?

Thank you.

[Applause.]

[End of tape.]