Transcript of Tape made at
JFK School of Government
30 November 1978

I'm very pleased to be back at Harvard, and to have an opportunity to share with you some of the excitement that I feel in the intelligence process of our country today. There are few public institutions in history that have undergone such thorough public scrutiny as has the intelligence community of our country in the last four years, particularly of course, the Central Intelligence Agency.

The CIA is and should be our most secretive government agency. The fact that it has undergone this public scrutiny is really extraordinary. Perhaps it is the first time in history that the world has had opened up to it a major intelligence organization in almost all of its aspects. It has been a somewhat traumatic experience for those of us in the intelligence community. It has damaged morale. The typical intelligence officer, for instance, feels that he is performing a difficult patriotic task and one that requires a lot of sacrifice on his part. And when he finds his activities exposed in the public media he feels sometimes as though the country does not appreciate what he is attempting to do. The trauma also extends to the fact that it is more difficult to do our job in these conditions. It has damaged our capability to perform the intelligence functions authorized by the laws of our country. When we cannot insure adequate secrecy, foreigners who are willing to work and support our country; foreign governments whose intelligence services are willing to work for us, are certainly much less willing to do so.

It has been a traumatic period for the American public also. The American public likes to view the world in idealized terms and yet the world is not idealized. It is not an open, free society. The world is highly competitive and more nations than not are closed and totalitarian societies. And not all countries, by any means, are willing to inform us in advance of what they are going to do even if it may be inimical to our national interests. Let me remind you only of the great Soviet wheat steal of 1972, where we simply lacked the statistical data base in that situation in order to drive the proper bargain for our national interests. So, today if we are going to protect those interests and our pocketbooks I believe that we must have good information about what is going on in the rest of the world. I believe, it is in fact, much more important today than ever before that we have such good information. Thirty years ago when the Central Intelligence Agency was founded we were the preeminent military power in the world; we were a totally independent economic power and many if not most of the free nations of the world took their political cues from us. How different is the world today. We are one of several economic powers that are interdependent. We do not dominate the world political scene. Small nations and large are activist and independent and we are much closer of course to military parity. In these circumstances, the leverage of good intelligence, of good information, so that our decision-makers can make the best decisions is much greater than it was in days of economic, political, and military superiority.

Yet, if we are going to have the better intelligence that we really need today than in the past, we are also going to have at least as much secrecy that we have had in the past and the ability to keep national secrets. There is, of course, a contradiction between this importance of secrecy and the exposure of the last four years. And there is, of course, a great danger because secrecy can lead to unidentified power. Power in any form can be abused, but unidentified power has a particular potential for abuse. How then, can we, are we, going to provide for good intelligence for our country and yet insure against abuse?

On the one hand, we can under-react and simply assume that a relatively limited number of abuses of the past will not be repeated because we are more conscious of the problem today. On the other hand we can over-react and so attempt to control potential abuses that we handcuff and handicap our intelligence effort out of business. Either course would be shortsighted, obviously. What we need to do is to achieve some balance here. The best way, I think, to achieve that balance is to have a system of accountability. Accountability to the Legislative branch of our government, accountability to the Executive Branch, and in addition, accountability to the public. But we must do this in a way that does not handcuff our intelligence capabilities at the same time.

I would like, briefly, to look with you at how this accountability is being structured in all three of these segments of American society and to try to determine whether there is an adequate basis for the kind of accountability the country needs in order to be insured against these.

First, the public sector. In the past public oversight, public accountability was an impossibility. There was simply not enough information shared with the public. Today that is no longer true. The recent revelations, the public inquiries and investigations, the Freedom of Information Act, have all made our intelligence community much more accesible to the public than heretofore. In addition, over the past several years we have made a very definite and deliberate effort to be more open as an intelligence community. My presence here with you tonight, something that probably would not have taken place as recently as four or five years ago, is an earnest of that effort to keep the public as well informed as we can within our limits of secrecy. In addition, we are responding to the press more forthrightly than ever before. Clearly, we cannot answer every question, but I can assure you that the needle is not stuck in the groove that says no comment. In addition, we are publishing more and making more anaylses and estimates of the intelligence community available to the American public. Obviously we are doing that in those that can be downgraded from high security classifications to unclassified. In that process I happen to hope that we are also assisting ourselves and protecting our classified information better. The big problem we have is there is too much classified information and it therefore does not engender the respect that is due to it. So if we can remove and declassify as much as possible I hope we will garner that respect for the remaining highly classified material.

Finally, in the public sector we, of course, have the free press -- a very major assist to the public in its effort to hold the American intelligence community accountable. People like Woodward and Bernstein and others have of course performed yeoman service in helping the public to keep track of governmental activities. There are, however, potential problems here. When something is made known to the press it is automatically made known to a potential enemy. And unlike a court the press can find you or me guilty through accusation alone. The power to accuse in the public press or on the airwaves of our country is a profound power and one that is subject to at least as much abuse as any other form of power. This is particularly a problem with respect to intelligence, because, at least I hope, the press never has the full information that we have on any given subject. All of our secrets, I hope, have never leaked. That means that any member of the media writing about our activities always must do so from an incomplete evidenciary base. It is a very difficult position for the press, it is a very difficult one for us as well. We do though have some things in common with the media. One of them is the absolute necessity that both newsmen and intelligence officers be able to protect their sources. I know how ardently the press holds to that principle in their case; sometimes I am dismayed when they don't recognize it in ours. Let me cite an example. A few weeks ago in a national newspaper, on the front page in column three there was a story about an impending trial with two officials of the ITT corporation for perjury before the Congress in testifying about ITT activities in Chile. The thrust of the story was how bad it was that the Central Intelligence Agency might frustrate

that prosecution because of an unwillingness to release certain information. Over in the next column was another story about a trial that was underway in New Jersey in which a man was accused of murder and claimed that in order to defend himself properly he needed the notes of a New York Times reporter, and that reporter had refused to produce those notes. That trial was completed, the reporter went to jail for awhile but never did provide the notes. These cases may seem different to you but they are analogous in that they both stand on the principle of protecting sources of information. And yet, I am dismayed at times when the media does not recognize the similarity here and I believe it is symptomatic of the fact that throughout our country there is not really an adequate recognition of the legitimacy of some degree of secrecy.

Let me move on to surveying the second means by which we are held accountable. The Executive Branch. There are a number of accountable processes in the Executive Branch, but let me just focus on those revolving around the Presidency. Today, no President can really establish the doctrine of plausibe deniability that we have seen in the past. The President is required personally to sign the authorization for any covert political action. The President is kept informed of our sensitive intelligence activities. And this President has been very strong in supporting the concept that the Congress must be given adequate information in order to perform its oversight responsibilities (which I will talk about more in a minute) and this attitude is a very vital one to the whole process of accountability. In addition, the

President has what is known as the Intelligence Oversight Board, a Board composed of three members outside the government, at the moment it is former Senator Gore, former Governor Scranton and a Mr. Tom Farmer of Washington, D. C. These three men appointed by and reporting only to the President have the sole charge to look into the legality and the propriety of the activities of the intelligence community. Any of our employees, any of you, anyone who feels like it may report to them what they believe is an abuse of the intelligence privilege. This Board will look into it and report only to the President as to whether something should be done.

Let me move now to the third accountable process, that of the Congress. Many people are skeptical here, feeling that the record of the Congress is no better than that of President's in exercising accountability over intelligence. Yet, let me point out that the Congress is a body elected separately from the President and operating totally separately from the Executive Branch of our government and having accountability in both of these branches is, I think, a reinforcing assurance. There are two committees in the Congress, one in each chamber dedicated exclusively to this task of overseeing the intelligence process. In the past intelligence information was only shared with a few members of the Congress and effective oversight was really impossible. I would like to refer to a statement by Vice President Mondale recently when he summed up this situation by quoting your eminent Massachusetts senator of the past, Leverette Saltonstahl. At one time when he was a member of the subcommittee to oversee the Central Intelligence Agency, the senator said:

> "It is not a question of reluctance on the part of CIA officials to speak to us. Instead, it is our reluctance to seek information and knowledge on subjects which I personally, as a member of Congress and as a citizen would rather not have."

I can assure you that attitude is not very prevalent in our Congress today. On top of that the two committees I have mentioned conform very, very closely to requirements laid out in a recent book by your own Dean Graham Allison in stating what he felt were the prerequisites for good Congressional committee oversight of the intelligence community. Let me tick off a few of the standards that Graham set forth:

- That the committee should stand permanently (They do.)
- That they should be specifically concerned with intelligence (They are.)
- That they should receive all relevant information (They do)
- That they should be subject to rotating membership (While this is not yet an established rule, the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, last January, stood down from his position to establish this principle and concept and I think it will take hold).
- That they should review and approve the intelligence budget for our country. (They do, they are now what is known as the authorization process in the Congress for intelligence.)
- And finally, they should propose statutory charters to prescribe our authorities and our limitations. (This is underway at the moment and hopefully will be enacted by the forthcoming Congress.)

Let me just go back to what I said in the beginning about the need for balance: balance between accountability and balance between an ability to conduct effective intelligence. Have we achieved that balance today? I don't know. I think it is too early to tell. I think it will be several years before we know whether we are on that right part of the tightrope and in particular until the charters are enacted by the Congress and are put into being. If we do find this right balance we will truly have achieved a revolution in intelligence, for never before in history will any major intelligence activity have been subject to the degree of accountability we are conducting today. I believe we are on the right track. I believe this can work in our country. I would remind you that it will require some understanding and some forebearance. Forebearance, for instance, against having such detailed laws and regulation that we will find ourselves in a straightjacket unable to conduct intelligence activities adequately. And here, let me just pause to give you two examples of how this can go astray.

When I came to the Central Intelligence Agency there was a regulation on the books that we would not establish any paid, contractual relationship with any accredited member of the United States news media. I was only there a few weeks when I received a letter from the American Translators Association. They said, hey, you just fired a whole bunch of stringers to the news media who are also part-time translators [redacted] That really didn't make any sense. So what did we do. When we rewrote the regulation for other reasons, we put a loophole clause in it. It said, we

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will not have any paid contractual relationship with any accredited member of the American news media, unless, the Director of Central Intelligence personally makes the exception. Now, there are those who feel that is no regulation whatsoever, that I can make an infinite number of exceptions. I don't think that is the case because I want to remind you that we do have the oversight process, and I am subject to being interrogated by the Intelligence Oversight Board, the President, and by two committees of Congress as to what use I have made of this loophole clause with respect to the media.

In sum, let me say it is not a perfect world, it is not an open world. It is a world in which we must balance our idealism and our realism in international affairs. We must be sure that the check of accountability is there so that we do not overdo our realism. We must ensure that the check of accountability is made sufficiently flexible that we do not overdo our idealism. I say to you, we are not there yet, we are moving strongly in the right direction. It is an exciting period, an important period in American intelligence. A period when we are, in effect, evolving a new uniquely American model of intelligence, one tailored to the values and standards of our society, and yet one also designed to ensure that we can remain what we are today, the number one intelligence service in the world.

Questions & Answers
JFK School of Government

Q. Inaudible

A. We are very pleased to take your appeal and handle it as expeditiously as possible. Nice to see you. Thank you.

Q. How did the CIA and other groups miss out on the situation in Guyana, Jonestown and do you take responsibility for those 900 Americans?

A. No, I don't take any of the responsibility for the following reasons. Already, without charges, we have very express executive order regulations governing the ability of the intelligence community to pry into the lives of American citizens contrary to their constitutional rights. And, I am not allowed to do that except under extraordinary circumstances where there is a formed threat, and I have to go through very established procedures at that time. This happened overseas, which is generally my province as contrasted with the FBI which is the United States, but it was entirely an American activity, and therefore, I am forbidden by these regulations from inquiring into it, from delving into the privacy of those American citizens and I think that's how it should be.

Q. Would you comment on the extent of MIG-23 presence in Cuba -- and secondly, would you comment on the MIG-25--(inaudible.)

A. We are being much more open these days, but we are not disclosing all our intelligence secrets, so I can't tell you that. The President responded to a press conference inquiry on the MIG-23s today and, unfortunately, I was in a conference and didn't have an opportunity to see it directly, but he acknowledged that we had known for some time that MIG-23s have been in Cuba and he indicated what his policy position was with respect to those. I really don't want to quote it, because I haven't heard it directly, but I am sure it will be in the evening or morning newspaper and give you the most complete information that is available.

Q. Director Turner you speak very much about the tremendous need for secrecy and as far as it is paid off gainst accountability. I am concerned about secrecy versus performance and as we have seen a little bit less protection of the secrecy today, we may see a little bit better performance, particularly the example of the Soviet wheat field. I think an additional example may be what we read in the papers about the insufficient information on the situation on Iran during this particular crises --that with more information about the CIA the nation and the Congress knows a bit more about exactly what their normal day-to-day activities are and perhaps through less secrecy can get better performance in the CIA. Do you care to comment please?

A. That is a reasonable argument, but as in all these things there has got to be a some balancing point. When I cannot persuade human beings in foreign countries, who are willing to risk and sacrifice on behalf of the United States to do so because they fear they will be exposed in the American media shortly, I can assure you that our ability to provide warnings of events in foreign lands will go down markedly. So, there has got to be some compromise here, and I am trying to say to you that we are trying to open up so that we do have that accountability both to the public in a more limited degree than to Congress and to the President so that there will be that pressure on us to perform and to perform properly. We can't just open up the flood gates and let out all the secrets any more than these newmen in the front row here are willing to walk up and disclose all their sources of information and hope that they can still do their job well. It is a difficult compromise, it has to be made on each individual issue.

Q. The CIA may be the best intelligence agency in the world. How much of your credibility suffered as the result of these revelations in the last few years?

A. It suffered very much. The leaks that have occurred, classified information, clearly worry foreign intelligence services who work with us, because they don't want to see their information appear in the public. And yet, I would say that I am confident that our principal liaison relationships are very strong today, we work very closely with the principal allied intelligence services and they are very cooperative with us. But I do say to you that we are threatened in the long run, if we cannot staunch the flow of unauthorized classified information that reaches the public in our country.

Q. Admiral Turner what do you know about the debate inside the People's Republic of China on the question of foreign military transfers to that country?

A. That is a tough one, I thought you were simply going to ask about the wall posters. That is a good question and clearly it is an area where our intelligence is less complete than many others because of the lack of personal contact with the Chinese over these many years. We don't have the opportunity, have not had. I think the best that I can say to you is we certainly see the Chinese on a shopping spree and we're clearly interested in this. At the same time, I think it is going to be fascinating over the next year or two to see how the Chinese balance the modest amount of foreign exchange they have between industrial development and military development. And it is going to be, I think, a difficult position. There are some few weapons you can almost say are purely defensive, but almost anything can be turned around and used in what can be termed an offensive mode. You know, something like a land mine, which is difficult to think of as offensive but you can consider some applications of it as offensive perhaps. I think it is a quagmire, and I think you just have to judge in a sense how threatening a military system appears to those around it, as to how dangerous it is to sell or transfer it.

Q. Since your province is the overseas Admiral Turner, do you feel that the United States has the duty to act either overtly or covertly with regards to the current situation in Cambodia. Or should the United States remain aloof to the internal affairs of other nations, even if a holocaust, as has been mentioned in Cambodia is occuring

A. One of the tenants of being an intelligence officer is to keep yourself aloof from issues of policy, and the reason for that is very clear. If we associate ourselves with a policy of intervening in Cambodia, or not intervening in Cambodia, then the intelligence that we produce with respect to what is going on in Cambodia can easily be charged as being slanted to the policy that we are about. So we don't have and I don't have, at least I don't discuss a policy position on an issue like that, because it is not either my job with the government nor is it one that will preserve this independence of the intelligence position.

Q. Do you want to respond to your position on the Harvard Guidelines for academic affiliation with the CIA?

A. My position on the Harvard Guidelines is that Harvard is certainly privileged to make its own regulations for Harvard people. IBM makes them for IBM people, CIA makes them for CIA people. Harvard Guidelines don't apply to the CIA, the CIA regulations don't apply to Harvard, I'm sure you're pleased. Let me say though, that when dealing in a Harvard environment, my intelligence officers are instructed that if they are working with a member of the Harvard faculty for instance, they are to remind them of our understanding of what a Harvard faculty members obligation is under the Harvard Guidelines, specifically, as I understand it he should report the association with the intelligence community to the Harvard administration. If the member of the Harvard faculty says he does not intend to follow the Harvard Guidelines and make such notification, it is certainly not my job to force him on to require him to do that. That is a Harvard and Harvard faculty relationship and problem. We do our best to respect that relationship and advise people we work with on any campus that we would prefer that they conform with those rules. We don't object to their notifying the administration here or in any other university that they have a relationship with us, but that is an individual matter. Many professors around the country prefer to stand on their right to free association and don't want to conform to those guidelines and most universities around the country have failed to pass such guidelines for that reason. I don't anticipate any change in my position.

Q. Could you direct comment please to the Russian competition with the United States and the part that the intelligence community plays in this competition? Could you particulary focus on the Russian mentality towards American will to survive? And, whether, perhaps in your mind or in anyone else's mind, there is the actual potential for nuclear war?

A. Of course there is a potential for nuclear war when two sides have large arsenals of nuclear weapons. I can see no prospect that the leaders of either side feel, or are likely to feel that it would be a rational move to initiate strategic nuclear warfare between the major superpowers. Nor do I see the Soviet mentality you have described as to questioning our will and in effect devloping from their point of view a more complete war fighting capability in the nuclear field than we are developing. That is, looking at the full consequences if the war broke out--the civil defense, the shelters, the recovery program--I don't see that that has put the Soviets in a mentality or in a position to feel that they could successfully initiate nuclear warfare without unacceptable damage to themselves. There is here a different mentality, however, in that they feel that the best deterrent is to have as complete a fighting capability even in a strategic nuclear field, as they can develop. We rely on a different sense of deterrent which is a full, retaliatory, second strike capability.

Q. The CIA does not make any recommendations concerning policy.

A. That is correct, we do not.

Q. So you are carrying out the policy of the Executive.

A. Well, in this sense. My job is to provide objective information on which policymakers can base their decisions. And also when they are debating a policy move it is my job to say to them: I think you are making that on the best information we have available; and to say to them, it is my estimate that the consequences of what you are planning to do would be the following as far as the reactions and responses of other countries are concerned. Then whatever they want to do, it is not my job to argue and say you are doing the wrong thing.

Q. You have restricted yourself to talking in terms of information. Does this mean that the CIA is no longer engaged in forms of covert and overt coersion and influencing of situations throughout the world?

A. No, that is not correct and you have a valid point and it opens up a whole area of discussion that I will try to cover quickly. May I explain to the rest of the audience who may not be sure what covert action is here because we have to have our terms here very clear and it will take me just a second. Covert action is not really an intelligence function. Intelligence is collecting and evaluating information and providing it to the decision makers. Covert action is attempting to influence events in other countries; influence the course of events without it being known whose doing the influencing. It is not intelligence, but from 1947 until now Presidents have only assigned that function to the Central Intelligence Agency when they wanted it attempted.

Q. It seems to me that the record of the intervention of your organization throughout the world shows that the people who are concerned with people who are socialist, communist, they are lots of other things. It seems like the main focus of your activities are against people who think of themselves as socialists, as communists and sometimes as very strong nationalists. Primarily, all of these groups have one thing in common: they are going to restrict the possibility of penetration on the part of US corporations and the success of their profit taking ventures in those countries. This is what I get from examining the record of CIA intervention throughout the world. Now, if you elaborate on where there is a record, where this--in other words, this is the policy of the US government. If it is true that this is what the CIA has been up to and it continues to be up to, then this is from what you say the policy of the US Government to smash, to liquidate, to kill socialists, communists and anyone who is fighting those kinds of changes. Where is that policy articulated? In other words if that is the policy of the US government, where is that policy articulated, so we can go to it and refer to it and see however it is laid out, and also..(inaudible.)

A. The President must personally sign for any covert action that is undertaken. This is required by the law, something known as the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, Leo Ryan of the recent Guyana problems, passed in 1974. It requires not only that the President each covert action that is undertaken, but that I notify up to 8 committees of the Congress that we are doing this. There is, therefore, a clear unequivocal written track record of any covert action undertaken by the Central Intelligence Agency on behalf of this government. I can assure you ladies and gentlemen, that I am not about to undertake covert action not authorized in that manner because the consequences of that are jail for me and I'm not going to do that.

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Q. How has the role of your spies, your field operatives, changed with your increased reliance on satellites.

A. It has changed because way back in biblical days the only kind of intelligence collectors were spies. That was the system more or less until World War II or so. Then we began to have this mix and the more the capabilities of the technical systems evolved and increased, and they are very, very fine, the more we have to think about segregating and giving to the human intelligence problem just those things that cannot be achieved by the technical satellite, or other intercept type systems. There is no reason to risk a spy in getting information that could be had by a satellite. So, what we are trying to do much more today than ever before is to make sure there is a complementarity here. We don't send out a human agent to look for things that can be had in other ways. That is I think, a principal difference. It doesn't mean that the human intelligence fellow is less important, because generally speaking technical systems tells you something that happened sometime in the past, but you also need to know in addition what is going to happen tomorrow and why that is going to happen. That, of course, is the forte of human intelligence activity.

Q. When you say your main function is to collect intelligence, do you have a different standard to apply to "friends of the US and enemies of the US". I wondered whether the term enemies is applied to those who violate the human rights standards that Carter is standing for now or whether it is pretty much in the socialist/capitalist dichotomy?

A. That is a very good and difficult question to respond to, in this sense: Our policy makers today, because of the economic/political interdependence of the world that I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, have a legitimate interest in what is going on in many, many countries of the world. If you could see the intelligence reports that go out of my desk and up to the President today. The countries that we're involved with, the countries whose names we didn't know--Namibia, who would have ever thought we would be interested in Southwest Africa. But this is a major concern today as to whether this African continent is going to remain stable. or not. So, we have to target our intelligence collection in accordance with where we think the pressures are going to be and in accordance with how open a society is. Why would we go spy on Great Britian? We would go ask Mr. Callahan if we want to know something about Great Britian and I am sure he would tell us. So, I have to adjudicate the priorities of collecting intelligence with how much money we have, how many satellites there are, how many other thing we have got and apply them as best we can to the priorities that go across 150 countries. Some have a low priority, because they are open and we know about them, some are very low because they are inconsequential, we don't think we will be involved with them, others change overnight. One of my difficult tasks is not to get caught out a couple of years from now, because I haven't built the foundation today, not anticipating that it would be very important in a couple of years.

Q. As the Director, do you feel you have adequate knowledge of all that happens in the bureaucracy below you. In short, is it reasonable to fear that practices condemned by you may still be carried out covertly someplace else?

A. I would be very foolish to stand here and give you just a categorical answer that I am totally confident. I am confident. I have been there 20 months and I have not found any effort to conceal things from me. I have not uncovered any activity that was contrary to what were my directives or those of my superiors. And yet, I want to assure you that I think the essence of my job is to be constantly alert. You do that by your sixth sense; you do that by asking a question here, a question there; you do that by asking yourself the question when you go to bed at night, where could problems develop. When I say that I am really not suggesting that I think intelligence agency people would invidiously attempt to subvert policies. I am saying that some of the kinds of positions I've just described are very delicate and two men looking at it with the same purposeful intent may come to different answers. Finally, I can only say to you that everybody in the Central Intelligence Agency knows today, I can assure you, that if they don't conform to the policies and regulations, they are going to be unemployed. I think you have to take a very tough position on this. Because if I find there is one person in the Agency who is out of control, who is not carrying out the rules, and the ones I have found were on relatively small issues, but when it was an issue of deliberately not telling a superior something that the superior was entitled to know, my answer was, that man is out of control. If he is out of control I can't demand that his superior and his superior be under control, so I can't tolerate that individual in the organization and a few of them have gone. So, you can only by constant vigilance, by constant establishment of a clear firm direction, ensure what you ensure. I am confident, I am happy, I am comfortable with it, but I am always looking and alert.

I am very pleased and gratified for your courtesy, and the opportunity to be here with you on the Harvard campus. Thank you so much.

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