

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

Executive Registry

84-144611

3 April 1984

NOTE TO

STAT

Bob:

John looked at the attached and wishes you well in whatever you pursue in your "next life." As I'm sure you can understand, he cannot endorse any plans you might have one way or the other.

I'm sure you also realize that any speaking or writing you might decide to do will have to be vetted through the normal channels on a case by case basis.

From a personal point of view, sounds like you have been doing some fun things and will continue to do so later. I wish you well.

EA/DDCI

Attachment

STAT

DCI
EXEC
REG

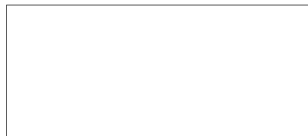
INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY STAFF

27 Mar



STAT

I have a pretty good idea of just how busy John is, and the personal request attached is no hot item. I may even be breaching protocol, but I'll sincerely appreciate a response to my query whenever its convenient.



STAT

INFORMATION

Executive Registry
84-1446

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)
Post-Retirement Activity

FROM: Intelligence Community Staff	EXTENSION	NO. _____ DATE 26 March 1984
---	-----------	---------------------------------

STAT

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)
	RECEIVED	FORWARDED		
1. Deputy Director of Central Intelligence 7E-12 Hqs.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				

DCI
EXEC
REG

7-139

26 March 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. John N. McMahon
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM:
Intelligence Community Staff

STAT

SUBJECT: Post-Retirement Activity

1. At the end of April I'll retire from the Agency. It's been the kind of experience that I'd hoped for thirty years ago. Now I'm anxious to become a part of the private sector, complete a novel that I've been working on for some time, and delve into a second career of some sort. But I depart with a thought that has nagged at me for several years. I'd like your reaction to it if and when you have a spare moment.

2. The one thing that the Agency does not need, I believe, is a public relations arm--an image builder. But there is in my opinion a responsibility (I'm not sure whose) that is being ignored--something that is owed to the American people generally and to higher education in particular. That is, a better understanding of US foreign intelligence as part of the national decision process. Sure, literature abounds in public libraries on intelligence--some good, some bad--for anyone who cares to investigate. But there are no forums, preferably academic, where this topic can be discussed and examined informatively and authoritatively as part of the learning process.

3. I have five college-educated children and not one has ever come across anything on intelligence in curricula at four different colleges. Moreover, I have been reading college texts aloud once each week for the past two years to a blind student who is majoring in international relations at American University; he happens to be president of the entire student body. During this time I've become acquainted with quite a few students and have joined in many of their late-night rap sessions. I enjoy it immensely and it is a learning experience for me. Conversation roams all over life's spectrum but never far from politics and Washington as the center of global interaction. Occasionally, the subject of intelligence and CIA creep into discussions. At such times I usually find myself gritting my teeth quietly. Like so many of their peers, these bright young people treat intelligence as an enigma in our midst--a curiosity, feared by some and damned by others.

4. Graduating these days with a baccalaureate degree in political science, government, international relations, and such without a useful understanding of intelligence--its role, structure, and decision mechanisms--is, to me, an incomplete degree. I find it disappointing that these young people and thousands like them across the country are left pretty much in the dark regarding one of the nation's most vital assets and one of international politics' inherent features.

5. I'd often thought that when I would retire from government, how much I would enjoy soliciting colleges and universities for a chance to lecture or conduct small seminars under personal contract (unaffiliated with CIA) on the role of intelligence--what it is, why it is, what kind of people man the business and so on. I know that the Agency gives talks at colleges as part of the recruitment effort--but they are Agency people doing the talking. To have someone who knows the business and is no longer affiliated with CIA address groups that would almost naturally include skeptics and cynics would, I think, add credibility. (Recently, I briefed a class at the Defense Intelligence College and was amazed to find a clear absence of knowledge about the national intelligence decision process among military intelligence officers; some of these officers were not fledglings.)

6. If you think there is something here worth pursuing, I'd be pleased to work up an outline--a complete syllabus, if you like--for review and approval by appropriate offices of the Agency. I really enjoy working with young people and seem to develop a good rapport. I can't think of a post-retirement activity that I would enjoy more. I've been around the top echelons of CIA and the Community Staff for ten years and I believe I know what story to tell (and how) without compromising sources and methods, or getting involved in operational specifics. I take my secrecy agreement seriously.

7. If you think that this is not such a good idea, I'll accept of course. Lastly, I commend to you the essay attached. It was written by a young graduate student in 1980 before entering Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. In eloquent style, it heralds my concern.

STAT

STAT



Attachment: a/s

IN DEFENSE OF THE CIA .

Confessions of A Change of Heart

Writing this is quite painful for a card-carrying liberal weaned on the idealistic rhetoric of the 1960s and the moral zeal of the Watergate years. I am instinctively distrustful of big business, be it oil company or ITT. I fought like a Marine to keep ROTC out of my college. I have faithfully read Karl Marx and Carlos Castenada and Baba Ram Dass and Robert Pirsig. In short, my credentials are almost impeccable.

Almost. For I am about to defend one of the most popular targets of my generation: the CIA.

The nest of vipers one expects to find at the Langley, Virginia-based headquarters turns out to be much like a colony of respectable, hard-working... well, earthworms. The people employed at the CIA--and there are thousands of them--are reassuringly normal. Forget James Bond. Forget your image of shifty-eyed scoundrels wiring your wastebasket for sound and snooping through your underwear drawer. The truth is ever so dull in comparison.

CIA employees go to Sunday school and watch Sixty Minutes. They have studied at Georgetown and Stanford and Florida Tech. They play softball, drink beer, write poetry, raise children, read Kant, and forget to feed the dog.

When they don blue government badges and enter the seven-story white fortress which is headquarters, they do not check their individual aspirations, disappointments, convictions, and prejudices at the door. They carry with them precisely the same ethical baggage as does any other more or less representative cross-section of the American public.

To be sure, their jobs make them a bit more insular and secretive than most Americans. An extra defensiveness about their work sets them apart. And their speech is often like a foreign tongue: the astonishing and sometimes incomprehensible lingua franca of the bureaucrat who "massages data, interfaces with other shops, and then torques the estimates before the other shoe falls." But in all the fundamentals--taxes, cavities, ring around the collar--they are just like the rest of us. Indeed, they are us.

The point may seem banal and obvious. Yet it is a terribly important one to make to the majority of Americans who treat the CIA, after years of damaging public disclosure and embarrassment, as a surprising, inexplicable aberration to be disdained and disowned. It is as though CIA employees are somehow "them" and not "us."

The prevailing American attitude toward the CIA today borders on the smug. Public opinion runs roughly thus: To believe what the CIA says is naive. To expect competence or high achievement from them is simply foolish. To work for them is to make a profound ethical compromise. To endorse them is to demonstrate pathological mental disturbance.

The press (admittedly another popular target) does little to alter this remarkably superficial and parochial view. There are some journalists involved in what William James called "the stubborn attempt to think clearly" about the events that are making headlines. But the very structure of daily reporting in the print and electronic media, which favors brevity and sensationalism, generally promotes the painting of a distorted and apocalyptic picture of the world. Even if the press were always able to take sufficient account of the complexities of events, it is hardly clear that journalists could lead the public through the newsprint curtain to a more lucid and sophisticated awareness. Long-time columnist Walter Lippmann confessed in a less than sanguine moment: "It would be sheer hypocrisy to pretend...that any large section of the American public is informed, or interested, or thoughtful about international relations." Or that they want to be.

But when the press and the public have been at all shrewd in their assessments of the institutions involved in the shaping of American policy, they have had salutary effect. There is no question that revelation of the government scandals of the last decades has taught us valuable lessons about the moral shortcomings of political expediency. There is no question that the CIA deserved--and may even benefit from, in the long run--some of the regulation, such as the strict prohibition of assassination, it has been subjected to recently. These points are no longer at issue. President Carter has issued executive orders, and Congress is considering charter legislation to curb past abuses. What is of concern now is how long open season on the CIA will continue. Watergate gave a new legitimacy to public censure of government wrongdoing. But it has also spawned a generation of petty moral snipers who fire from positions of unexamined outrage and indignation at whatever targets are most visible. The fact that the CIA rarely defends itself makes it particularly attractive. Sniping at the CIA has become fashionable--and by logical progression, indiscriminate, irresponsible, and frankly, quite cheap.

Office safety, floor tiles, and government parking lots elicit mammoth yawns from editors until any of these are connected with the CIA. The elimination of 820 jobs over the course of 26 months--most by a simple process of attrition in which some positions vacated by routine resignations and transfers are not refilled--becomes in the parlance of headlines and national newsbriefs a large-scale peremptory firing of key CIA personnel. Convicted criminals claim CIA sponsorship for killings and others inexplicably charge that Agency personnel are infiltrating UFO-watching organizations. With the exception of a few responsible journalists, very little effort is made by press or public to check out such claims before they are given absolute credence and printed legitimacy.

There is a limit to how much criticism a government agency can take without somehow buckling. Largely unfounded or exaggerated charges do little to forward the very serious business of bringing U.S. intelligence under legitimate regulation. If you will pardon a metaphor of doubtful taste, it is foolish to pick incessantly at a healing wound when it is recovering from major surgery.

If the CIA is peopled, as I have suggested, by bright, well-meaning, perfectly normal individuals, then its most likely course in the face of this critical zeal is a simple retreat. It can shrink from conflict. It can stop taking risks and sacrifice everything to keeping a low profile. It can become inured to accusations and protests, and learn to ignore everyone but the policymakers to whom it is responsive. With classic siege mentality, it can divide those policymakers into friend or foe. And so on. What good is an intelligence service that is hounded until it entrenches itself in its own bureaucratic paranoia and inertia?

We will not avoid provoking such a retreat until we clear up a more basic problem: some very muddled thinking about international politics. The common American view of political reality is astonishingly sentimental and naive.

First, there is the natural inclination to desire unequivocal answers and absolute judgments. We like our government to be either right or wrong--preferably right, of course--and are more than a little bewildered when those simple terms of reference are insufficient for judging the very complex stuff of international relations. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the close of World War II brought childhood's end, but we still forget the terrible truth that made such destruction possible: acting morally is never simply applying absolute principles in a vacuum. It involves an agonizing weighing of conflicting choices in the gray area

somewhere between ineffectual, rigid morality and vulgar expediency. Hiroshima's most troubled offspring, the SALT talks, provides a good example today. Strict morality demands that we abjure completely the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, whether the Soviets do so or not, because even the development of such a horrible killing device is a deep betrayal of humanity. Pure self-interest would probably suggest that we do unto the Soviets before they do unto us. Neither extreme, of course, is really conscionable--and so we take only small steps, using the diplomatic arts of adjustment, accommodation, and compromise, toward limiting the possibility of nuclear holocaust. That isn't all that we hope for, but it is all we can reasonably expect.

Second, there is the temptation to pillory others for wrongdoing in situations in which we ourselves are never tested. Goethe suggested that "conscience is the virtue of observers and not of agents of action." Back seat drivers, arm chair athletes, and peanut gallery politicians are notoriously strong on criticism and weak on practical action. There is a widespread failure to see that those involved in international relations, including the CIA, work in the uncomfortably real world--the region of the contingent and unforeseen in which proximate solutions are often the best that may be achieved. From the perspective of a comfortable Washington townhouse, for example, I am shocked and horrified at the plight of the Indochinese boat people, and I find the callousness of ASEAN states incomprehensible. Such a reaction is understandable and perhaps even justified, but it fails to take into account all the facts: that first asylum countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand are deeply convinced that the refugees constitute a threat to racial and economic balance and national security; that Hongkong's reward for humanely refusing to repulse refugees has been the additional burden of 65,000 new boat arrivals this year. But these are the kinds of intractable problems that policymakers must deal with daily, continually forced by events to recognize that a world of harmony and peace devoid of conflicting self-interest is not a reflection of reality but a cherished hope and goal of humanity.

The fact that such hopes and goals are only hopes and goals should not discourage us from honestly seeking to bring them about. But it ought to dissuade us from horrified outrage when those entrusted with the responsibility of coping with current events, and foreseeing and preparing to deal with future ones--among them, the CIA--fall short of those goals by themselves overstepping the bounds of morality. We learn as children that evil human beings will do evil. Maturity teaches the crushing lesson that even high-minded and intelligent human beings will act unethically when national interests appear to them to be at stake. No one has to like the fact of well-intentioned wrongdoing. Where possible it is to be indicted and shunned, where necessary it is to be endured and thereafter prevented. But in either case, it must be understood.

Understanding requires a new look at the international situation, the United States' position in it, and the kind of work we are expecting the CIA to do. What the furor over CIA "covert action"--attempts to influence or alter events in other countries, such as Vietnam or Iran--should teach us is not that all CIA employees are evil interventionists, but that the U.S. has a very ambivalent attitude toward its international role.

Confident in our own sense of moral superiority, comparatively progressive and fair-minded as nations go, we like to claim that our foreign policy is conducted in accord with the highest ethical principles. Moral conviction has prompted our championing of the causes of those as disparate as Soviet dissidents, Indochinese refugees, and victims of South African apartheid. So far, history has conspired to support our affirmations of ethical purity: geographic isolation from the "Old World" has tended to make our involvement in global disputes more a matter of choice than necessity, and the superiority of our national resources and technology have made us rich and powerful enough to afford a degree of self-righteous morality and noblesse oblige.

Yet the fact is that the Hobbesian side of human nature does exist, and it is especially visible in international affairs. Political life is hopelessly full of the people we love to hate: Idi Amin, the Ayatollah Khomeini, even the Ghandi's and Zia's of the world. George Kennan's list of the lengths to which such leaders will go probably doesn't cover all the options: "persuasion, intimidation, deceit, corruption, penetration, subversion; horse-trading, bluffing, psychological pressure, economic pressure, seduction, blackmail, theft, fraud, rape, battle, murder, [and] sudden death" are among them. At the very same time that America asserts her selflessness and high-minded devotion to morality, she is attempting to deal successfully with this less than pleasant underside of international relations. The luxury of "splendid isolation" drifts farther from our reach as the world grows smaller, more interdependent, and more complex, and the locus of decision shifts from Washington and Moscow to capitals such as Cairo, Bonn, and New Delhi. We want desperately to be moral and to remain powerful at the same time, and when the two impulses conflict, it is often the game of power that goes underground, so inept are we at openly coming to terms with the fact of the ambition, greed, injustice, and selfishness of states. Where has the nation traditionally looked for the expertise and resources to play this underground game of power and influence? To the CIA, of course.

But three decades after the CIA's founding, we begin to be uncomfortable about the necessary but unattractive game of power and influence. The public knows too many of the details of playing it to continue as before in blissful and untroubled ignorance. The question now becomes: Where do we go from here? Shall we simply make scapegoats of those who undertook, with very little explicit direction, to interpret and execute the will of the people in foreign policy? Or can we make our own demands precise and a bit more reasonable?

Legitimate, constructive criticism of the CIA is of crucial importance, and deserves encouragement and protection. But attacks and suspicion based on an unexamined immaturity about affairs of state, on false expectations and irresponsible recriminations, simply complicate matters further and reduce our chances of success at molding an intelligence service that American can live with. If we cannot marshal enough collective awareness and sensitivity to aid that process rather than blocking it, then I am afraid we will deserve what we get.



STAT