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Mossad-CIA Ties Legacy of Casey And Angleton

By WOLF BLITZER

Israeli intelligence officials are mourning the deaths in recent weeks of Central Intelligence Agency Director William Casey and James Jesus Angleton, the legendary chief of counterintelligence at the CIA. Both men were great friends of Israel.

Mr. Angleton, who died of cancer May 11 at age 69, almost single-handedly ran "the Israeli account" at the CIA until 1974, when he was forced out by a new CIA director, William Colby. During his many years on the job, Mr. Angleton was instrumental in dramatically strengthening U.S.-Israeli intelligence cooperation in a host of areas. His legacy continues despite the very serious setback suffered during the Jonathan Jay Pollard spy scandal.

Mr. Angleton's counterparts at the Mossad, Israel's external intelligence service, were deeply disappointed when Mr. Angleton retired, and suspected that Mr. Angleton's extraordinarily close connection to the Mossad was one reason Mr. Colby wanted him out. But even after retiring, Mr. Angleton retained his personal ties to some of Israel's best intelligence agents. They often visited him at his suburban Virginia home and dined with him at local Chinese restaurants.

Like Mr. Angleton, Mr. Casey, who died May 6 at age 73, was a frequent—though secret—visitor to Israel.

Mr. Casey in the '80s and Mr. Angleton in the '50s, '60s and '70s would often travel there to meet the head of the Mossad, to exchange information and to plan covert operations. There was an incredible degree of mutual trust, built on unique personal relationships that had been established and proven over time.

Mr. Angleton, in fact, had a very dramatic impact on his counterparts in Israel in persuading them to take the necessary precautions to make certain that the Soviet Union could not penetrate the Israeli intelligence community. He was always suspicious of Soviet operations, and is credited with being the first to recognize the dangers of the Soviet Union's "disinformation" campaign to subvert the West. Israel learned much from him.

Mr. Casey, for his part, was seen as the most pro-Israeli director of the CIA ever. He made previously restricted information, including satellite photography, routinely available to Israel.

One incident in 1984 helped cement Mr. Casey's appreciative attitude toward the Israeli intelligence community. A top CIA operative had been kidnapped by a pro-Soviet group in Ethiopia. He was being tortured during interrogation. The U.S. could not locate him, let alone get him out. Mr. Casey appealed to Israel for assistance. Mossad agents, at great personal risk, managed to locate the agent, leading to a dramatic rescue operation. It was an example of CIA-Mossad cooperation at its finest.

The effort was repeated a few months later as both groups tried to find and free William Buckley, the CIA's station chief in Beirut. CIA and Mossad agents went into Lebanon. But that operation failed. Mr. Buckley, one of the CIA's experts on counterterrorism, was killed after extended interrogation and torture.

There is no doubt that that kind of very close U.S.-Israeli intelligence cooperation set in motion a mind-set in Washington that resulted in the Iran arms affair. Ironically, the Pollard scandal exploded just as U.S.-Israeli intelligence cooperation was at its best, with Mr. Casey setting the tone.

Some Israeli sources in Washington fear that the tenure of the new CIA director, William Webster, may be a throwback to the times of Mr. Colby and Adm. Stansfield Turner, who served during the Carter administration. But top CIA professionals recognize that the U.S. has too much at stake to allow its intelligence-sharing cooperation with Israel to overly suffer. In this area, according to American experts, the U.S. has gained as much as Israel—if not more. This is true in combating terrorism, in learning about Soviet weapons systems, and in planning covert operations.

In 1978, for example, the former chief of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, Maj. Gen. George F. Keegan, said: "Today, the ability of the U.S. Air Force in particular, and the Army in general, to defend whatever position it has in NATO owes more to the Israeli intelligence input than it does to any other single source of intelligence, be it satellite reconnaissance, be it technology intercept, or what have you." Other U.S. specialists agree.

Messrs. Angleton and Casey appreciated Israel as a reliable and democratic friend and as a strategic ally. They also had a very high regard for Israel's technical capabilities in the area of human intelligence. And they admired Israel's "tactical flexibility" in doing whatever was necessary to get a job done.

It was this general attitude that helped set the stage for the ill-fated U.S.-Israeli collaboration in the Iran arms initiative. Former National Security adviser Robert McFarlane and retired U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard Secord, during their appearances before the joint House-Senate panel investigating that affair, have said as much.

Mr. McFarlane referred to this aspect of Israel. "Now, it may not always be arms, it may not be preemptive attack," he said. "It may be negotiating, it may be bribing. But you can be goddamn sure if any Israeli's caught, he's going to have his government going after the people who did it."

U.S. intelligence on Iran was virtually nonexistent, Mr. McFarlane and Gen. Secord noted. As a result, they explained, the administration was prepared to rely on Israel's intelligence.

As far as Israel was concerned, Mr. Angleton set the standard. Mr. Casey met that standard. They will both be missed by their friends in Israel.

Mr. Blitzer, Washington correspondent for the Jerusalem Post, is author of "Between Washington and Jerusalem: A Reporter's Notebook" (Oxford University Press, 1985).

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