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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

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SUBJECT Interview with Admiral Stansfield Turner

PHIL DONAHUE: You recognize Admiral Stansfield Turner, who was Director of the Central Intelligence Agency under President Carter.

You're a former President of the Naval War College. You're former Commander-in-Chief of NATO's southern flank. And they wouldn't let you print some of this stuff. Not unlike the order that you issued when you were head of the CIA. So you were hoisted on your own petard.

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: No, not at all. Quite the opposite. You see, when I was head of the CIA, we had this rule, it had been in force for over 20 years. But one man named Snepp did not submit his book for publication. We sued him for breach of contract.

My problem was exactly the opposite. I did submit my book.

DONAHUE: I see. So your grievance with Snepp is that he didn't submit, not that there was necessarily something sensitive about what he wrote.

ADMIRAL TURNER: He had not only signed a written contract to submit, he had looked me in the eye, Phil, and said, "I'm going to submit my book to you, Admiral." And he did not.

DONAHUE: What's curious to me, though, is how a guy who heads the Central Intelligence Agency can't make his own decisions about what ought to be released and not released, and you've got a bunch of lower life -- I shouldn't say that. You know what I mean about lower-echelon people making a decision

about what you should publish.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I understand your point. But things change over time. And I believe ex-Directors, like myself, should submit their things. But I think they should not be judged as arbitrarily as they were by this administration.

DONAHUE: You think some ridiculous things, decisions were made about...

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, you know, when I can't quote one of my own speeches that I gave to the alumni of Vassar College when I was Director, I think that's pretty ridiculous.

DONAHUE: So we have a Vassar College speech delivered by you during your tenure as head of the CIA which is now classified information.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, parts of it. Now, that's pretty ridiculous.

DONAHUE: I think so, too.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I can't quote Jimmy Carter's book, pieces of it.

DONAHUE: I see.

ADMIRAL TURNER: You can buy it.

DONAHUE: Okay. All right.

Let me ask you some basic questions, Admiral Turner. How many people working for the government have what would be called the ultimate security clearance?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, the very highest levels, I would guess it's over half a million people. The total security is over 400 -- I mean four million. Four-point-three million people have some security clearance. About half a million of those are very, very high clearances.

DONAHUE: Five hundred thousand people have a security clearance which is exceeded only, perhaps, by the President and the Director of the CIA himself.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes.

DONAHUE: And perhaps the Joint Chiefs.

ADMIRAL TURNER: And I froze those clearances for

intelligence materials and found that we could reduce them by some 30 percent in all the contractors. They didn't even notice the difference, didn't even object.

DONAHUE: Admiral Turner, I'm not pretending you have not heard this before, but this is ridiculous on its face. Five hundred thousand people are told, are given information which, if shared, would presumably be damaging to the country. That's why it's called sensitive and top clearance.

ADMIRAL TURNER: There are several reasons for that. One, of course, is that as we've gone into more and more technical systems for collecting intelligence, we've had to have more and more contractors, more and more people who build these things for us have the clearances.

In addition, Phil, it's just become a prestige item to have those clearances. And I found it very, very difficult to cut the government back. I found it was very easy to cut the contractors back.

DONAHUE: Most of these 500,000 people, then, are people that might be associated with the manufacturer of hardware. For example, electronic scrambling for confusing...

ADMIRAL TURNER: Satellites.

DONAHUE: Yeah. So that the guy in the union who --with the small screwdriver is a guy who's got a clearance.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Not that far down. He may have a low-level clearance. But the 500,000 you're talking about are the designers, the people who operate them, and so on.

DONAHUE: Okay. Here's the point. Should we be surprised that a certain percentage of these folks are selling the information? Come on.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well...

DONAHUE: And you cannot -- here's my point. You can't have a half a million people with top secret and expect to control all the information. The Walkers is the tip of the iceberg. And we're kidding ourselves here. We've met the enemy and it's us. We can't possibly keep secrets among a community of a half a million people.

ADMIRAL TURNER: You're incorrect there. We can, because most of these people are really loyal Americans. Because today, Phil, no American is going to spy for the Soviet Union for ideological reasons. Nobody believes in communism, as they did

in the 1930s, '40s, and maybe '50s.

What we have today are some of these people who are out for greed and want money. And we do have some other people --and I think John Walker is one -- where they want the thrill of spying. They want some zest added to their life.

After all, Walker had a pretty dull job in the Navy. He wasn't a very important person. So he tried to make himself important.

Now, if we're alert and see that he's doing something different -- you know, he's driving a Mercedes, where he used to drive a Ford...

DONAHUE: That ought to be obvious.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yeah. That ought...

DONAHUE: A yellow light ought to go on.

Why didn't the yellow light go on in San Diego, where a citizen operating in an insurance storefront place, with the cooperation of several other people in the dock area, quite literally stole us blind and sold F-16 radio hardware to Iran so that they could update the equipment that we had sold them prior to the Shah?

Five hundred thousand people have all our secrets.

Admiral, why is it -- doesn't the view have to be respected that this is not going to end, that we have here the absurdity of a gigantic bureaucracy that includes 12 different organizations, each of which is trying to CYA, cover their you know what, and inevitably you get competitive conflict between them, and inefficiency, waste, and counterproductive activity?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Of course it's not going to end. We've had spying since back in the Bible days, and there'll be spying always in the future. The question is, can we control it to the point that it won't hurt our country?

DONAHUE: No.

ADMIRAL TURNER: There's a lot...

DONAHUE: No, you can't.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes, we can. But there's a lot you've got to do that people have not been willing to do. You've got to cut those 500,000. You've got to cut those 4.3 million. And

you've got to release more information to the public. Because if it's all kept classified, nothing's classified. Nobody respects it. You understand that? That's the simplest point.

And that's why trying to clear my book was so ridiculous, because the information belongs in the public domain. And if it were there, the real secrets would be kept much better.

DONAHUE: Okay.

Now just a couple of rules, and we'll let this audience in on this. You, as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, had to report to two different committees, the House Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate. True?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Right.

DONAHUE: Do you take a back elevator up to this room, and is it like that?

ADMIRAL TURNER: As a matter of fact, there was a back elevator to one of them, but that was a coincidence. But they have rooms where you do your testimony that are very secret, very...

DONAHUE: They sweep them for bugs and all that?

ADMIRAL TURNER: They sweep them for bugs. Cockroaches too.

[Laughter]

DONAHUE: Obviously, if you want to mine Nicaraguan harbors, you have to tell some -- which committee do you call, both?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Both?

DONAHUE: You, incidentally, call for a joint committee, don't you?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes.

DONAHUE: You think it's silly to have the two different House and Senate committees?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think it would be helpful to security if we compressed it into one.

DONAHUE: How many on each committee?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, there are 15 on one and 17 on the

other, I believe.

DONAHUE: Fifteen on the Senate Committee?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes.

DONAHUE: A lot of these guys are really rootin', tootin', shootin' older fellows, aren't they, who are more likely to agree with, yeah, let's go get these bums? Isn't that true?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, not necessarily so. These are what are called select committees. And in the congressional jargon, a select committee is one where you don't get on to it by seniority. You get on to it because Mr. O'Neill, on the one hand, and Mr. Dole, on the other hand, appoints you. And that has let them put very responsible, good people on. And that's been a big help.

DONAHUE: You can't mine the Nicaraguan harbors without telling the people over on the Hill, can you?

ADMIRAL TURNER: They're not allowed to, according to the law of this country.

DONAHUE: Do you think William Casey told them?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes, he told them. Apparently, according to Mr. Moynihan, there was a couple of lines in a 10-or-12-page document.

DONAHUE: So he snuck it in.

ADMIRAL TURNER: He snuck it in.

DONAHUE: And Barry Goldwater used a vulgarity that has to do with urinating to describe his own anger about the -- about William Casey, did he not?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes.

I think there's also case that Barry, who is a marvelous person, and his committee were not very alert, because they did have some clue and they didn't pick it up and grab it.

DONAHUE: Right. So they didn't pick up two sentences in a multi-page report that suggested we were going to mine Nicaraguan harbors, behaving like terrorists and looking like fools all over the world.

ADMIRAL TURNER: If you were look...

DONAHUE: ...should be a two-line thing somewhere in a

17-page report?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I'm not trying to exculpate Mr. Casey. But on the other hand, when you read or hear something like that, your antennas ought to go up. I mean that was something pretty different. I mean that was in fact, in my opinion, an act of terrorism, state-supported terrorism, by the United States.

DONAHUE: So we shouldn't be -- and that has to be considered when we try to figure out what to do about terrorism against us.

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's absolutely true. Because if we're conducting terrorism -- and if you were the skipper of a Norwegian ship going into that harbor and you were damaged, you're not there to help win a war. You're there to carry on your business. Well, you're innocently damaged. You're innocently, maybe, killed. You feel it's terrorists who've been after you.

DONAHUE: Can you open my mail?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No.

DONAHUE: Could you? Could you, as CIA, could you have ordered the opening of my mail?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Not legally.

[Laughter]

DONAHUE: Well, would you have ordered it illegally?

ADMIRAL TURNER: It was done illegally before my time.

DONAHUE: But is there not now a Reagan directive calling for the opening of mail without a warrant?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes. He changed -- he loosened the rules that President Carter and President Ford had, in a number of respects, that let the CIA get into spying domestically. And I think that's very dangerous, because we have the FBI to do the domestic spying, if it has to be done.

DONAHUE: So, in other words, you don't want two agencies opening my mail.

ADMIRAL TURNER: There's a real reason not to. The FBI is trained to operate within the law of the United States. The CIA is trained to operate overseas, where United States law doesn't apply. So when you're going to do things domestically,

spying on Americans, you want the FBI to do it because it keeps it within the law.

DONAHUE: But the law at the moment, if -- the law at the moment is that no warrant from any bench is required for the opening of mail for someone who's perceived to be potentially a threat to the general welfare of the United States of America. So?

ADMIRAL TURNER: That was a mistake to weaken that.

DONAHUE: Okay.

Can you hire a hooker to seduce me or try and put me in a -- seriously. I'm asking...

ADMIRAL TURNER: There's no law against that. There's a regulation against that. In my time, I forbade that.

DONAHUE: But it has been done, hasn't it?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I'm sure it has been done. It's been done all over the world, mainly by the Soviets and others. That's a common practice, goes all the way back to Mata Hari and Cleopatra and lots of others.

DONAHUE: Right.

We now have William Casey, who is making unscheduled, unannounced visits in camouflaged airplanes to various trouble spots, especially in Central America, I'm told. We do appear to be looking for a war to fight somewhere.

We're also, as I'm sure aware, very, very angry about terrorism around the world, and most especially terrorism directed against us.

How do you feel about the Presi -- here's what the President said recently. As you know, he named the nations that are -- here's how he put it. Here are the terrorists, according to my President.

PRESIDENT REAGAN: Most of the terrorists who are kidnapping and murdering American citizens and attacking American installations are being trained, financed, and directly or indirectly controlled by a core group of radical and totalitarian governments, a new international version of Murder Incorporated.

And we're especially not going to tolerate these attacks from outlaw states run by the strangest collection of misfits, looney-tunes, and squalid criminals since the advent of the Third Reich.

DONAHUE: How do you feel about that kind of rhetoric?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, I think it's exaggerated. No question that those five countries he named are countries who will at least tolerate terrorists operating from their...

DONAHUE: Including Cuba and Nicaragua.

ADMIRAL TURNER: They'll tolerate people operating from there. The other three countries, I think, are the ones who are more likely to originate, to sponsor a terrorist action.

At the same time, we've got to look at the broad picture and go back to what we were talking about a minute ago, Phil; and that is, are our own skirts clean? And the very President who said that three times in the last 15 months has given the CIA orders to do things that amounted to terrorism, and then cancelled those orders after a while.

Now, why did he cancel them? He cancelled them because he found that they were not acceptable to the American public, like the mining of Nicaragua was one.

DONAHUE: But we do appear to have an Administration peopled especially by septuagenarians, which I hope to be someday...

ADMIRAL TURNER: I'm closer than you.

DONAHUE: ...who are fighting the last war, who are spending billions of dollars on aircraft carriers, and now a trillion on Strategic Defense Initiative, all the while that the biggest threat will be somebody who got a message from God and will choose to bring a nuclear instrument into this country in a shoebox. We are paralyzed by our own military rigid hardware, and not at all adapting to the new realities of...

ADMIRAL TURNER: Oh, you know, you can overdo that. I'm not an enthusiast for a lot of what Mr. Reagan says, but follow what he does as opposed to what he says. He talks a big military game, but what did he do? On Friday, one year, he said we'll never pull out of Lebanon. On Monday he pulled out. The same thing. He's making lots of other noises about using military force against these terrorists, and he hasn't done a thing as yet.

The only time he's done it is against 600, or so, Cubans in Grenada, and that was a tough show.

DONAHUE: Do you see -- you must see his illness as complicating.

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ADMIRAL TURNER: Very complicating. And I certainly wish him every...

DONAHUE: As we all do. As we all do. But does this mean that we'll have a President who will give even less energy and leadership to JCS decisions, for example?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, we certainly hope now. If the President's health holds up, then he can carry the workload. Of course, we just don't know how to predict that at this point. And if he can't, then there's that provision in law where he can turn over to the Vice President.

DONAHUE: It's not likely. Well, the provision in law. He wouldn't need the Twenty-fifth Amendment. He could resign.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes.

DONAHUE: A 74-year-old President, diagnosed cancer, with a big ranch out in California. I mean, really, who could condemn him. I'm not suggesting I know, but who could condemn a man for wanting to go and ride a horse and...

ADMIRAL TURNER: He made that decision to run a second time...

DONAHUE: Yes, he did.

ADMIRAL TURNER: ...and he knew he was already under some medical question mark at that time.

So I think the man is dedicated to our country. He's certainly a patriot. And my personal feeling is he'll stick it out if he has to.

DONAHUE: What do you think he knew about his medical condition at the time he made that decision?

ADMIRAL TURNER: My understanding is that he knew there was a small growth there, and they decided to postpone action on it. I would suspect because it was before the election.

DONAHUE: So you are lending credence, then, to the thesis that the President of the United States chose to walk away from dramatic exploratory surgery so as to not to upset the electorate at the time just before the elections in '84.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think there's a high probability of that, but I'd be careful about being too firm on it, because you and I just don't know what went on inside the medical chambers of the White House.

DONAHUE: This book is titled Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition. It's author, Stansfield Turner, who ought to know, having served as Director of the CIA 12 -- how many people, in all -- do you have any -- what's the number of all the intelligence communities? What do you want to say, organizations?

ADMIRAL TURNER: There are 12 different agencies, all of them semi-autonomous, within our government.

DONAHUE: Each branch of service has its own intelligence service, huh?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Each of the four military services does. There's a Defense Intelligence Agency. There's a National Security Agency that collects electronic eavesdropping. There's the CIA. There's State Department Intelligence, FBI Intelligence, and a number of others.

DONAHUE: So what are we talking here?

ADMIRAL TURNER: So the job is how you coordinate that, how you bring all that together.

DONAHUE: How many bodies? How many bodies? Four million?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Wish I could say. That's one of those classified numbers.

[Laughter]

ADMIRAL TURNER: I always say that when I can't answer a question, anyway.

DONAHUE: We'll be back. We're in New York City with Stansfield Turner.

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WOMAN: I'd just like to know, how can the CIA justify going in and taking terrorists out in the same manner, in many ways, that they are doing it back to us?

ADMIRAL TURNER: They haven't done that, to my knowledge. And although the President's talking about doing that and people in the Administration are talking about it, they haven't faced up to the tough decision to do it.

WOMAN: They have never gone in and killed somebody in another country?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The CIA, to my knowledge, has never killed anybody.

[Groans from the audience]

WOMAN: What about the CIA in Chile?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The CIA did not kill anybody in Chile. The CIA...

DONAHUE: Did the CIA send any money in Chile to destabilize...

ADMIRAL TURNER: Absolutely.

DONAHUE: ...the government of Allende?

ADMIRAL TURNER: With the approval of the President of the United States, they did do that. And they plotted to kill a number of foreign leaders, but they never pulled it off.

DONAHUE: And there were meetings between mob figures in hotel rooms at various places in this country in an effort to knock off Castro. Nobody doubts that.

ADMIRAL TURNER: No question about that. They didn't do it.

DONAHUE: So you're saying that the CIA, while it has planned in various ways to kill other people, it has as yet not been successful in doing it.

ADMIRAL TURNER: And since 1976, when President Ford signed the first executive order on intelligence, there's been a presidential rule that says you will not do assassination of any kind. President Carter reaffirmed that. President Reagan has reaffirmed that.

DONAHUE: Go right ahead.

MAN: The CIA has been exposed as literally a global Murder Incorporated in the book by Philip Agee, Inside the Company, as well as Frank Snapp's book. Examples...

DONAHUE: Hold it. This sounds like a very long question. My program is an hour. What is your point?

MAN: Okay. The point is that there can be no doubt, after reading those books and watching recent history, that their main function is to guaranty governments favorable to the United States Administration that happens to be in power. And it seems

to me there's little question that it tries to fulfill that function.

DONAHUE: What do you think?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, you've just got to be very skeptical of some of these things that your read. Mr. Agee is a traitor to our country. He has betrayed the names and identities of many CIA officers who are working for you and me under the authorization of the Congress of the United States. And here's a man sabotaging a duly authorized organization of our government. He is not to be trusted.

DONAHUE: Yeah.

WOMAN: I have a question regarding Mr. Walker. Wasn't it an embarrassment to the government for Mrs. Walker to turn her husband in, rather than the government to find out about him?

DONAHUE: His ex-wife.

[Applause]

ADMIRAL TURNER: It certainly is not an indication of good counterintelligence work. Yet you never know if they really caught him that way or some other way. Because if they caught him some other way, that would be a nice way to cover it up.

WOMAN: Admiral Turner, our government has billions and billions of dollars that we spend on all our fancy toys. Do you really think that you can stop the terrorists?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think it's going to be very difficult, but I think we can do it if we can have enough of a moral posture of our own -- that is, we're not doing terrorism -- to pressure the rest of the responsible nations of the world to help us, to make people extradite terrorists like these three who are in Beirut today, to stop using airports where they don't have adequate controls, and various other methods to bring world attention onto this problem.

WOMAN: When the hijacking took place in Lebanon, did your people know right away who those people were as soon as you got news that it had been hijacked? Did you know who they were and their backgrounds and...

DONAHUE: They're not his people anymore. But did his agency know?

WOMAN: Did the CIA know who these people were and their background almost immediately? Do you have people in Beirut and

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in all these countries and know the underground?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I can't tell you what the CIA knew because I am not part of it anymore. But let me hypothesize for you that I doubt that they knew that that quickly because it's very, very difficult to get inside a fanatic religious terrorist organization. It is done, and I saw it done. And I saw us actually thwart some terrorist activities because we had people on the inside who made it fizzle. But the odds are not high.

MAN: Do you think -- the seven hostages who are still in Lebanon, it seems funny that the American Government is like playing a game with these people and we're not really doing anything about it, and all we're doing is just dealing with them and...

DONAHUE: What do you want to do about it?

MAN: We should give them an ultimatum: We get these people back, or we take military action.

DONAHUE: And what kind of military action?

MAN: We should go in there and maybe drop a couple of bombs and let them know we're not the paper -- we're not the paper tiger, we're not the paper tiger...

DONAHUE: Where should we drop the bombs?

MAN: We should drop the bombs on Lebanon. And it's not really...

DONAHUE: Drop them in Beirut?

MAN: In Beirut.

DONAHUE: Downtown, huh?

MAN: We...

DONAHUE: How about the women and children? Does it bother you?

MAN: Well, listen. In all wars...

DONAHUE: Do you know who the last person who dropped bombs on Beirut? Ariel Sharon. And almost 700 Israeli soldiers have died since that bombing?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Let me put it another way, Phil.

MAN: But if Ariel Sharon didn't drop those bombs, there

wouldn't be an Israel.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Let me put it another way. Actually, it's nice to sit here in this studio and say, "Let's go in and bomb a few people." But somebody in the United States Government, ultimately the President, has got to finally make a decision and say, "I'm willing, in order to get some terrorists, to take out this lady and that lady and that lady and that baby," and so on. And I don't want to be the person who has to make that decision, because it's faces, it's real people that you've decide to kill, innocent people, if you're just going to go in and bomb to demonstrate.

WOMAN: I feel that if Americans would hijack a plane, our government would probably punish them. Why can't the Lebanon government do the same?

ADMIRAL TURNER: They absolutely should. We should insist on it. We should get all the countries of the world to insist on it.

We did not do anything, in my opinion, despite all this tough rhetoric by the Administration, to force the Iranians to prosecute the hijackers last December whom they captured and who had killed two Americans. We've not had any publicity on that. We've not had any pressure on the Iranians to do something with those people. We don't know what's happening.

DONAHUE: Thanks for calling. I'm glad you waited.

MAN: I worked on B-52 models during the Vietnam War, and we could quite literally take pictures of military equipment [unintelligible] and you could pass that information on to somebody in town.

So my question to you is, what do you do or how do you tighten up security at a military installation?

DONAHUE: You can't. You can't.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Back to what I said earlier, you reduce the amount of classified information by making more of it open to the public, and thereby making it easier to protect what needs to be protected. You reduce the number of people who have access to those clearances.

MAN: But, see, the problem you have with that is there are people who are still required to service these B-52s. And if pictures are taken on the inside and those pictures are passed on, it won't take a Soviet technician long to -- that long to figure out.

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DONAHUE: That's right. But I think you'd be wasting your time, because the Soviets, I'm sure, already have the information. The B-52 is 30 years old.

Now, it's true there are new black boxes on the B-52, but do we really believe the Soviet Union has no information about the kind of electronic-warfare hardware that we have now?

MAN: They must have that, and they can get their hands on more with current military equipment if security isn't tightened up.

DONAHUE: He's already been there. Don't hold him responsible for whatever you may be perceived as the sins of today's intelligence community.

Are you there? Hi.

MAN: The Teheran rescue attempt. Do you feel that that was a sabotaged operation? And was there an investigation afterwards?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think it was a well-planned operation. I supported it and was enthusiastic about proceeding with it. I think it met with a very unfortunate set of circumstances that brought it down...

DONAHUE: Because the intelligence community did not alert us to the real interaction of that terrain and those helicopter engines?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, I don't think that's the case at all. I think the case was the intelligence was very good. Some of the military planning wasn't what it should have been, and they met some really unfortunate circumstances. But overall, it was a worthwhile effort because we were totally frustrated, totally stymied at that point.

DONAHUE: These helicopters were going to land at a soccer field, were they not?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No. Oh, yes, eventually.

DONAHUE: Right. And then we were going to go in and rescue all the hostages, take them to the helicopters, lift off from downtown Teheran to some rendezvous point where apparently, what, they would get on a bus and go to an airport and then be transported back here so we could take the yellow ribbons off the trees.

This was the worst idea in the history of the United States Military.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Absolutely not. It was...

[Applause]

ADMIRAL TURNER: It was a tough challenge, but it could have been done. It could have been done.

DONAHUE: It's easy -- I know, it's easy for the big TV guys to come in after the fact and pretend like they're brilliant. So let me share with you that I've been known to be wrong myself, Admiral.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Really?

DONAHUE: But it is -- that was a big surprise. After the courage of the Carter Administration's restraint, to do this because of pressure, and to have only one dissenter, Cyrus Vance, who resigned, and has never since said, "I told you so." Now, there's a courageous man.

ADMIRAL TURNER: We had a situation here where we estimated that we're not going to get those hostages out any other way for a very long period of time. The Iranian government did not look as though it was going to negotiate in earnest in any way, and this seemed the only way to try to get that whole problem out of the way, because it was holding up almost all American foreign policy at that time. It was the only way to try to get these hostages back.

I think the plan was very complex. But I do think, as a military man, it could have worked. It was just very unfortunate that we lost those helicopters at the early stages.

DONAHUE: Secrecy and Democracy is the title of Stansfield Turner's book, The CIA in Transition.

We'll be back in a moment.

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DONAHUE: I suppose you're going to duck this one, too, but let me give it a try.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Too!

DONAHUE: Well, no, no, no. No, you have been forthcoming.

William Casey is variously described as an Irish curmudgeon, fighting the last war, aggressive -- the mining of the harbors just one example -- who wants to use the CIA to

execute policy. And the way you solve problems is you use military might.

And that scares a lot of people. This man is sticking pins into a rattlesnake, not only in Central America, but elsewhere. The children, the sons of this audience are the ones who will have to back up this kind of macho rhetoric and covert behavior.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, it's not just...

DONAHUE: Does he, should he, a man who actually didn't put all his money in a blind trust? You must be distracted when you read stuff like that.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, what distracts me, what upsets me, after working for four years to restore the image of the CIA, because it had gone down pretty low in 1975 when there'd been some investigations of past abuses, is that today you look in the papers and what do you read? Criticism of mining, criticism of killing people in Beirut, criticism...

DONAHUE: Assassination manuals.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Assassination manuals, analysts quitting because they say they were being pressured to slant the intelligence.

Whether those are true or not is less important to me than the fact that if the public and the Congress again believe the CIA is out of control, then we're going to have another wave of criticism just like 1975, which hurt us terribly, crippled us.

DONAHUE: Is Nicaragua a threat to the national security and welfare of the United States of America?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Not a near-term threat, not to the degree that the urgency has been exercised. We've got to take care of the fact that there are communists down there. I was down there a few months ago, and there definitely are communists. But we don't have an urgent threat. It's a poor, weak country.

DONAHUE: So if communists are there, that's a threat, huh?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Absolutely. We have a terrible problem in our hemisphere with Castro, who has been a thorn in our side all around the world.

DONAHUE: What is the terrible problem? How has the security of the United States been threatened by the presence of Fidel Castro?

DONAHUE: Well, Castro has sent troops to several countries around the world to work against our interests. He has tried to align the Third World movement against the United States. He's just been a bloody nuisance to us. We don't like to have that kind of thing in our back door.

DONAHUE: And that's why we tried to knock him off with the mob. Is that it?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, that was the excuse back then. I don't think that was a good plan then, and I don't think it should be done now.

DONAHUE: But does it make a person a left-wing, knee-jerk, unrealistic liberal pinko person to say, "Why don't we start talking to these people"? What are we afraid of? What's going to happen if we reach out?

ADMIRAL TURNER: We've tried repeatedly to talk to Castro, both in the Carter Administration and in this Administration, and it hasn't worked. I think the day will come when he will talk.

WOMAN: You made a reference as to checking our own skirts. And I'm interested to know why this government has allowed the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi Party to grow into large proportions, and they are now armed.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I wish I could help you on that, but that's strictly a domestic FBI problem, not something the CIA would get into.

You don't think so? Well, I can assure you the CIA has nothing to do with the Ku Klux Klan, with that kind of -- or the Nazi Party during my time. That is not something that we had anything to do with.

You've got to keep the CIA out of the domestic scene as much as possible.

Now, there is spying goes on in the United States. The CIA has got to be alert to that. But basically...

DONAHUE: But the original charter disallowed that, did it not?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The original charter says this is an overseas agency. But, you know, when people come over here from overseas, you've got to...

DONAHUE: So...

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, no. What we did was we hand it off to the FBI. If a spy comes to this country, the CIA has been watching him overseas, when he comes here it's the FBI's job. You've got to have teamwork there. So there is some domestic interface.

WOMAN: I would like to see these terrorists taken, and I would like to see these seven hostages come back. But I think...

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, I would too.

WOMAN: I think that sometimes the CIA has to just play dirty. We want every...

DONAHUE: Like what?

WOMAN: I mean they have to go over and maybe they do have to kill some people who are innocent.

DONAHUE: How about a bomb? Plant a bomb?

WOMAN: Well, maybe that's what you need.

DONAHUE: Put a bomb in the -- like in the...

WOMAN: Israel, when they get attacked -- I'm so in favor of Israel -- they just go right back and attack the people who attacked them. And that's what we need to do.

[Applause]

DONAHUE: And right now the Israeli economy is barely breathing. And Israel -- can Israel claim to be safer now?

WOMAN: But the CIA cannot be a bunch of angels. I mean I think they have -- you have to be prepared for them to do some dirty...

DONAHUE: But if we plant a bomb, what's to prevent them from planting a bomb against us later?

WOMAN: Well, I suppose so, but we're just...

DONAHUE: Where will it stop?

WOMAN: I don't know. But we're just using rhetoric and we're not getting anywhere.

DONAHUE: You want to get and do something.

WOMAN: That's right. I do.

DONAHUE: We're spending all this money on the military and we're wimps. We don't even be able...

WOMAN: That's right. And I want to see those seven people come back.

DONAHUE: Let me get somebody who hasn't had a chance.

WOMAN: When you say the CIA is in transition in your book, what do you mean by transition? How is it changing?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, there are two themes in my book. One is that before 1977 we really didn't have any oversight of intelligence, any check from the outside. I detail in a number of directions how we have instituted that and yet made our intelligence stay effective.

Secondly, by the mid-1970s technical intelligence, satellites and electronic eavesdropping systems, had come to dominate how we collect information. And I again detail in the book how you dovetail those new systems with the old traditional and still very needed human spy.

These were both major changes in how you go about intelligence.

WOMAN: The CIA has very negative connotations for many people. Okay.

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's too bad.

WOMAN: What kind -- it is the truth. What kind of people do you want to see come in to the CIA, what qualities? And can there be women as well as men?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Oh, yes. And we have a great emphasis on getting more women into the top levels of the CIA. And what you want are people who are very bright intellectually. It's one of the most intellectually demanding careers I can think of. And you want people who have high ethical standards and who represent the morals and attitudes of this country. You want people who are able to react quickly, because many of them have to act under stress overseas when they're actually out there doing the spying work, and suchforth. But mainly you want patriotic, dedicated, moral Americans.

DONAHUE: Who obey the law.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Who obey the law.

DONAHUE: And it makes it difficult, I would assume, to

attract that kind of person when you've got the head of the agency in a cavalier way giving the back of his hand to a law which obliges him to place his funds in a blind trust so that he is not at least beyond even the suspicion of...

ADMIRAL TURNER: You're carrying it a little too far, Phil. There isn't a law on that. It's a matter of individual choice and individual judgment.

But I do believe, and I'm very worried, that young people will not go into the CIA in the decade ahead if it keeps getting the kind of criticism it's received in the last four or five years.

DONAHUE: There certainly is a law disallowing any kind of overseeing of your own assets that may be benefited by information that you would glean as a result of your capacity as a public servant.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, that's one thing, as opposed to --having to put your things in a blind trust is not a law.

DONAHUE: Okay. We are...

ADMIRAL TURNER: I did it, but I don't feel I was required to do it.

DONAHUE: We are in New York City with Admiral Stansfield Turner, and we'll be back in a moment.

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WOMAN: Based on statistics, how safe are Americans in Lebanon, Europe, around Greece? How safe are we?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I don't think you're very safe in Lebanon today. I wouldn't go there if I were you.

Europe I don't think is unsafe at all.

WOMAN: If someone came to my door and said they were from the CIA and they were checking on the integrity of my neighbor, should I believe them?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Only if you got real documentation. They should have a lot of papers with them that convince you of that. There are millions of people who pretend they're working for the CIA. You've got to be very careful. And if you have to, call up the CIA. They're in the local phone book...

DONAHUE: How do you feel about -- whether or not

they're legitimate, authorized people, how do you feel about that question? It's very close to the kinds of questions that we were asked, as you know, in the early '50s that ruined a generation of creative artists, not to mention a whole lot of wonderful people.

WOMAN: I just wondered if this would be a way they'd go about it. Would they go to someone's doors? Suppose someone wanted to get in the CIA. Would they check him out?

DONAHUE: Has your neighbor now or has your neighbor ever been kind of funny looking?

WOMAN: Old soldiers never die. What happens to old CIA Directors?

ADMIRAL TURNER: They write books.

[Laughter]

WOMAN: Many people today are afraid of flying. Are any of the agencies doing anything to protect the overseas flights?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The President is talking about bringing back sky marshals and putting them on international flights. I hope he does it. He has not done so yet.

DONAHUE: You'd like to see him do that?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think it would be very good.

DONAHUE: As you know, a lot of reasonable people don't think it's such a hot idea. You get O.K. Corral at 38,000 feet, and that upsets -- that bothers a lot of pilots.

ADMIRAL TURNER: But if you put a responsible sky marshal on, he knows when to shoot and not to shoot.

MAN: I was going to ask that. Do you believe that, for example, two armed sky marshals on that flight would have prevented the death of that Navy diver?

DONAHUE: What do you think?

MAN: I think there would be a better chance.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I do too.

WOMAN: Admiral, how often does the CIA have to get clearance from the Select Committees? Is it just for the big products...

DONAHUE: Yeah. What determines when they go over

there?

WOMAN: ...big projects, or just the everyday activities?

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's a very complex subject because you can't put everything in a law. It's just too complex.

I do, in my book, tell you in great detail how you decide when to go up there. If it's what we call a covert action, like mining in Nicaragua, you are required by law to go up very quickly. If it's spying on somebody, it's a decision between the Director and the committees as to how often they want different spying activities to be discussed.

MAN: Admiral Turner, why is it that the Israeli airlines can protect the people that are flying in their airlines and we can't protect the people flying in ours?

[Applause]

ADMIRAL TURNER: We just aren't tough enough with the security at other people's airports. Ours is good enough, but we just aren't...

WOMAN: Why not?

DONAHUE: Hang on just a minute now. Without a mike you'll never be a star.

WOMAN: How does the CIA recruit their agents, or do they just look in the want ads?

ADMIRAL TURNER: You know, that's -- you think that's funny, but we do -- they do put want ads in the newspapers, as well as recruit on college campuses and have recruiting offices that are quite open in all of our major cities. We're just looking for a few, but some of the brightest young men and women in America.

DONAHUE: As you know, the agency perceived itself as in disarray following your leadership. We should not be surprised. I'm sure the next CIA Director won't have too much of a nice thing to say about the last one.

But as a matter of fact, CIA employment applications are up. Thousands of young people are applying for jobs at Langley and related agencies. True?

ADMIRAL TURNER: It's encouraging. Even when I was there and there was this hangover from the 1975 investigations,

the young people were applying in increasing numbers. They saw through a lot of the media hype against the CIA. It's a critically important organization to our country. It's one with very fine people in it.

It has made mistakes. But let's recognize that, partly, those mistakes are because of the tough job we give them, the moral and ethical issues we confront them with. It's you and me who put them in those positions.

WOMAN: Is it just the person applying that's scrutinized, or is it their entire family? Where does it end?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, you have to scrutinize their family, particularly to the extent that they may have relatives overseas in an Iron country -- Iron Curtain country. So, yes, you have to do what's called a background investigation. These are done by the Defense Department, the FBI, the CIA, and it looks into the whole background of the person.

DONAHUE: Admiral Turner, just one more time. Given the nature of the human animal -- and you say you now have as many as a half-million -- I can't get over that -- a half a million people know everything. This is what you're saying, top clearance. Drugs, sex, booze, intrigue, ego, vanity, sexuality that may be held up for blackmail for the wrong prejudicial reason, but nevertheless a -- I mean this is ridiculous. You can't possibly protect America if a half a million people have information which we believe will damage the country.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, Phil, I can only quote the record to you. We've had spies. But compared with Great Britain, compared with Germany, compared with some other countries, we've had relatively little spying. You can of course hypothesize that we haven't caught them, that they're still out there by the millions. But I don't believe that's the case, because we do catch them. And I think that is...

DONAHUE: Didn't they break the whole code? Didn't they break -- didn't the Walkers and their related allies actually steal submarine decoding information for use by the Soviet Union?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I don't think so. They got some code information, but rather limited.

I think the Walker case is very serious. I'm not trying to downplay it. And it's a bad mark on our counterintelligence. But counterintelligence is a very tough nut, and you have to tread a very fine line between how much you're going to intrude into your life and mine to find an American who's a spy, and how much you're going to take some risk by protecting those human

rights, those privileges that we have under our Constitution.

DONAHUE: And we'll be back in just a moment.

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DONAHUE: Go ahead. I'm almost out of time.

MAN: I think it's great that we have a small group of intelligent people that can plan the assassination of maybe one person or a small groups of people, so that we don't have to worry about the killing of babies or innocent lives.

I was in Vietnam. I saw some work done by the CIA. And due to that work done by the CIA, it saved thousands of lives of military people.

DONAHUE: So we ought to get out there and start shooting somebody.

MAN: Not somebody. Plan somebody.

DONAHUE: Plan. Plan it. Right. Shoot 'em.

Listen to this. A trillion dollars and we're going to pay some guy with a six-shooter. Oy.

WOMAN: In reference to President Reagan's illness, do you feel that everybody should know exactly what's happened to him?

DONAHUE: What do you think?

WOMAN: I don't think so.

DONAHUE: In other words, you've seen enough of the inside of his body. Let's have a little...

[Laughter]

WOMAN: Yes, exactly. I mean you don't know what's happening in these other countries till they die two days later.

DONAHUE: This one's for you, Admiral. How do you feel about that?

ADMIRAL TURNER: You want me to answer that one?

[Laughter]

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think we ought to be a little

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discreet in what we talk about as to a President's personal health.

WOMAN: I was just wondering, is there forced retirement in the CIA?

DONAHUE: Do you have to retire from the CIA?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes. There's a retirement. It's different for different people, but it comes around 60-62 for most people.

WOMAN: Do you think that war is imminent in the near future?

DONAHUE: Yeah, are we going to go to war? That's what I want to know.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, it depends on what you mean by war. I don't think a big war between us and the Soviet Union is imminent. I'm very worried that we're getting dragged into one in Central America.

MAN: How much more demanding would it be for the CIA to take action if we actually got terrorism happening in the United States?

ADMIRAL TURNER: We wouldn't want the CIA involved. It would be the FBI and the law enforcement people in the United States to stop terrorism.

MAN: My question is, is not destabilizing a government a way of dropping a very slow bomb on a group of people?

DONAHUE: ...in Chile...

MAN: Yes.

ADMIRAL TURNER: When the United States wants to destabilize a government, it's got to be done under the law.

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DONAHUE: Hi. Did you have a point? I have very little time.

MAN: I was in Grenada as a medical student and I found the CIA to be very helpful. They saved my life. If it wasn't for them, I would have been dead right now.

[Applause]

DONAHUE: The book is titled Secrecy and Democracy. How do you do it in an open society? That's one of the major dilemmas address in this book.