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## A Fond Farewell

# Honoring the Office of Communications (U)

*George J. Tenet and Richard D. Calder*

*Editor's Note: Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet and Deputy Director for Administration Richard D. Calder made the following remarks in the CIA Auditorium on 29 September 2000, when a Meritorious Unit Citation was presented to the former and current members of the Office of Communications in recognition of more than 50 years of outstanding service. (U)*

## DCI Tenet's Remarks

I am delighted--but not at all surprised--at the great turnout today. I learned long ago that our communications officers, past and present, share much more than a title. They share a powerful bond of commitment to their mission, their Agency, and to each other. (U)

And that is true whether you cut your teeth on HF or SKYLINK or your teeth--and a few fingers--on the torn tape of a teletype machine. The men and women of our Office of Communications have always been there for CIA and for our country.(U)

The great traditions that we celebrate today have roots that are deep and strong. They extend back more than half a century, back before the founding of our Agency, back to the cataclysmic struggle of World War II. (U) With freedom in the balance, secure communications among the Allies was essential. That included one of the first American-built "hot lines"--a radiotelephone link between the White House in Washington and the Cabinet War Rooms in London. (U)

The technology was crude, the reception was bad, and the weight was 55 tons. But the link was critical enough to warrant the closest protection. The British end of the system was in a well-guarded, underground bunker in a small room disguised--so the story goes--behind a false bathroom door allegedly reserved for Churchill himself, a door that only the most bold or the most desperate would ever dare to open. (U)

You have heard about the decisive contributions of communicators to the success of our wartime parent, the OSS. General Donovan was absolutely correct. The best information, gathered at the greatest risk and sacrifice, is worthless unless it gets to the right people at the right time. (U)

General Donovan prized his communicators for their skill and dedication. He would sometimes even take the staff of his Message Center out for beers. That was when we knew enough to have our Headquarters right up the street from a brewery. (U)

A few things have changed since then. For one, the brewery is gone. But communications--safe, swift, and sure--remain at the very heart of intelligence and espionage. That is a truth that the communicators of CIA have proved over and over again. (U)

The demands that we place on you have always been heavy. Engineering. Maintenance. Cryptography. Administration. Security. Leadership. And much, much more. All to be performed under difficult, often dangerous, conditions. (U)

As President Clinton wrote: "The men and women of the Office of Communications have endured many hardships. They have been in the thick of battle, survived coups, civil unrest, bombings, natural disasters, separation from family and isolation--all in the highest spirit of patriotism and dedication. Without their sacrifice, the intelligence mission of the United States could not be accomplished." (U)

The Office of Communications has always focused on achievement, not recognition. Excellence was expected of commo officers. If your post was in a war zone, off you went. If it was a singleton Station deep in the jungle, off you went. (U)

As serious as the challenges have been, are today, and will be tomorrow, they have never matched the will and capacity of our communicators to meet them. And they never will. (U)

For your greatest legacy is not only the two words "can do," but also the ones that you inevitably put right beside them: "will do." To me, that is the spirit of the Agency's communicator, the spirit of the history that you and your predecessors have written, a history of technical excellence and human valor. (U)

The examples of that excellence and valor are many. I could never hope to do them justice here today. But from the earliest days, the mission has come first. In the late 1940s, as our bases in China closed amid the advance of Communist armies, our valiant communicators developed three priorities: keeping their links open as long as possible, destroying or dispersing their equipment, and getting away safely. The order of those priorities was no accident. (U)

The selfless values of the Office of Communications--forged in war and passed along ever since from generation to generation--have inspired countless acts of bravery:

- The officer who climbed a flagpole atop a seven-story building to repair a vital antenna that had been blown away.
- The officer who--at an embassy under siege--continued to destroy classified material while the floor tiles buckled from the heat of fires below.
- The officer who came to view artillery rounds, car bombs, and kidnapping attempts as just another day at the office.
- And, finally, the officers who endured 444 days of captivity, emerging far stronger than those who took them hostage and who hoped in vain to break their spirit. (U)

These patriots are not abstract figures from some distant past. Each and every one of them is right here with us this afternoon. They are heroes in a community of heroes. (U//FOUO)

Whether under pressure or under fire, the men and women of the Office of Communications provide the secure and reliable networks that modern intelligence demands. The motto "first in, last out" is no cliché. It is a reality that reflects the central role you play. (U)

I have been privileged to see that reality for myself, here at Headquarters and around the world. Wherever I go, secure communications go with me. Faxes, laptops, STU-IIIs, satellite links--the whole package. It is almost magical to watch those command posts materialize again and again in what seems like the blink of an eye. (U)

But I know that magic does not do it--commo people do. Specifically, my guys Mike and Jeff and

the rest of their team. I have learned a few of the secrets of their success: first comes talent, care, and passion. The second secret: no matter what the circumstances, they always seem to have a backup to the backup to the backup. (U)

There is, of course, a third secret which--like all the others--applies to the entire Office of Communications: incredible cohesion and teamwork. And incredible support from family and friends. You stand on many broad shoulders. (U)

I want to pay special recognition and tribute to the love and steadfast support of spouses, children, and other family members who made your service possible and who dealt with your danger. With grace and caring, they accepted your excuses for being missing from family action on behalf of your country. (U)

When I approved a new structure for CIA's information services, a structure that I believe will give us even greater strength and agility, I knew that it would be up to all of us to live up to the example of those who have gone before--to build on their heritage of daring, courage, and vision. (U)

The best have never seen commo as a job, but as a sacred mission with which very, very few are entrusted. As you move into a new structure--and with it a new era--the last thing I want you to do is forget who you are or where you come from. (U)

There is no prouder tradition of service and excellence in US intelligence than that of the men and women of our Office of Communications. Your work is at the core of our success. (U)

And, as DCIs have done since the birth of this Agency, and as my successors will do long into the future, I will continue to rely on you and your colleagues to provide the communications that make our work for American possible. (U)

The traditions, values, and spirit of the Office of Communications--the things that helped it do the seemingly impossible for our country for more than 50 years--have to be preserved. They can be. They must be. And I pledge to you today, that with your help, they will be. To do anything less would dishonor your service. You have my enduring admiration and respect. Congratulations. I am proud to serve with you and your families. May God bless you all. Thank you. (U)

## **DDA Calder's Remarks**

If the past is any indication of the future, we can be certain that the beginning of the 21st century will be turbulent and unpredictable. Only a decade ago, who would have imagined the stunning geopolitical shifts that we now accept as reality--the breakup of the Soviet Union, the end of Communism in Eastern Europe, a peace process in the Middle East, the demise of apartheid in South Africa, the economic emergence of China and the Pacific Rim? And who but a small band of futurists and technologists would have predicted the incredibly rapid commercialization and spread of new technologies such as cellular and wireless communications, notebook computers, DVDs, Palm Pilots, global positioning systems, digital cameras, multimedia workstations, interactive cable, the Internet's emergence as an electronic superhighway, and more? (U)

Organizations, too, have been buffeted by a tidal wave of unimaginable changes. Once-invincible companies such as IBM, General Motors, Sony, Eastman Kodak, Aetna, Apple Computer, and even Microsoft--previously unquestioned models of organizational excellence--have experienced severe performance problems and, in many cases, sudden shifts of leadership. Even in the public sector, once-venerated institutions such as the World Bank and the UN have had their very existence questioned, while governments around the world from the United States to the UK to Australia have been reviewing, reinventing, downsizing, and privatizing their basic operations and services. (U)

There is little doubt that this fast-track, kaleidoscopic pace of change will continue, or even accelerate. In fact, stories of organizations "hitting the wall" are becoming almost a routine feature of the business press. The question for us at CIA is how to ride the crest of this tidal wave of change and still be effective and preserve the security of the country. (U)

In this era of turbulence, the Agency cannot escape the need to reskill its people, reshape its mission portfolio, redesign its processes, and redirect its resources. Transformation is an imperative for every organization. And CIA is certainly no exception. The real issue is whether transformation happens belatedly in a crisis atmosphere or with foresight in a calm and considered atmosphere; whether the transformation agenda is set by more prescient outsiders or derives from our own point of view about the future; whether transformation is spasmodic and brutal or continuous and peaceful. I am reminded that Samuel Goldwyn once said, "Only a fool would make predictions--especially about the future." Nevertheless, I am very confident that the Agency has a strategy for coping with the future's inherent unpredictability. (U)

Director George Tenet has set out a bold Strategic Direction for CIA. He has chosen not to speculate on what might happen in the future; rather, he has challenged us to imagine what we can make happen. He has argued that our ability to reconfigure quickly our products, structures, and skills is absolutely essential in maintaining our relevance in a world that is shaken, not stirred. And he is demanding that we leverage technology more effectively in all that we do. His vision for technology is captured in the words, "speed, connectivity, and volume." Our way of acknowledging that at the heart of all the change that is swirling around us is the much-hyped, much-maligned, but absolutely critical information highway. This highway is our link to the global community, our digital pipeline for collaboration and for the networking of intelligence. Technology also is converging on the information highway. With the merging of communications and computing technologies, the Agency needs a new approach to managing its technical infrastructure. We want to be certain we are developing our people appropriately to deal with tomorrow's technology challenges. In short, it is time for a strategy reboot. (U//FOUO)

For our communicators, our communications technicians, and our commo engineers, this change in strategy means opportunity. The communications network remains central to the Agency's success. It is the vital link between Headquarters and our Stations and Bases around the world. Demands on this network are growing. In addition to cables, we now support a vast array of new technologies requiring greater sophistication in operating, maintaining, and securing these links. But the same is true at Headquarters. Our internal networks are equally vital to our success. By managing both our internal networks and our external networks as a single entity, we can much more effectively utilize the skills of our people. Equally important, this new focus will enable us to better develop the talent of our people and provide more opportunity for them to learn and manage emerging technologies. (U//FOUO)

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(U//FOUO)

Given our strategy for making our technology platforms in the field and at Headquarters as similar as possible, our communicators, technicians, and engineers now have greater assignment possibilities. The walls that separated how we operated in the field from how we operated at Headquarters are coming down. For our communicators, an assignment at Headquarters no longer needs to be dreaded. There certainly will be opportunity for our people to continue to enhance their understanding of and familiarity with technologies that will be increasingly common to both the

field and Headquarters. Moreover, we believe we will be better able to plan and deliver training in this new environment so we can keep the skills of our people as fresh and competitive as possible. (U//FOUO)

Some things will not change. Our dependence on the dedication and can-do spirit, that has been so emblematic of the Office of Communications over the past 53 years, will not lessen. Given the increasingly uncertain environment in which we live and our growing dependence on technology, we will need to be very prudent in ensuring that we do not dilute exemplary commitment to mission that has characterized our cadre of communication officers. On any visit overseas, I am always awed by the quality and the commitment of our communicators, by their enthusiasm for understanding and integrating new technologies into their locations, by their growing indispensability in managing the proliferation of computers to the field, and by their growing prominence as "the" center of excellence as other agencies seek them out for their expertise and advice. (U)

Ultimately, everything that we are doing ties back to an essential theme of the DCI's strategic intent: putting our people at the heart of our organization. Inspiring them with the power and excitement of our mission; providing them with challenging jobs; offering them ample learning opportunities; helping them appreciate the unique talents of our diverse work force; and encouraging their entrepreneurship. (U)

Creating a new organization in the Agency is not an overnight program. It requires hard work, experimentation, persistence, and energy. And because it is not a controllable, predictable process, it also requires that we have the confidence to allow a variety of people, with different viewpoints and perspectives, to shape and reshape the future. But for those of us trying to recreate the CIA for tomorrow, this is one of the most daunting but exhilarating endeavors we will ever experience. (U)

I am reminded of a huge, white placard I saw several years ago on the side of a bus. It contained just four lines of text. The words have stuck with me over the years, and I would like to share them:

*To achieve greatness: start where you are, use what you have, do what you can.*

*--Arthur Ashe*

I find his message both inspiring and illuminating. It makes profound change manageable and makes personal change part of life. Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can. (U)

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## **A Brief History of the Office of Communications (U)**

The progenitor of the Office of Communications (OC) was the Communications Branch of the World War II OSS. By 30 September 1945, when the OSS was deactivated, Communications had become an organization consisting of 1,193 officers, civilians, and enlisted men who had operated communications facilities in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, China, and the United States in support of OSS operations designed to acquire intelligence information on Axis activities. (U)

By 18 September 1947, when CIA opened for business, the pattern of communication operations was clear, but several years were to pass before a worldwide area concept would be totally implemented. Overseas, Communications Area Headquarters were established to manage and operate the communications networks which were the

primary means of secure US Government record communications between all official installations and Washington, DC. (U)

In the 1950s, the prevailing modes of communications used by OC were Morse Code, manual and high speed, and a limited amount of 60 words per minute (WPM) radioteletype. In most cases, one-time-pad cryptographic systems were employed, although some of the larger high-volume stations were replacing them with offline, one-time-tape systems. Demands for secure, reliable communications between Headquarters and field sites increased. A World-Wide Communications Plan was developed and approved by DCI Roscoe Henry Hillenkoetter on 25 April 1950. This became the blueprint for OC's future operations. The CIA Communications Division was re-established as the Office of Communications on 1 July 1951, by DCI Walter Bedell Smith. (U)

OC has witnessed many changes over the past 53 years--from manual Morse Code and a limited amount of 60 WPM radioteletype to the current local area network configuration; from High Frequency (HF) radio to satellite communications (SATCOM). In the spirit of the World-Wide Communications Plan "and contained forward-looking proposals," OC continued to keep pace with rapidly changing technology and was committed to being a national asset providing secure and reliable world class telecommunications and information services for our partners and customers. (U)

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