

Honoring a Unique DCI: The George Bush Center for Intelligence

Henry R. Appelbaum

Thousands of CIA employees, along with senior officials from current and past Administrations and Sessions of Congress, former Directors, Deputy Directors, and other senior officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and Intelligence Community, family members, and friends joined former President George Bush on 26 April 1999 in ceremonies marking the designation of the CIA's Headquarters compound as the George Bush Center for Intelligence. Events included a ceremony held under a large tent at the Original Headquarters Building Quadrangle; a wreath-laying ceremony at the Memorial Wall; a reception for the Bush family; a speech and informal remarks by former President Bush; and addresses by former First Lady Barbara Bush; DCI George Tenet; Stephanie Glakas-Tenet; Patricia Tamaccio, Chair of the Agency's Family Advisory Board; Rep. Rob Portman of Ohio, who sponsored the Congressional bill that designated CIA Headquarters as the George Bush Center for Intelligence; and CIA Executive Director David Carey.

Following are a few of the highlights of the speeches:

Former President Bush

Photo: Former President Bush

The men and women of CIA . . . exemplify the best about public service. Here service to country comes first.

I love this place; I love what you all do for your country.

Your mission is different now from what it was back then [in the mid-1970s, when Mr. Bush served as DCI]. The Soviet Union is no more, and some people think, "Well, what do we need intelligence for? And my answer to that is, "We've got plenty of enemies . . . enemies abound. [There are] unpredictable leaders willing to export instability or to commit crimes against humanity, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, narcotrafficking . . . fundamentalists killing in the name of God--these and more. And to combat them we need more intelligence, not less. And we need more protection for the methods we use to gather intelligence, and more protection for our sources, particularly our human sources--people who are risking their lives.

Former First Lady Barbara Bush

Photo: Former First Lady Barbara Bush

I think this [event] touched George more than anything that has happened to him. As all of you know, he loves the CIA. But when I first heard that this was going to happen I was a little bit bewildered. I found myself wondering why an institution dedicated to intelligence would name their Headquarters after a 74-year-old man who occasionally has a tendency to jump out of a perfectly good airplane at 12,500 feet. It just didn't make sense to me.

President Bill Clinton

The following is an excerpt from his message to the former President, read aloud by DCI Tenet.

When you assumed your duties as Director of Central Intelligence in January 1976, the nation had just endured one of the most tumultuous periods in its history. Many Americans had lost faith in government. Many asked whether CIA should continue to exist. As Director, you accomplished a great deal. You restored morale and discipline to the Agency while publicly emphasizing the

value of intelligence to the nation's security. You also restored America's trust in the CIA and the rest of the Intelligence Community.

Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet

Photo: DCI, George Tenet

The unbiased assessment of our Directorate of Intelligence is that throughout your long years of public service you have been among their most dedicated, enthusiastic, and discriminating customers. You have always understood how vitally important it is for our national leaders to be able to make their decisions based on the most complete information and the best analysis possible. As DCI, as Vice President, and as President you read every single Daily Brief that the Intelligence Directorate produced. Even if [our analysts] doubted that anybody else in the government was reading their stuff, they could always count on you!

Thanks in great measure to your leadership, our country no longer confronts the worldwide threat from a rival superpower that we did during the Cold War. But as the 21st century approaches, we must contend with a host of other dangerous challenges--challenges of unprecedented complexity and scope.

Representative Rob Portman

Photo: Representative Rob Portman

Many of you know of [Mr. Bush's] high regard for the intelligence-gathering capability of the CIA and its importance in [supporting] foreign policy. This high regard has been demonstrated by the unprecedented regular intelligence briefings he insisted on, first as Vice President, then as President, and now as a former President whose advice continues to be sought on foreign affairs

He was the first Director to go on to become President, the first political figure ever to head the Agency, and . . . I am told he was the first Agency head to take the employee elevator to his office every morning rather than the Director's private elevator! Vintage George Bush, and one small example of why, during his tenure, the then-beleaguered men and women of the Agency felt they had a friend and supporter at the top and began to hold their heads a little higher.

Executive Director David Carey

As Vice President and President, Mr. Bush was an avid--even voracious--consumer of intelligence. He kept us on our toes, challenged us to do better, to take calculated risks, and to "tell it like it is", because even if the news wasn't what he wanted to hear, he knew he needed to hear it.

Those of us who were at the Agency when he was DCI remember his steady leadership and defense of the Agency when it was under attack, seemingly from all sides. His obvious appreciation for our work, willingness to stand up for us, and calmness under pressure were a great boost for morale.

The George Bush Chair for Leadership

Another ceremony amid the events of 26 April 1999 marked the dedication of the George Bush Chair for Leadership and the selection of career DO officer Allen Smith as its first occupant. The George Bush Chair is a new teaching position established by the Directorate of Operations in honor of the former DCI and US President. Appointees are to be selected from among the DO's best senior officers.

The George Bush Chair represents a major investment in new generations of DO officers who are expected to benefit greatly from exposure to the wealth of operational experience and proven leadership skills embodied by Allen Smith and future occupants of this Chair. The focus is to be on command and crisis leadership. Allen Smith and future appointees will have the opportunity to mold, guide, and encourage junior DO officers and emerging leaders.

Allen Smith, whose long record of exemplary service is the prototype for this Chair concept, brings abundant creative energy to this prestigious position. With 32 years of service, he has excelled both in the field and at Headquarters.

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