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JANUARY 30, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
GEORGE BUSH
UPON MR. BUSH BEING SWORN-IN AS
DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

CIA HEADQUARTERS
LANGLEY, VIRGINIA

11:07 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much, Bill.

May I say at the outset that I fully concur with your observations and comments concerning the quality of the people, and I have no question whatsoever that they will give to George Bush, as they have to me, the fullest support and the greatest dedication.

Bill, as I told you and your family on Monday of my high regard for your 25 years of dedicated and distinguished service with the CIA at the time that I gave you the National Security Medal, I meant every word of it. You fully deserve it and I wish to congratulate and compliment you for this outstanding record.

For good reason, obviously, you have the full support and deep feeling of all of the people here and those of us not in the intelligence community are just as grateful for the fine service you have given to your agency and to your country.

General Douglas MacArthur once said that in war there is no substitute for victory. Let me assure you that in peace there is no substitute for intelligence. The time is long overdue for the men and women of the American intelligence community to receive the praise and the gratitude of the Nation that you have so conscientiously served. I have and I will continue to give voice publicly to that gratitude.

As every President since World War II, I depend on you as one of America's first lines of defense. Every morning as a result of your efforts an intelligence report is delivered to my desk which is complete, concise, perceptive and responsible.

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As a result, I am fully aware of the tremendous effort, the tremendous teamwork that goes into it and all of the other intelligence reports that I receive that are so vital to the making of sound policy decisions on national security, and let me express my personal gratitude for this fine work.

The appointment of George Bush as your new Director matches a good man with a good team. George Bush assumes the leadership of the intelligence community at a very critical point in its history -- critical because national and international attention is focused on your work now as never before.

Because much of your work depends on secrecy and because secrecy adds a new aura of mystery and intrigue, there is the natural tendency for extraordinary attention to be paid to the intelligence community when allegations are made that it has not functioned as it should.

Past problems, any excesses, the abuses of the past have more than adequately been described. I am concerned about them as I know you are, but one thing is very, very certain -- we cannot improve this agency by destroying it.

Let me assure you also I have no intention of seeing the intelligence community dismantled, its operations paralyzed or its effectiveness undermined. The Administration fully intends to safeguard the effectiveness of this agency, the confidentiality of its information and the lives and honor of its agents and employees.

The irresponsible release of classified information by people who should know better must cease. A better balance must be struck between the right of the people to know and this country's commitment to survive and live in peace.

Accordingly, in the next few weeks after a great deal of study and consultation with experts in this field, I will announce my decisions on the steps I believe necessary to strengthen our foreign intelligence operations. My actions will be designed to insure that this Nation has what you and I know we must have -- the best intelligence capacity in the world.

These actions will be consistent with two very fundamental principles. First, the United States must have a strong and effective capability to gather, to evaluate foreign intelligence and conduct necessary covert operation; and second, these activities must be conducted in a Constitutional and lawful manner and never be aimed at our own citizens.

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George Bush shares my commitment to these principles. As a former Member of Congress and as the son of a very great man, a distinguished statesman -- the late Senator Prescott Bush of Connecticut -- George has known all of his life that the people are sovereign and that their rights must be secure.

As a former representative of this Government to the People's Republic of China and as the former United States Ambassador to the United Nations, George Bush is in step with world development. I know from first-hand personal experience he is a man of enormous capability, sound moral judgment and has had an intense devotion to public service. He is fully prepared to guide the policy decisions of this agency and of the entire intelligence community with a depth and a breadth of knowledge that few others have.

George has said that he sees his first task as one of making a tremendous effort to restore public confidence in this fine agency. In that effort he has my full and total support.

I continue to believe that the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency must have direct personal access to the President. George will have this access on a very regular basis and whenever special circumstances require.

With his leadership and with your help, I believe we can make this agency an instrument of peace and an object of pride for all of our people. That is my goal and I know that each and every one of you share it with me.

Now it is my great privilege and pleasure to introduce Mr. Justice Stewart who will administer the oath of office.

(The oath was administered.)

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DIRECTOR BUSH: Mr. President, members of the President's Cabinet, distinguished Members of Congress and other guests and fellow employees:

First, let me express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for coming out here for this occasion. We are honored by your presence.

And I also want to thank Bill Colby for the marvelous cooperation that he has given me over the past few weeks. I wish him well as he leaves this agency to which he gave so much.

Mr. President, I accept enthusiastically the challenge that you have given me. I will work hard to earn the confidence that you and the U.S. Senate have placed in me. I will not turn my back on the past for from the past we have learned a lot about what an intelligence agency must do to maintain the confidence of the people in an open society. But the emphasis now will be on the future, and because of its dedicated people, this agency is the finest intelligence agency in the world. They will have my total support and I have much to learn and I will work hard at that. But I pledge to my associates here this full support.

I am determined to protect those things that must be kept secret and I am more determined to protect those unselfish and patriotic people who, with total dedication, serve their country, often putting their lives on the line, only to have some people bent on destroying this agency expose their names. This must stop, and I will do my level best to play a role in that.

I am equally determined, Mr. President, to take a new look at some of the practices that may have made great sense in the past, but that now must be reviewed and rethought to see if they are necessary and to see if they are indeed compatible with moral judgment of our countrymen. And this won't be easy work, but as you said, sir, restoration of public confidence is essential if we are to get on about our important work here.

And lastly, Mr. President, our goal here is to provide you and others with intelligence. We are not in the policy business. We will call them as we see them, and we will be objective and our estimate will continue to come to you without hint of bias. They will be the product of the best intelligence in the entire world.

I pledge to you that no politics, no policy bias, will color the collective judgment of the CIA. This is the way you want it, this is the way the CIA operates, and this is the way our country must have it.

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Many have said to me since this nomination that, well, you are taking on a difficult -- and somewhat more pessimistic say--taking on an impossible task. That may be true in one sense, but I consider myself fortunate indeed to have been confirmed for this challenging job. I want this job -- I want to do it well, and I like the dedication and love of country that I find here. And I am proud to be a part of the CIA.

Thank you very much.

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(AT 11:20 A.M. EST)