

EPISODE 506**[INTRODUCTION]**

[00:00:00] AH: Welcome to this week's episode of SpyCast. I'm your host, Dr. Andrew Hammond, and I'm the historian curator here at the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C. This week's guest believes that espionage is about the human soul. It's a very intimate profession. The relationship between a case officer and an agent, and they need to really have a profound insight into their life and their souls.

Doug London may be accused of many things, but you can't say that he's shallow. His book, *The Recruiter*, is based on a 34-year career with the CIA including multiple field assignments as a CIA Chief of Station and working in places such as the Middle East, Africa, and South and Central Asia. He didn't get out very much obviously.

Next week, we'll hear more about Doug's career, his forthright views on CIA at the crossroads, the ongoing centrality of human intelligence to the intel business, as well as what he calls the lost art of American intelligence.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:11] AH: I'm really pleased to be speaking to you today, Doug, because I found your book really interesting. Books by former intelligence officers, it's like a whole genre unto itself, and they can be classified in various ways. But yours is very broad-ranging. It's very thoughtful. You've reflected on your career and on some of the changes that the agency that you work for has went through. So there's a lot of one to dig into there. But just to begin with, I want to start, you said that in the beginning, espionage is about the human soul. I just wondered if you could reflect on that for the benefit of our listeners, because I think that's quite fascinating.

[00:01:51] DL: Thank you, Andrew. It's a pleasure to be on the program with you. What I sought out to do with this book is make it intimate. What I believe is that espionage is a very intimate profession. It's about people, and it's the relationships, and a case of responsibilities, ours to them and what they think they may have to us.

So by looking over the course of my career I tried to find anecdotes, which brought home what's really unique about the profession and about the human dynamics. Because there's any number of misconceptions, some very glorified and romantified from the movies, and other books, and novels, and what have you. And I believe the actual reality is even more exciting. Though not mission impossible, jumping out of airplanes and helicopters exciting all the time. Though that does happen on occasion. But relationship between a case officer and an agent and the need to really have such a profound insight, window into their life and their souls where your engagement with them is at a level of confessional where they're able to profess their soul, because they have to for you to be able to recruit them, but also to run them securely.

There're clearly unethical aspects to that. I've often said, and I say to my students, I've always believed that spying is an unethical business that has to be done in the most ethical manner because of the stakes and the responsibilities you have for the human beings who you are leveraging to do things that are not necessarily in their best personal interest.

[00:03:20] AH: I mean, it sounds a little bit like talking about the confessional. You have to have the listening or the soft skills of a psychiatric nurse or a good religious leader. Yeah, tell us a little bit more about that, because that's part of the job that you don't hear that much about. You don't see Daniel Craig as James Bond being touchy-feely and trying to understand where someone's coming from. That's a flipping example. But help us understand that a little bit more the confessional nature of the job.

[00:03:50] DL: Sure. Happy to do so. And I'd love to see James Bond have to do a travel accounting as well, which is more the reality. You're all sort of amateur psychologists or maybe professional. But I think a lot of that is intuitive. The CIA at least has a profile of what a case officer looks like, what a successful case officer ideally looks like since 1947. And so much of it are innate traits. You can't teach some of the skills to case officers that they require. You can't teach a level of personal insight, that ability to manipulate. And it really is a lot about manipulation, but manipulation informed by assessment.

So to be able to train somebody to look in somebody's soul, you can't really do that. We basically take people who have some of that natural capacity and then we formalize it. We build it. But the thing for a case officer is, and I'm asked this question often, what's like the difference between a CIA case officer and, let's say, an FBI special agent, or a military special operations forces person. Is that there's no book for everything there's. No training book to tell you how to deal with any possible set of variables and circumstances you might face at any given moment. And it's a lonely business. It's individual. The case officers out there by themselves. They don't have a lifeline. They don't have a team generally. There are some activities we do with groups. But for the most part, recruiting and handling is an individual business. So you have to have the intuitive ability, the critical thinking to make the right call when you're faced by things that you could not have ever rehearsed.

So taking that a step further where we're taking individuals who will learn through experience, because so much of the dynamic is experiential. What do they say that instinct is experienced reinforced? But teaching somebody that they've got to engage someone where they're disarming them to an extent that these are people that we're pursuing that hold secrets that might come from police state, autocratic societies, where they've been conditioned to distrust even their own friends and relatives who could be informers.

So breaking that down to put it maybe in a simple **[inaudible 00:05:51]**, a lot of it is bait and switch. A lot of it is about listening. And when I train case officers, where I was instructor at the farm and I teach academically, I talk about being interested and interesting. A good case officer can't be the center of attention. The case officer is not going to earn trust for discretion and

reliability by being the one that's telling all the jokes of being a standout comic. You have to have a degree of that, I suppose, because you've got to be interesting. But most importantly, you've got to make the agent feel like they are the most special person in the world. They are the center of your universe and the center of the CIA's universe, because you're taking them from what was your ploy to first beat them. Whatever ploy you used undercover. And I'm not just talking about the cover of what you claim to do officially, because if you're a CIA case officer, you're not announcing that. You're under some form of cover. Either official for the US government, or foreign, or business, or whatever. But your interest has to be something that peaks their willingness to see you, right?

So they have to need to talk to you because they want to do it. It's for their interest because they find something in you. Not just that you're flattering, and or obsequious, and you're telling them how great they are. But there's also something intriguing about you. So I variously had to study butterflies, birds, squash, roller skating, whatever I needed to do to find some common area of interest that maybe I could help them do something socially or even professionally that they couldn't otherwise get initially. But nothing secret. Nothing damaging. And then use that as my avenue into their soul, where we have these shared experiences, where we have long opportunity, time on target we'd say, that they start trusting me with what matters most in their life.

And then once I understand what that is, manipulating that in a way, which serves you as government interest. To be fair. To be honest. But in their mind, promotes their interest. An agent has to want to work with you. Has to be invested, which also is one of the other illusions that, while some services use it, coercion just doesn't work. CIA doesn't use coercion because we're just great folks and we're unbelievably ethical immoral. I'd like to say that. But we don't use coercion because it just plain doesn't work. What we need is we need an agent who's so invested in the relationship that they want to come back. They want to keep coming back. And likewise that you could trust them. I don't want to meet someone who I've blackmailed on the back streets of Karachi or Beirut, because my life's in their hands as well. And I also have to stand behind the intelligence they produce. And how can you stand behind the intelligence of

one who's being forced to do something with coercion? You need to be able to vet them, test them, and stand behind them to the community.

So getting to that point takes some time usually with some people more than others. It's been said, and I agree, that with the hardest targets, those that come from a natural police state, I would include Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, it's not like they haven't thought about it, right? But that they've thought about wanting to do something about their lives maybe for ideological reasons, maybe because they have a sick child, maybe because they want vengeance. They've been messed over, or bypassed, or whatever like that. They're not going to just profess that to anybody, let alone an official form of a foreign government.

So doing that takes an amazing amount of trust, which you have to demonstrate your reliability, your discretion. Some of the hardest targets like those I just named will often test their case officers when they start realizing, "Okay, he or she's not really a lover butterfly collection, and who just happens to work for the U.S. government. This is more than serendipity. But can I trust them?" Because while many of the folks we target have the interest, taking the risk is a tremendous leap. Being at the end of an umbilical cord in the heart of the lion den where they're compromising themselves, their families, putting themselves at great risk, takes a great deal of that trust that takes time and reinforcement to build.

[00:09:43] AH: And I want to use the example of Bilal, who you mentioned, and to help our listeners understand a little bit more about some of the things that you've been speaking about. But before we go on to that, just briefly, what are some of the innate characteristics that you say have existed since 1947?

[00:10:01] DL: For case officers, I believe it's an ability to deal well with ambiguity. To deal well with dynamic and fluid circumstances that change on a dime. To be able to think through what's going on in a logical manner under the most amazing amounts of pressure, which could be at least end of your operation, your arrest, to physical harm, and death. So having that sort of courage, I would say, maybe a fair way to do it, or at least sangfroid, to be able to think through

something and still be able to think logically and not get tunnel vision as is easy to do. And under those circumstances, to still nevertheless prioritize, "What's the most important thing I need to do now? Oh my gosh! I'm under surveillance. Oh my gosh! There's someone at my drop site or my pickup site for an agent. What do I do in terms of priorities?" And the priority is always going to be operational security. There's always a tension of mission versus security and what you want to accomplish, and then doing it in a safe way. So that sort of ability to deal with all these events. The fluidity are really key.

And then it's about being able to sort of sit back, if you would, and listen. A lot of people are really busy on send, right? They always want to talk about themselves and they want to they just like the attention. They like the response. They want to make people laugh. They want to make people interested and stuff. And you've got to do that to be sure that you're not the center of attention. So here's the irony. Case officers tend to have huge egos. They do. You have to, I think to do the job, because you need a level of self-confidence that can withstand all of which I've just said. But then you have to subdue yourself to not being the center of attention, to not talking about yourself, to not highlighting how great I am and how wonderful I am. But basically just keep validating the agent or the target before they become an agent. How important they are? How important their beliefs and their dreams are? And maybe we can do something about that together.

That's not an easy combination of personality traits when you take it. And that, by saying this egotistical self-confident, maybe overconfident case officer, also has to be satisfied with no attention with rewards to be mostly personal satisfaction. There're no TV cuts. There's no newspaper, God willing. No newspaper articles, right? Nobody might ever know and hopefully will never know what you did. You might have just saved the day, disrupted a terrorist operation, stolen the manual of the newest Russian jet fighter that will save our pilots and give us advantages to air defense and such like that. But all you get is basically, "Well done," and maybe some of the respect of those peers who can know because it's compartmented. So it's not like even everybody in the agency will know about it. So put all that together, and that's a very unique individual.

[00:12:46] AH: Wow! You mentioned coercion. So here in the museum, we have the kind of classic acronym; money, ideology, coercion, ego. Yeah, help us understand coercion a bit more. So are other intelligence agencies in other countries using coercion? I think a lot of our listeners the ones that aren't in the IC, or even some of the ones that are, their understanding of recruitment may come from watching movies where you take photographs of someone who's married and has kids and they're in a compromising relationship. And, I mean, just off the top of my head, that seems like quite an effective source of leverage. So does that not happen? You're not so sure you're looking for their soul and how to connect with them on a deeper level? But if you have something that can be used to leverage them straight off the bat, why would you not use it?

[00:13:39] DL: So what you're talking about, the Russians call MICE. The whole money, coercion, compromise, all that sort of stuff. And the Russians still use it, and they like it. And it's easier in a lot of ways. It's real simple. You don't need this whole romance and dancing around and such like that. Do you? You take dirty pictures of somebody. You find out they're an alcoholic, or a drug addict, or whatever the case may be, and you threaten them. And the Russians do this, the Pakistanis, Iranians, Chinese. I mean, a lot of, if you notice a trend, police states, authoritarian governments, the Saudis, they use it. Because they don't have the time. They don't have the patience. They don't have the training. And they don't have, ironically, for countries that generally tend to have a longer view on policy and international affairs, they have a very short view when it comes to intelligence collection.

So they do use that. And it was really interesting being in the agency when some of the former Soviet states were becoming partners of ours, liaison partners that would share intelligence, and they want to work a case together, joint case. And it wasn't infrequent that their cases were compromised just like that. There was some target of great interest to us who they had blackmailed. And they would be all proud of showing us the video and things that God knows I still lost years of my life trying to get some of those things, right?

But as I said, the benefits I think are not worth it in the sense that, yeah – And I'm not saying the agency doesn't always use a bit of that dark trait to get their foot in the door just to get

somebody to talk to them. And there's a case in point that I talked about in my book about a character I named Yusuf, who was a terrorist facilitator, who I used the possibility that he could be extradited by the country in which he was detained to a place that wouldn't treat him very well. But I very quickly used that to adjust to a relationship where he was invested. I mean, this was a terrorist, right? So not somebody I'd want to meet clandestinely and put my life in their hands or trust their intelligence.

So somebody who's coerced is never going to give you 100%. They're never going to give you the full truth. They're going to do just enough to keep that pressure off of them. They'll often disappear, even the services that we work with, where I saw their cases, where they had compromised these people. These were people that as soon as they get out of harm's way, perhaps they were serving while they were in the country they were assigned to, our partners country. And as soon as they got away, they would never be heard from again.

And most importantly for an agent, we talked about defectors in place. I think people would have read that phrase. We don't really use this in the CIA. We talk about an agent in place. We want a long sustainable operation. We want production. We want to be able to nurture a case where the agent moves up. That's partnership. That's cooperation. You're not going to get that from sort of the one-time, "Okay, what do I need to get you to tear up those pictures, or not tell my wife, or whatever like that?" It's very limited, and it's very unreliable. I can't imagine trying to provide an intel report to a key decision maker and standing behind the source description, because every raw report that any USIC agency does has a source description and a context statement to give the reader the most informed judgment on how much can I rely on this information? Is the veracity reliable? Is the access reliable? Do they really know what they're talking about? Are they trying to influence? Are they trying to deceive? Is it a double agent operation? How do you write a source description for somebody who's blackmailed where the reader is going to really take the risk?

At my Georgetown class, we talked about an agent called Polyakov. He was a famous GRU officer. And one of his biggest contributions to American security was he was head of the East Asia group and the GRU. He provided enough insights on the relationship between the Soviet Union and China that gave Richard Nixon the confidence to reach out to China and establish

diplomatic normalized relations. How could you stand behind his intel for such a grave consequential decision?

[00:17:32] AH: With Bilal, like help us understand everything that you've spoke about through the lens of that particular vignette that you sketch out in the book. So there's you, there's Bilal, and a very important third figure, Johnny Walker Black.

[00:17:48] DL: Yes.

[00:17:49] AH: Tell us a little bit more about the case of Bilal.

[00:17:51] DL: Oh, those complementary elements. So Bilal was actually the first station I ever recruited. And I talk in my book about just a weird kind of sensation of being called a spy by someone for the first time. Bilal was what you kind of look for sometimes. And I'll say, and I profess, that most anyone can be recruited at the right time and place based on circumstances, based on precipitating events, right? What's going on in their life? So whatever their disposition, you need also a certain precipitating crisis often to come to play. People sometimes say, and I've heard with my colleagues, "Oh, you're looking always for the odd duck. You're looking for somebody who's got a mental disorder. They're a narcissist or what have you." Having recruited and handled agents I consider patriots that were trying to do all the right things for their country, having separated their country, their allegiance to their country, to allegiance to a government, I don't believe that.

Bilal though was a bit more of an odd duck. He was a member of this country's ethnic minority. He had a great many particular talents that made him of interest to the ministry for which he served. He was a funny guy. He had a great sense of humor. Often a very self-deprecating. And you'll see that I think in a number of my stories. But for him, Bilal was particular, because he tended to play the fool so as not to seem threatening to his masters who are all from the main line, the main tribe, the main religion, to work his way up in the ministry.

Bo Bilal was a funny, joke-cracking kind of guy. Liked to tease. Love to tease. Love to make fun. And he was much more senior than I was. I was on my first tour. I was a junior officer. He was a very well-established senior guy. Not like top level, but senior guy in his ministry. And I was able to meet him fortunately through my cover duties, which I can't detail. But my day job, as the agency will let me say, allowed me to have engagement with Bilal's office. And I had already kind of done a bit of study of Bilal. I'd heard about him through colleagues who were not in the agency. Because when you target somebody, you want to have at least indirect assessment so that you know what you're going to do going in. You know what you might say your elevator pitch is going in. You know how you're going to shape your persona.

And I'm not talking about like what your name is. I mean, you are who you are. But are you going to be funny guy? Subdued guy? Academic guy? Shy guy? Whatever. What do you think you're going to be like in order to sort of get Bilal's, in this case, interest? Because, remember, I said interested and interesting. It's easy enough to be interested in Bilal. But how do I get him interested in me?

I was fortunate, Bilal and I hit it off. I used the pretense of actually something outside the office, but was acceptable. It wasn't like anything really bad that could get him in trouble. But it was just enough of an issue that he wouldn't really want to broadcast it. Again, that's part of the bait and switch. What's my N to get him wanting to see me beyond just my bubbly personality? It has to be something tangible. We say the what's in it for him or her?

Over time, Bilal and I saw each other at proper engagements at his office at first, and then maybe outside, and then ultimately at his house, which is not the best way to recruit somebody from a secure point of view, because you want to take things out of the public eye as soon as possible. And these days with social media, and biometrics, and phone tracking, it's much harder, it's a much harder job. But we'd spend a lot of time in his house. And Bilal was a talker. God love him. And even though a lot of what he would say at first was shaped to put on the persona he wanted me to see. That started to erode over time as he got more confident at me,

as he saw my discretion that I wasn't telling anybody about a relationship. I never mentioned Bilal to anybody else.

And agents, prospective agents will test you for that. They'll want to see, because they want to know how much we can be trusted. Particularly those who can have believable sad consequences from their cooperation. A lot of this was done over peanuts and Johnny Walker Black. You're absolutely right. So this was a country where it was hard to get alcohol, particularly for the locals. It was an Islamic country. And they were sort of strict on that kind of thing. And so early on I just started gifting him, because he made some mention, I think, casually. Came up organically about having had a drink. So I didn't ask him if he wanted a bottle of this or bottle that because that would be offensive, right? I, just one day, when he invited me in house, showed up and said, "Hey, maybe we can open this up together." And he liked that. And in fact I started providing him more. Actually, was that and Playboy magazines. He just loved them both.

And over time, sort of sitting around, and this is kind of maybe a little bit like dating or romantically looking at the stars, he would just start confessing bit by bit, bit by bit, which I would then reinforce by sort of recapping what he said, but in a context. Not kind of forcing him at the beginning, but sort of over time, starting from empathy, not so much sympathy, but empathy, to understanding to maybe where it becomes a bit more challenging where the empathy goes to, "Don't you want to do something about this? How do you feel about just sitting by and watching these offenses to your community, to you yourself where you're more talented than these people?"

Again, building on the ego, but not just in such a unnatural way that it seems sincere. Because people smell insincerity. I mean, you could fool some people because some people just want to be told, "Oh, you're great." But folks can smell it. And you have to deliver it in a way that's sincere by kind of tying you to specific issues, events and best in anything, actions. Making sure he knows you've been following closely. Everything he's been saying, such that you can remember something he said a month or two ago and put it in context of something that just came up tonight.

That's sort of the way that, with Bilal anyway, and generally for a case in which you're cultivating someone, you're just disarming them increasingly. You're getting under their skin in a good way. You're getting in their soul. And you're looking at the world from their eyes. So that when you relate what they just told you, it's from their perspective.

[00:23:48] AH: You mentioned preparing for the moment where you're going in and you're going to adopt a particular persona. A few years back, I've done an acting course in New York and we explored how to inhabit different characters. How to be different types of people. We mentioned the confessional nature of the work. But I just wondered if you could speak a bit more about that aspect of the tradecraft. Am I going to be funny irreverent Doug? Am I going to be solemn and grave? Am I going to be some other type of Doug? Help us understand that part of the tradecraft.

[00:24:21] DL: So it's based on your assessment of the target. And ideally, it may be a target you have some information of in advance, like I said, indirectly, where maybe they've written things. Maybe they have a reputation in the community. Maybe other people have engaged them in conferences, seminars, meetings, what have you. So you have some sense of who they are. If you don't, it's a little bit trickier. It's sort of a bit on the fly and you're sort of responding. You're reflecting. We talk about mirroring a lot, right? And that's probably an acting thing for all I know.

But mirroring their behavior, mirroring their tweaks and quirks and whatever. Are they telling a lot of jokes? So you tell jokes. Are they really serious and clearly have no interest in your sense of humor? Because I tell you, your jokes are the wrong person and my jokes. Anyway, you can just fall like a thud, right? And that's just an awkward and uncomfortable feeling. So you have to know how far to push.

So if you have some indirect assessment, if you've done target analysis, which you traditionally will do on somebody you're specifically pursuing. You've got to remember, a lot of what we do is trolling as well. We're going to events. We're trying to run into people and places that no one will see the contact. So, particularly, if I'm pursuing a hard target where – And I say hard target, someone who lives in more of a police state where there's informers among their colleagues, their communities. That's what they do. I don't want to just go up to this person in the middle of a big diplomatic reception at their national day and go, "Hi. Doug London. U.S. government. How are you doing today?" Because everybody else is going to see that. So I will troll for them at events I think they may go to. It's where I sadly, and I don't want to use this word too hard, maybe pimped my family a bit. School events, picnics, family outings, tourist events, whatever, where I know these people might be. I just happen to be there with my cute and charming family and kids, particularly for someone who maybe they are stationed without their family who really adores children and will kind of gravitate. I know my poor kids thinking about this. They have such trust issues.

So I have to go in with what I have if I have something and then decide, just as you were saying, "How am I going to come across? For example, if I'm going after a military officer, I'm probably going to leverage my experience in the Marine Corps. I'm going to leverage some of the training the CIA gave, which at least in my day, they put you through a pretty intensive power military course, which is a bunch of different special ops training. 12 weeks, including airborne, jumping on airplanes. Doing land survival. Doing interrogation survival, all these kind of things. So I might play up more of the understated version of warrior, because I'm not trying to pull off that I'm seriously a special operations person. I can't pull that off. But that I have enough for the background that I can in an understated self-deprecating way show an appreciation for their life if they truly are a special ops person in their country and that's what they do for a living, they jump out of airplanes and they get shot at. And I even go like, "Well, I have such respect for you because I've only just tasted a little bit of that just to understand it." That sometimes is enough to get in the door, because if you jumped out of an airplane, a fellow paratrooper is automatically respect you. It's an amazing thing. I mean, I've got like five jumps, right? And that's it. Just to get my badge, which didn't all go that well. But I made it. And I tumbled out, but I made it. But that's enough to at least show you understand. And by being understated, but leveraging that will be an end for a military person.

Approaching somebody who's more academic than just showing that, and case officers are traditionally a mile wide but an inch deep, at least enough of a taste of an appreciation for papers, studies, philosophers, writers and being very forthcoming, not pretending to be an expert, because that will do you great harm and saying, "You know, I don't know much about that. But I was really impressed by the work of Immanuel Kant," or whatever like that. Just to kind of get it started. Because you don't want to be talking about yourself. You want them to be talking about them. So you just need enough to get it started to have that appreciation for what's my persona. How am I going to be to them so that they are interested in me?

[00:28:18] AH: Some of this reminds me of when I was a researcher during my PhD. Different people that I interviewed. I interviewed about over 100 people in the end, but different people wanted different things for me as an interviewer. Some people wanted me to be – They wanted to be the alpha person in the room and they wanted me to be the beta. So I was quite happy to do that if I could get the information. Some people wanted me to match them on their level and have an intellectual sparring contest. So I was happy to take my shirt off and get down with that. Other people, I kind of adopted what I called the Columbo type persona, where I pretended to be like a bit of a doofus and just instruct me, help me understand this. But there was more going on underneath the surface just like with Colombo.

So it sounds a little bit like that. But again, just to go back to what you were saying, that's quite a difficult person to find. How can you find someone that has got the reflexivity to observe what someone else is doing and to adjust based on how they're acting in the world and to know enough about everything to at least get your foot in the door? I mean, how do you even recruit – Your book is called *The Recruiter*. How do you recruit for that? That's like a very specialized skill set.

[00:29:42] DL: First of all, those are excellent examples. Those are terrific examples. The interview process and such. And you are looking for somebody who could be a chameleon. But here's also a part of the rub there. You're looking for somebody who could be a chameleon on

the outside, to the outside world, to their targets, but be completely transparent and faithful inside, the level of integrity. So looking for that, the agency, as those of you who might have applied or gone through some of the process, they ask some pretty bizarre questions, or questions that most reasonable people would presume would be bizarre. They give you this one – And again, this is like centuries ago when I went through this. But they give you these weird tests that aren't necessarily academic, but just sort of, "Would you rather live under a rock or up on a tree?" I mean, just really bizarre kind of things. But they must know what they're doing in terms of psychology .

I think one of my concerns for the agency, and particularly going forward, I know they've made great strides in diversity, particularly since my time. And you look at the hallways. At least I did before I left. And especially among the young, it's a lot more reflective of America, people of color, people with accents, people from different parts of the country all of whom are Americans. But the agency has this history of looking for this unfortunately stereotypical, and it's written in my book and others, East Coast Ivory League elite. And take that beyond not just to be the East Coast, but that kind of privileged suburban kind of individual who may not have had to overcome a great deal of adversity, who may not have to have been a chameleon to survive just to kind of get by and make it in the world. But who sort of got everything handed on a plate.

I think it's a danger for the agency to be relying on that. Now, that's an individual they might get through the security process, which also is exhaustive. And if you want to imagine multiple root canals, that's not even close to how painful it is. I'm sorry. It's worth doing, but painful. But I'd like to see people who had a struggle. I'd like to see people who came from South Central L.A., or the barrio, or the South Bronx and had to use their heads and their smarts to do just that. To be what they needed to be so they didn't get on the wrong side of gangs, but they got along with the game so they weren't necessarily a threat or somebody they had to worry about. Not selling drugs. But you know what I mean? So those are folks that might not always go to the best schools. They might have gone to community college. They may not have a college education. But I don't think the agency is quite there yet. But those are the personalities that you look at that are actually the most successful.

And I doubt the agency will confirm it, but it's been written enough that it is said in the DO that 80% of the recruitments are done by 20% of the case officers. Because even with all of our vetting and looking for this personality type that we've seen since 1947, when they actually get out there and the rubber hits the road, not everybody could do it. Not everybody could pull the trigger. Often an amazing impediment is some people just can't get to like closing the deal. They can't get themselves to like bribe somebody. Like it's, "Oh my God! I don't bribe people. I grew up in Westchester."

But, yeah, we bribe people. We manipulate people. We leverage people. And there's an art to it and there's a pride to take into it, because if you're doing it right, you're doing it not only for God and country, but you're doing it in a way where you're responsible for protecting this person. You got them into it. You are going to dedicate your life to protecting them.

And I think as we go forward, I really hope the agency can kind of look beyond some of its very rigid security requirements, which I agree, you got to make sure they're reliable because the secrets they have are life and death. But are you telling me naturalized U.S. citizens can't be trusted, can't get through the security process? Are you telling me that somebody who grew up on the wrong side of the tracks can't be trusted? I don't think so. And I believe they will be the better people to deal with adversity and ambiguity than others who lived a less challenging life.

[00:33:28] AH: That's really fascinating. I think that, from my point of view, I completely agree if you find someone that can hustle someone that can make a dollar stretch a thousand different ways. Someone that's had to adapt to get out of a particular social milieu, then that's a pretty interesting skill set compared to someone that's never really had to work that hard for things. And I suppose one of the questions that that generates for me is, to me, the hustler is going to be able to do – I'm just adopting a short hand here, of course. Let's just call one the hustler. They're going to be able to do things and to be able to operate in a particular environment and the way that suburban kid hasn't. But a suburban kid not better place to be a case officer because, largely, diplomats are engaging with the elite of a particular country or those are the people in positions of power or with access to secrets. And the hustler may not feel comfortable being in those privileged social milieus. Whereas if you're a suburban kid who's went to an Ivy

League school and has mixed in those circles, you're kind of accepted by people in the foreign country because you're seen as of a similar ilk. You're kind of like me, but just from a different country. Whereas the other person would just – I don't know. Would you not look at them and think, "Well, they're not really like me." So just help us understand that a little bit more, because I think that's really interesting.

[00:34:59] DL: It's a really fair point to make. You're absolutely right. Social status is really key in a lot of countries. So if I'm pursuing somebody who's a military officer who went to the best schools and the military academies, probably from a good family, is going to want that in kind. A lot of other cultures don't necessarily respect people who fought their way up through the system because they think you're in a very hierarchical world beneath them. So the case officer has to have the wherewithal to be a chameleon, to pull that off as well. They have to have a high ceiling. So it has to be somebody who can come across as what they need to be. The persona they shape. Again, fitting the target they're pursuing. You automatically have an advantage as an American, official overseas. You're special to begin with. American exceptionalism, right or wrong, exists and it's understood. It's disliked by a lot of other cultures. But at least it has a certain door. It has a cachet and an entree. So just being even a low-level American official and from a government agency you may be pretending to work for, a third secretary, or an assistant attaché or whatever, you've got that big beautiful American seal on your business card, that will open doors to you. You can, actually as I did many times, crash parties, crash events just by **[inaudible 00:36:12]** American embassies. Like, "Oh, please come on in, sir," right? That kind of thing. It depends on the character of the person.

When I was brought into the organization, I was unbelievably lucky. I had the nicest most incredible man in the world who probably advocated for me. The first person that interviewed me who went under an alias. I can't name him today. But I still stay in touch and a long time mentor. I had lucked out because he even said, "You're more a sex story kind of guy." And I kind of knew I was in trouble when he was saying at the end of the interview, he goes, "You know, usually at the end of the interview, I ask candidates would you be willing to accept a job outside of the clandestine service, like as an analyst, or as a technical expert? But frankly you're just not smart enough." And he was right. I showed up at my EOD class, entry on duty class, and

everybody had the most lovely suits and dresses from the nicest stores. I had my suit from Sears.

So I had to grow as well. And I was lucky that because I hustled and worked hard and really worked hard and could deal with people on any level, and I could pretend to be smart. I was certainly clever. So I could pretend to be smart enough to get it to the door. And, again, that cachet of being a US government official overseas, I made the most of that. And once I was in, I was in and able to do the job.

[00:37:25] AH: How do you separate the skill set that you develop as a case officer from everyday life? So out there assessing, trying to recruit assets, and then you're just going through everyday life. Like here never, did you like assess me and your personas based on what you perceive me to be and so forth? Or do you turn that off when you're not trying to recruit people?

[00:37:53] DL: Of course not. No, actually, you do. It's 24/7 being a case officer. And the reason is it's a vocation. Because if you're working in a US government platform overseas and you're whatever, you're a CIA and you're a targeting officer, you're a collection management officer, you're an analyst. You work hard. CIA officers work hard. But they leave the embassy or they leave the government platform and they go home to their family. And they need to be aware of their situation. Like where is anything going on? Are people looking at them? Following them? But they don't have to worry about establishing a pattern, a routine, a pattern of life under which everything they do operationally has to fit. There has to be some rational unsuspecting explanation to a local or a third-country counterintelligence service for every moment of your day. Why are you out at night? Why are you not out at night? Why are you in this area? Why are you **[inaudible 00:38:44]** this place? Why are you making that stop? Because everything you do factors into, "I'm casing sites for my agent." "I'm going to meet my agent clandestinely." "I need windows of opportunity where there's gaps in coverage of me that can be explained." "I have to do something with my phone." All these things, it's 24/7. There's no day you can go, "You know what? I'm just going to take the day off. I'm going to call the local counterintelligence

service and say, "Hey, boys and girls. I'm just not working today. You don't have to worry about me. I'm just really hanging with my family."

So at no point are you actually down. I mean, even since retirement, I'm still looking for surveillance when I'm driving. I just can't help myself. I'm looking at things going, "What a good sight that would make." "Oh, it's a lovely alley." Because it's a lifestyle. And to do it safely, it has to be a lifestyle. You can't ever turn it off. You can't ever turn off your judgment and discussion. Am I under threat? Is something going on? Is there an opportunity here? Is there a threat here?

No. Actually, you don't turn it off. What you do separate is the manipulation. Okay? Inside, and obviously, or ideally, with your family and friends. You're not manipulating them, right? But you're certainly always aware. You're situationally aware. You're looking for opportunities and risks everywhere you are all the time. And that can be mentally and emotionally exhausting, until such point it just becomes life.

[00:40:02] AH: And talk to us a little bit more about the life cycle of an asset. So the moment when you're surveying the landscape, looking for people. When you approach them, when you build a relationship. You mention your book, doing the pitch and smelling blood and so forth. And then the process of running the agent and then managing people that run agents. And you mentioned, when we spoke before the podcast, being a player coach. So there's like a whole life cycle there of that process. And some of the people that I've spoke to before that had a similar role to you, they've said that some people you find are very good at recruiting, but they're not so good at running and vice versa. And I suppose it's a lot about like academia. You get people that are good at teaching and people that are good at research. Sometimes you get people that are good at the pastoral stuff or the administrative stuff. But to get someone that's good at administrative pastoral teaching and research is very rare. So help us understand that life cycle a little bit more.

[00:41:07] DL: Okay, sure. At the risk of getting in some trouble with some of my colleagues, because I actually differ on that. I differ when I taught at the farm. I differ as I teach as an

academic. So if you're a case officer, you're handling a case, and I know some of my colleagues will say, "Oh, I was a really great handler. I'll agree. I wasn't as good as recruiting. So I didn't smell the blood. But I really was great at handling." I would say you weren't as great as you think you were, because the job of the case officer is to constantly re-recruit their agent. You are constantly assessing them. You don't take them for granted either. Life happens. Life changes. So that which motivated them, that which pushed them to conducting this activity might have changed. Maybe life got better. Maybe their kid is healthy. Maybe they've been promoted at work. Maybe they've re-examined their life and they don't want to do this anymore.

If you're not constantly seeing into their soul and assessing them, and manipulating them, and re-recruiting them, and reinforcing the motivations so that you understand what's getting them to work for you and you keep leveraging that, then you're just not a really good case officer. You're probably a mediocre case officer who understands clandestinity. You may be really good at, "Yeah, I can run a great surveillance detection route. I could spot surveillance. I understand the mad minute of what I first say. I can collect intel. I know how to debrief." That's not being a case officer. You could train people to do that. Those are not intuitive skills as much. A lot of those are more mechanical skills. But the idea of seeing into somebody's soul and manipulating them and leveraging that, that's a case officer. And that's why only 20% of the case officers are recruiting 80% of the agents, because not that many people could do it. So I take some exception at that. And I apologize for any cards and letters you'll get or hate mail.

[00:42:46] AH: I get plenty already.

[00:42:47] DL: Oh, good! It's sort of a lie really. It's terrible. The smell the blood thing, it wasn't my own invention. A colleague who I can't name said that about me, and I thought, "Well, that's a really good point," because you just have sort of a sixth sense of seeing somebody. I mean, I would sometimes joke when I was a young cocky case officer, now I'm an old cocky guy, where I would say I could recruit that asset in five meetings, because there was just something that came across in my first encounter. There was something I felt. Something I sensed intuitively. And I already knew, "Ah, I see it. I see the road path. I see what I'm going to focus on and what I'm going to manipulate."

The lifestyle for an agent, those who recruit, I mean, we lay that out very academically. There's a recruitment cycle. There's the whole target analysis part. If you're actually pursuing somebody specific, you have a need to have an agent in the Russian office for hypersonic weapons, right? So you take a look at who you might know who works there, and who might be accessible, and what you know about them. Then you have the spotting, where you actually see them. You find them, right? You make that first contact. We call it spotting. Then you have assessment, which is that cultivation time. Assessment, I'm starting to get an idea. Are they worth pursuing? Do they have the access? Do I think I could recruit them?

And then having done that, you go into development. And that's the sustained steady time on target where you're developing them. You're really doing the cultivation. You've got your assessment. You're validating, reinforcing. Then you get to the recruitment where you do the pitch, which again some people have real trouble right there. They keep developing. They just don't know when to pull the trigger. And I've had some young officers who I've had to either push or kind of help them along the way. And then after recruitment, you get the whole handling part where they are being handled, just their production and stuff. And then there's a life cycle of what goes on with them. Are they going to be turned over to a new handler? To a new case officer who then steps in and continues the case? Or are they going to be terminated? When we say terminate, it's like firing them, right? But ideally in a nice way, you always want to leave them laughing, leave them happy. Because, one, you don't know if you might need them again in the future. And you don't want to provoke them if there is something that is a problem. And you don't want to reveal what you know if they're doing bad stuff about you. So that's the recruitment cycle. And there's no kind of fixed plan.

I said the agent I talked about last night, Polyakov, lasted for 25 years. There are agents who last that long and agents that won't make it for months. I think particularly with counter-terrorist agents, they tend to be unfortunately short-lived sometimes because their access is short-lived or because the US government has such a proclivity to expose the information. That's unfair to me. Sometimes to disrupt the threat or to warn people, which they absolutely have to do, that could burn the case. But agents could last any number of years.

And I remember one case, honest to goodness, and not just long ago in my career, he was from the OSS states. This was a guy that was recruited during World War II who was still in the government. More as an advisor at this point, because he was really long in years. I mean, imagine doing clandestine meeting with somebody with an oxygen tank, for real, right? This is how you had to do a meeting with him? But God, he was an incredible gentleman. And he literally had been around at this point for over 50 years reporting.

[00:45:51] AH: Wow! You mentioned the 80/20 split. 20% of the officers recruit 80% of the assets. Like for our listeners that may be in the private sphere, they may be thinking is there not some kind of performance management **[inaudible 00:46:06]** the people that you've had four tours and you've not recruited a single agent. Like I don't think you're really cut out for this. You need to get reassigned. Or something or or is it like a lot of government agencies where when people got their foot in the door, it's very difficult to get them out and they stay within the institution? I realize this is fraught territory that we're getting into here. But just give us from the hat, like what's your view on that?

[00:46:35] DL: Oh, people are mad at me enough already. So I'm okay. But there's recruitments in those recruitments. So the agency does in fact have a system of performance, performance-based criteria, competencies that you have to live up to. And to be a full performance case officer, you have to have successfully recruited. And I'm not just saying one recruitment. You have to proven you've mastered the competency.

Sadly, one thing the directorate of operations does poorly compared to actually the other CIA directorates is they don't have the best performance evaluation system. Now, they've invested a lot of money in this over the years. I've seen this come and go and change many times. And it breaks my heart that every time we spend millions of dollars and bringing some outside consultancy group and they come in and go, "Here's how you're going to do it."

But case officers, we're getting back to now what we said earlier. They have the capacity to sometimes manipulate. And sometimes they will manipulate in the performance evaluation. And sometimes they'll be the supervisor who wants to make the officer look good or not good. But generally, look good, look better, because that's a reflection on them. They think that if the officer succeeded, "Oh, it's because of my brilliance and my mentor, and mentoring," and such like that.

So case officers can get through the competencies because there's recruitments and recruitments. There's like the the Russian hypersonic office guy. That's a pretty darn good recruitment. And there's a safe housekeeper, or a taxi driver, or somebody who works at the local telecom company who basically you just need to throw money at. All of them can demonstrate the competency for recruiting. But it's really, really different. It's still those agents that provide those secrets that are life and death and inform consequential decisions that are few and far between.

So there's lots of efforts to try to keep people to standards. But I think the deal for what it is, and it's really funny and sometimes embarrassing, because in my capacity in some of the executive positions, it was a fusion center. So I had analysts and technical officers. And I look at their PARs and what we call performance appraisals. Now they're called PSRs, performance SRs. I forgot the S and R. And they were much more honest. They were really honest PARs. Because, God forbid, you say anything negative in a DO part. Oh, no. You can't have anything negative. You can't even have an area for development, because then boom! You're ostracized. So you can't really be honest about an officer that they've got strengths and they've got weaknesses.

And in the DA, yeah, of course, they have strengths and weaknesses and they were still promoted accordingly because the part – The revaluations were very honest. The trajectory was more honest and aligned with tangible products. Again, analysts are writing papers. Case officers have agents, which other people are evaluating. Did they handle them well? Did they not handle them well? People are really reluctant to criticize officially because, "Oh my God. I'm going to get sued." Litigation, it's all about litigation. So there's a lot more hallway file stuff going on in the DO. There's a lot more advancement or glass ceilings created by what is your hallway

file. He's got sharp elbows. Or he can't recruit himself out of the paper bag. But they'll never say that officially.

So you sit on a panel then if you're supposed to be, as I've said, on many a recruitment, promotion panel, and you're looking at this body of work of the people that you're representing, because you represent people on a panel. They're advocates. They're a representative. You could advocate for them if you think they've met the criteria for motion. And you read these evals and you're trying to translate it. What do all – I see the buzzwords. I see the language. They didn't like this person, but they didn't want to say it. Or, "Oh, this person really did great. And here's language I know." That's not the way to run a railroad. And unfortunately DO has never found a way out of it. And I think that whole cult of personality thing is just sort of a natural impediment. But they keep trying the standards. They keep trying to adjust them. And I'm sure, in good faith and with good intentions, but just they haven't found the right formula yet.

[00:50:23] AH: This reminds me a little bit of academia in the UK. They've tried to bring in performance standards, which has led to a decrease in people writing books and more people writing articles, because it's a shorter-term payoff and there's something tangible. And this has led to like a big debate. Well, the books that take 10 years to research but make a major impact in a particular field. Those books are not going to come out anymore because everybody's just focused on the seven-year cycle where everybody gets performance evaluated within. So how do you measure that as well?

If you were a case officer and you recruit a Polyakov, or a Penkovsky, if that's the only thing that you've done in your career, the intelligence from both of them is so consequential that that's a bloody great career that you had. Versus, "Well, I recruited a hundred agents, but they were all chaff that never really led to anything." Or help us understand that kind of evaluation of sources and of the intelligence that is culled as a result of having that source.

[00:51:32] DL: That's really tricky. That's a great question. So it's really tricky, because everything in CIA is compartmented. So I'm reading somebody's case file. I can't know about all

their cases. So when I'm reading their evaluation, it can't be recruited Polyakov. A senior GRU officer who provided information. That I get recruited a sensitive source maybe from a hard target country who provided information that was used in numerous finished products that influenced decision making.

Okay. If it's really true, that's awesome. But you're interpreting that, right? And is it maybe a little embellished? There's always a risk there. Now, the way it's run now, it's even a little bit more trickier. And it kind of breaks down sometimes according to cultural and gender. And I'll tell you why, and this is based on HR experts who have struggled with this. So I told you case officers are very egotistical. A lot of self-confidence. Particularly, I would say, and it goes both genders. It has been found according to statistics that more men will think, "Yep, I can be in that job. I know I'm good for that. I'll apply for that." And we'll find less women." And when you ask them, women that I've had work for me, "Why did you apply?" "I didn't think I was ready for the job." Wow! That's amazing. Where you ask the men, it's like, "Fuck, yeah! I could do it." "But you don't have this training or that—" "Who needs that training or that qualification?" Where I found female officers will go, "But I didn't take that particular course. And I only have two tours. Not three tours." So how do you allow them to succeed? How do you nurture them and advance them where the only people who might be applying for the job may be the wrong people. That you're missing people who are actually very well qualified, but look at the standards even differently.

Take even people who now we call it petitioning for promotion. Officers actually have to now say, "I am ready to be promoted. Here's my petition." Along with the evaluations they get from their supervisors. What if you have somebody who's amazingly humble and you can have still a case officer of a great ego about the work, but amazingly humble about themselves, which is the perfect combination? Because that's a really reliable officer, right? Their integrity, everything about them. They're a straight shooter. When they get out the door, they're like all ego and whatever. But when they're in-house, it's like they're understated. Perfect, right? In terms of being part of a team environment. But what if they think, "Oh, I'm just not ready for promotion," but you really probably are. And if you're not petitioning for promotion, then I have this pool of people who may not be ready or as ready as you. But I've got so many slots of headroom. So

I'm just going to promote the top 20, 25 whatever it is in that grade. What a disservice to them as individual performers and to the service by doing it this way?

So I don't think we have it right. I think they keep struggling with it. And I think when they went to the system of petition – And we actually had something like that years ago because everything old comes back again. It just really discounted that human dynamic, which I find so ironic for a spy service. It should be all about human dynamics. But I tell you, it's night and day different to how they look at the world of agents and operations and how they look at themselves. And I think we've got to find a way, again, with inclusiveness to make sure we're being fair. And, again, it's not just because it's the right thing to do. Lord knows it is. But it's the best need to the service.

When I talk about diversity, yes, it's the right thing to do. But it's likewise in the best needs of the service. So if you want to kind of criticize, "Oh, I'm just overstating my 2021 kind of guy. Because lord knows I'm an old white guy from the caves and stuff like that. But I'm a spy and I understand what works in espionage." And, actually, inclusiveness and diversity are strengths in espionage. Not weaknesses.

[00:55:15] AH: I want to take a moment to thank this week's sponsor, NordVPN. So back in the day, when you're traveling on the open road, there was always a real danger that you could be held, stopped and told to stand and deliver. I'm talking about highway robbery of course. Being on the Internet has often been compared to being on an information superhighway. But unfortunately, these days people won't even have the courtesy to tell you they're taking something from you. What's the solution? This is where a virtual private network comes in, which is often compared to having a tunnel to relay information privately. Go to nordvpn.com/spycast, or use code SPYCAST to get 73% off your two-year plan, plus four bonus months for free. Be quick because this software is for a limited time only. It's equivalent to buying a cup of coffee a month. And you'll get more benefit out of this.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:56:16] AH: So there's like a double reason why this is a good thing in and of itself. But it's a good thing in terms of the mission and function of the agency.

[00:56:24] DL: Absolutely, yeah.

[00:56:25] AH: And another thing that I was just thinking when you were talking there as well, that's saying follow the money, follow the incentives. Well, where are the incentives? And it's on particular things. I wondered how that played out in the agency. And I'm thinking of, you mentioned being on promotion panels and evaluating different types of people. If I'm in charge – If I'm heading up a section, if I'm a booster who make all of the people in my section look like amazing, they're changing the world. And I've got a particular skill set where I know how to play the institution to make sure that my people get the position over other people's favorite candidates and so forth, how do you deal with that? You were saying that the women are much more honest about where they are. And analysts were much more honest as a directorate than operations. Like how do you bring that into the DO? How do you get, "Okay, we hear what you're saying. You're advancing this person." Because if they get the job, then you look good, and they say that you were their mentor. And the whole system just keeps going on and on. How do we get to the objective reality of how competent and good this person is if we take away all of the fluff and all of the other stuff around it? I mean, this is a big question. What's your thoughts on that? Because you've thought about this quite a lot, and it comes through in your book.

[00:57:50] DL: My book does talk a fair bit about changes in the agency after 9/11 largely in leadership and how that took the agency, I think, off of its path. Unfortunately, had some negative impact on its credibility and its capability. And I think that, one, it's human nature. And two, it's a part of any government bureaucracy. So there's an interesting study. The last public one I know that the agency did on diversity in the ranks and promotions is from 2015. And ironically it was released. It used to be on the CI website. I can't find it anymore. It's probably more about me. It's not anything conspiratorial, but maybe it is.

So the study was really interesting because it looked at different groups. It looked at ethnic minorities. It looked at women. It looked at the number we were hiring. It looked at their advancements through the ranks just like we're talking about right now. And it showed that while the agency had made tremendous progress in hiring more women, more people of color, ethnic groups, minorities and such like that, it had actually gotten worse in promoting them. So while there might have been more black officers, or Hispanic officers, or women being brought in, they were getting promoted at a slower rate than white males.

How does that happen? Are the white males that much better? No. Obviously they're not. What it is is sadly still a cliquish kind of mentality. And particularly what plagued the agency after 9/11 was what does an agency leader look like? There's somebody who looks like me. There's somebody who went to the same schools as me. There's someone who believes and agrees with me who tends to kiss my butt for one thing, right? These are my people. So I'm going to bring them up and I'm going to protect them. And I will circle the wagons when something goes wrong to protect myself, since I've invested myself in their advancement.

That's bad for espionage. That's bad for any organization, but particularly for a group that's supposed to be truth to power. And I think that plagued the agency over the last 20 years. And I'm actually, on a positive note, really pleased so far at what I've seen in the newspapers that Ambassador Burns and Mr. Cowen, the deputy, and s, the new Chief of the Clandestine Service has been doing. Because I see the names of people who are leaving the agency and people who are being promoted into new positions. And sometimes those positions are because of cover. You can't know who they are, but I kind of know who they are. And I'm like, "Good on you. Right calls. You're moving in the right direction."

But 20 years of that, that's generational. You don't change that overnight. So if the agency has gotten to this very cliquish mentality of groups or people who are promoting in their own likeness, who are going to repeat the same mistakes and being an obstacle for the advancement by meritocracy of promoting in their own likeness, who are going to repeat the same mistakes and be an obstacle for the advancement by meritocracy of deserving officers of color, women, ethnic groups like that, that's not going to change overnight. I have actually great

confidence in the Burns, Cowen and Marlowe team. I know them all. I like them all. I think they're good people with good intentions. But I've seen their struggles. I've seen some of the bureaucratic tricks they've kind of used to move some people out, which I won't detail. But which was clever, I'd give them credit. But it hasn't been confrontational because they don't want to blow up the place. So I understand that as well and maybe I'm a bit more radical in terms of blowing up things when we need to fix it. But they're on the right path. But I think changing it to a meritocracy, stripping away the proclivity to promoting your own likeness and favor certain groups or have an innate bias cultural or otherwise, against people because they're not like you. It's going to take time even if they really want to make the changes. and I can only hope that it will reinforce itself positively in the same generational fashion that they will nurture and advance the careers of the right people.

But a lot of the folks that have made it up the over the years have been company men and women, if you would. People who like, "I'm not going to rock the boat. I'm going to do what I need to to get promoted." That's what he believes or she believes. By God, that's what I believe, right? Two-fold and such like that and double down.

A spy service, you've got to have some people who have different points of view. We talk about alternative analysis and finish products in terms of making sure that the entire analytic community gets together and thinks of even the craziest things to rule them out so that people aren't biased. There's not a group thing personalities dominating. It's the same piece and operations. There's great risk being involved. And those risks should be based not on a political calculus, but on an operational calculus. Is this secure? Is this the right thing to do? Is it worth doing?

When you have people who become company people in the sense that they just, "Oh yeah, that's your idea because you're the chief of the division or you're the assistant director for the center?" That's not healthy for a spy service. You have to do it in a respectful way so you don't have the sharp elbows. And I've been rightfully accused of having sharp elbows over the years. I mean, no doubt about it. But there's got to be at least a way that you can say, respectfully, there might be another way to do it.

One of the big cultural changes in the agency even from the time of the 90s. So in the 90s I was already a fairly good mid-level rank, right? And so I really saw a big change after 9/11, where my day, I'd come back from the field even as a junior case officer. The first start case officer. I'd see my division chief, or now the assistant director, and it'd be 30 minutes of kibitzing. And it's all loved and it's all like there's no sir. There's no mister. It was first name because we're spies. Spies call each other by first names, right? And talk about your recruitment, and talk about your cases and this and that. Awesome.

It's so rare for somebody that senior to abide having a meeting with a junior officer. I don't have time for that sort of thing. I'm not even going to sort of consort with people who are more into trenches because I'm going to talk to my lieutenant. So one of my lieutenants going to tell me. They're going to tell me what I want to hear. So we need to get away from that in a respectful way that's fair. But the CIA became such a military – Or the DO particularly, such a militarized organization after 9/11 that changed its culture. There was a great deal of censorship. Sometimes self-censorship, because people knew this is not the way I'm going to get promoted.

[01:04:02] AH: I'm just thinking about all of the institutions that I've ever been a part of. And one of the people that I've interviewed that I respected most was Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Adviser. and I remember reading in some archives. It has military advisor, Bill Odom, who went on to become the director of the NSA in the 1980s. And one of the reasons Brzezinski employed him is because he would just have furious arguments with him. And he would stand up to him and he would kind of argue the points with him. And if Brzezinski thought he had good points, he would be prepared to seed ground. But if not, he would pursue with what he wanted to do. But it's very rare to find someone with enough intellectual or personal self-confidence that they're happy for someone else that's bright to have a real sharp elbowed argument with them and then still leave the room and for things to reset back to normal and just to go ahead with whatever the decision was. Like how do you get people like that? Because in my experience, people just don't like to be challenged. People just like to be either validated. Or you can say something, you can maybe go a few percent outside of what I've said and maybe follow you

there. But there's a kind of five or ten percent boundary where if you go too far that, you're kind of not really one of my people anymore.

[01:05:28] DL: So the greatest danger are leaders who are themselves insecure. So the case you explained is somebody who's secure enough who wants to hear different points of views. And the irony is a good case officer wants that. Because a good case officer wants to look for whatever weakness might exist. I want to look for the weakness. I want to find the weakness myself and correct it so it doesn't find me first.

But if we go back to what we said earlier we talked about these case officers, at least running in the DO, who have tremendous egos. Subdue them a great deal to do their job. Put through a whole lot with very little recognition. Go through all sorts of interesting life challenges. And now they've made it. Now they're senior. Now people are like bowing down to them and treating them like they are gods. And in some cases, some of the senior officers that I speak about in my book were marvelous case officers and were terrific until the point where they became cult icons. And there was a transition when they became this like point of reverence that they loved it because they were starved for it. We're starved for it. We're case officers. We're ego maniacs and yet we can't like cultivate our ego, right? We have to keep it in check all the time. And now we've got people calling us sir.

I mean, one of the big changes in the agency was everybody's chief, "Hi, chief." "Good morning, chief." "Good afternoon, chief." And we never did that before. And I'm thinking, "Why do they do that?" Okay, if you're the Chief of Station, you're the chief. But just because you're a more senior officer, you're not a chief necessarily. But it's this whole kind of like military thing of like chief and sir and stuff like that. And I actually told the stations I ran or the offices I ran, "Don't call me sir. Call me Doug." Because you set up an atmosphere where you're automatically creating an imbalance. If you have that really rigid hierarchy, I want them to respect me because hopefully they like me and I think I'm a good leader and they think I'm a good case officer, but not because I'll make or break their lives and stuff. So they've got to like da-da-da. Because they're not going to tell me the truth. They're not going to tell me what they think I don't want to hear. But these very same personalities, it works against him, doesn't it? Where once they've had and

they've tasted this world where they're now being invited to the White House and they're going to the Hill. And sometimes actually on the Hill, it's very different than people think when they go for oversight. Sometimes it's a love fest. It's like, "Oh, thank God, you're an American hero," and whatever like that's. It's like, "Seriously?" I went to one of these meetings as a backbencher and one of these very senior people who I knew was doing stuff that I didn't really agree with was like, "Oh, you're an American and icon." So they're going to come back and they're going to listen to some junior officer tell them that they're doing it wrong. Not likely.

So how do you take these people who had to be a certain way to get up through and achieve as they did operationally and then make them into good leaders who have the where fall to have the security. As you said, the self-confidence, to be questioned. Where I sat in rooms with some of these people and they would eviscerate you at the first word if it wasn't what they wanted to hear. Actually there's one of the characters in my book who did just that. I was briefed in a real sensitive operation. We were prepping to go see the director where I had to go deliver it to him first so he could kind of review it and such like that. And literally, the first word out of my mouth, he said, "Shut up." It's like where do you go from here? How do I tell him something he doesn't want to hear? Really hard to do.

So I've seen some transformational leaders. Sadly some of them whom I'm thinking have left. But I remember this one chap, and I can't name him. A terrific guy. We would be in a meeting and he was the center chief and I was the department chief. So I was kind of like one of his lieutenants. I had an area of the world or whatever it was. And we were briefing him very similar on what we're going to tell the director about our findings on this particular issue. And my people came up, my ops people, my analyst. And they were all great. And they were they were the experts. They were the people in the trenches. And they told him stuff that totally flew against what he believed. I know this guy. I know this guy my whole career. And he had sharp elbows at a time too. But God, he must have gone to a great therapist. Because he just sat there and go, "So you all think this way." And they all went through it. It's not just they believed it, but they made their case, and he went, "Okay."

I went to him after the meeting and I said blank name. I said, "Wow! I know you don't agree with that." He goes, "Yeah, but they're the experts, and they made a really good case. So in my heart, I don't necessarily agree, but what they showed me is what I'm going to go with." That's a leader and that's what we need to be. And the agency, at least I left in 2019, was not nearly there and had gone totally in the wrong direction. And I'm hoping the leadership we have today at the top will nurture those traits and then reinforce it throughout the ranks as we advance people.

[01:10:12] AH: I want to come back to that, because that's a large part of your book. I want to discuss generational change, but also your appraisal of the post-9/11 agency, because you're very forthcoming. So just on the back cover, the CIA finds itself today at crossroads as an organization that has sought to reinvent itself after the debacle of 9/11's intelligence failure and its subsequent ethical compromise and facilitating the Bush-Cheney fabrications that justified the invasion of Iraq. I could go on. And you come out swinging. So I just wondered if you could the helper listeners understand that larger thesis that you make. And as you said, you are quite critical of people that were involved at senior levels after 9/11. So there's a lot going on there. And people should read the book. But help our listeners understand that part of it, because I found the recruiting and the case officer and all the stuff that we've discussed so far really, really fascinating. But I do want to touch on that bigger thesis that you have in the book.

[01:11:20] DL: What happened, and not to go into a whole history lesson, the CIA was created in 1947. It was specifically set out to be independent by making it civilian. By not putting it under a policy making organization, be it the military, Department of Defense, or state department. The intel community has 18 agencies most of which are actually under the Department of Defense. But the CIA was supposed to be the Central Intelligence Agency. So it was supposed to be objective in the sense that if it wasn't a policy maker, it didn't have to worry about criticizing its own policy recommendations and its own policies. It could be an independent arbiter of, "If this is what you want to do, Mr. President, here's what I expect the consequences will be." By laying out the intelligence that's been collected with good analysis, because intelligence is always a mosaic, right? It's a jigsaw puzzle where you never have complete information. But you can't

wait for complete information to make those decisions. So the decisions have to be made on what you have and the level of confidence that you have in it.

CIA officers didn't have uniforms. A lot of intel services around the world, they have ranks, they have uniforms. When they have an event, they dress up and they're put on their medals and stuff like that. I mean, it's like an act of God to get a medal in the agency. It's like, "So you lost an arm doing that. That's your job." I'm just being a little flipping. But, really, that's kind of like that's a little bit of the attitude. And that's fine. We signed up for that, right?

Post-9/11, the CIA was like, "Oh my God. We're going away." People wanted heads. They wanted blood. And the CIA did actually a number of things right at the 9/11 commission report. They actually had the intelligence. They were blinking the red lights as an **[inaudible 01:12:50]** and nobody was listening. What they didn't do was share that with other agencies. Tracking terrors that would be on those aircraft. Things like that that the CIA's lack of transparency within the community is what failed us. That was the intelligence failure for the CIA. Not that it wasn't doing everything it possibly could and producing intelligence, but that it didn't talk to the FBI. And the fault is not just with the agency, FBI, there's plenty to go around. But at the end of the day, for me, when I think of what's my responsibility. Dang! We didn't share the news that if we had, maybe, right? Maybe if.

So the CIA's looking around and going Donald Rumsfeld already hates us. We embarrassed him by getting to Afghanistan within 15 days where the DoD was going, "Hmm. How do we get troops there? What do we do?" And I'm being fictitious because, thank God for our brothers and sisters in the military and what they did, but the military wasn't constructed with the agility and the flatness of management and the authorities the CIA had that allowed them to just roll out, realign, and move based on old relationships and capabilities that the military didn't have. So it took them a little longer and the CIA facilitated their movement to the ground in 9/11. So the agency thought, 'How can we save ourselves? What do we have that's unique to CIA that nobody else has that could save us?' And that's covert action.

Now, the covert action authorities that the CIA have are unique, and that it's usually, and I say usually, the agency of US government that performs covert action, which is a deniable act. Not secret. DoD, the military, lots of people do secret things. But what can we do and went, "Oh, that's a shame. Something blew up there, or some government no longer exists." But we don't know anything about that. Only the CIA can do that where it's deniable. If the military, and there's lots of other considerations, prisoners of war. If various treaties and conventions protecting our soldiers and such like that can't do it, the president technically can assign covert action to another agency. No president ever has for all the right reasons.

So CIA thought, covert actions. What does that mean for us? Covert action for us means what problems does White House have that we can make ourselves important enough to them that they're going to protect us? Because the CIA needed protection, right? It needed somebody to help it. Because DoD is an 800 pound gorilla. It could crush, it could swallow, and Rumsfeld wanted to do all of that. Even the State Department. Because the CIA director traditionally has not been a cabinet member. There have been some exceptions when Casey was. But traditionally, they are not a cabinet. They are the president's advisor, at least they were until they became a Director of National Intelligence, the primary advisor. But they've got no lobby. They've got no public support. Most people have a negative default reaction when they think of the CIA even to this day. I asked my students at the beginning of a class, "When you think CIA, and tell me truly, is it negative? Is it positive?" It tends to be negative. Now we've earned some of that particularly in the last 20 years. So what problems can we solve for the White House? Well, Al-Qaeda just happens to have gone to Pakistan. Hmm, that's a problem, because the US military can't go into Pakistan. And the Pakistanis are not doing what we need them to do to go after Al-Qaeda. CIAs going to go after them there.

That's good. Actually, I had no problem with that. But then we got to how are we going to get to terrorists? Oh, let's just kill them all. We've developed these amazing capabilities. And they've become so amazing and so reliable, and we are so good at it that's going to be our easy button. When we find a bad guy, as we say colloquial, remove them from the battlefield. That could be capture as well. But it's so often was easier to do something kinetic. Whereas what about the conditions that led to terrorism? What about different groups that are now fracturing and

showing up? The decentralization of Al-Qaeda where we now have affiliates in Yemen which are more threatening to us based on Ibrahim al-Asiri, a terrific bomb maker, **[inaudible 01:16:27]**, who, today, 10 years after his death, continues to inspire more terrorists than Osama bin Laden did. Let's just kill them. I don't think that was the best. I think kinetic would have been a good tool to have in the kit, but not the go-to button. But it showed great metrics. And the White House could talk about hundreds of terrorists being killed. No attacks in the United States. Well, there still were, but there was no 9/11 kind of attack, right?

We missed ISIS in the Middle East because we were so focused on whack-a-mole in South Asia and such like that. What else can we do politically for the White House? Well, there's all these combatants off the battlefield. Now, traditionally, the military should be responsible for a combatant. If we're at war, Vietnam, Korea, whatever, they are able to. This was a new kind of combatant. Who was it? Was it a member of a government? Was it a member of foreign state? Are there treaty obligations? Do the Vienna Geneva Conventions apply here? The lawyers didn't know how to handle that. So the military couldn't take them. What are we going to do with them? We know there are bad guys, or we thought they were bad people. Ah! CIA will take them.

So the CIA took the combatants. And we hear about the black sites. But then we hear about enhanced interrogation. So the black sites, in a sense, if the lawyers are all behind it and it's simply the CIA holding them and doing the debriefings, I don't really have a problem with that if we're doing it right. But we farm-out to these air force psychologists, this program of enhanced interrogation, which is just absolutely inconsistent with not just our values, but our tradecraft.

We talk about using rapport, creating motivations, and even with a detainee. Because I've been in the boxes they say with enough detainees. Where it was like trying to find something that would incentivize the detainee. Not torturing them into answers. For the same reasons I said why we don't coerce people. How can I trust that intelligence to this day as much as some defend enhanced interrogation? And they talk about, "Oh, we would have never gotten some of this." I don't think that's true. Because if we look at Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the Chief of Operations for Al-Qaeda basically who came up with the aviation plot in the first place, Abu

Faraj al-Libbi, who succeeded him a year or two thereafter, they were spending most of their time distracting us from where bin Laden was. So they were lying to us. Like any well-trained Al-Qaeda, or any terrorist, or any member of a foreign government, they're trained to deal with detention. They're trained for layering. Providing some truths and appearing to be cooperative and stuff like that.

If they have a stake in it, if there's an incentive, maybe it's their treatment, maybe it's the treatment of their family, "Hey, KSM, we know you left behind a family. We'll look after them. We'll take care of them," whatever like that, those are more valid incentives to get them talking. But we totally tarnished our reputation for a program that I think wasn't even efficient that didn't even work. But it solved the White House problem because we were – Genuinely, because to take us all back to September 12th, there were other Al-Qaeda plots. There were other plots coming. There was no doubt about it even then. And as we'd find out, they were on route and being developed. We were going to be hit again. And it was going to be bloody awful. So there was this near panic. We must preempt the next plots.

So the idea of enhanced interrogation, the White House loved it. They got lawyers to sign off on it. And, ironically, some of the CIA leaders found a way to leave their names off the paper trail in terms of authorizing a lot of the specific activities and now make no comment about it, which I think is unfortunate. Because the CIA needs to be accountable because we need the CIA. By God, we need the agency more today now than ever. They are often our first, last and best line of defense to preempt nightmares that, God willing, people will never have to suffer. But that's done by at least being accountable internally. So we go, "We messed up. That was wrong. We need to fix that."

So no airing the dirty laundry. No leaking documents to the press. None of that stuff. But at least having the security. And we're talking about leadership. Leaders who are secure enough to look at the warts and think, "What do we fix so that we're doing the right job?"

[01:20:29] AH: I just want to touch on that briefly for a minute, because I get emails from people saying, because of the nature of our podcast, there's always a sense to which people can say, "Well, if only you knew what I knew, then you would agree with me." And for just Joe q public, or gen q public, there's no way around that for the Iraq war for example. If you saw the intelligence I saw, you would think that going to war was a good thing. But then, afterwards, obviously, the story is more complicated. So how do you deal with that deficit where you can't just say, "Okay, public, rake through all of our files and find whatever you may." But how do you get over that point of leverage that you have where you say, "Well, enhanced interrogations worked. And if you knew what I knew, you would know that they work. But I can't tell you." I don't know. That's difficult for just your average person on the street going about their business to kind of get their head around. What are your thoughts on that?

[01:21:25] DL: So it's tricky being a secret organization working for an open society. I believe in oversight. And actually, I will tell you, most of my oversight experiences with congress are very positive. Not negative. Of course, things went downhill significantly under the Trump years and by pressures from all sides, I would imagine. But because of the nature of our society, we need some degree of transparency, because we do need public confidence. Even the CIA needs public confidence.

One of the changes after 9/11 was the creation of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. And I have some issues and concerns about how that office has functioned. I think sometimes it could be a distraction. Resources may be used other places. But one of the fundamental responsibilities of that office, to which I totally agree, was to allow the American public some sense of transparency so that they would have reason to trust above and beyond the oversight. Because to oversight, and you think it's a republican former government representative, right? So we can't have John and Jane public sitting in on testimony for me to go up to the hill. But their representative, who they've elected, is representing them. And behind those closed doors, at least up until the time I left in 2019, it was fairly bipartisan because they were closed doors, because the senators, and the congressmen, and the staffers – And the staffers actually were nastier than the members really, knew that this wasn't getting out, God willing, unless somebody on their side leaked it, which they would protect. So if you were honest

with them and said, "Here's this op. We screwed up." They wouldn't really take you to the witch head. They would appreciate your honesty and ask you, "What are you doing to fix it? And who's responsible? And what are you doing accountability-wise?" Accountability was always a problem.

That was a very healthy place for that discord. There were some exceptions. And I would say, Mike Pompeo, when he was a congressman, was not as bipartisan. He just had a bone in his teeth about Benghazi that he was not going to let go. He was out to chastise Hillary Clinton. But for the most part, republicans, democrats, really good about that.

So the DNI's job, and complement to oversight committees, is to give the public some reassurance that the intelligence community, writ large, not just CIA, is on the case, is doing the right things, is being overseen properly and effectively. And they do that sometimes. You see more and more of these sterilized, unclassified versions of finished products that are coming out.

I have some mixed feelings about that too, because I think no matter how you sterilize an intelligence product, you're giving something away to our adversaries. I think, okay, the only reason they knew this is because they must have an agent, or they must be listening, or there must be something. But they do a decent job. I mean, we have to share some things, right? Because we share things with foreign governments all the time because we need them to act on our intelligence. So we don't want to compromise our sources and methods. So we sterilize it.

But constantly, if the American public sees sensational press exposures and begins to worry because, generally they're going to see the failures, aren't they? That's what's going to generally come out. Things that went wrong. Not all the things that went right. So you need a DNI who is, of course, going to be political to some extent because they're chosen by the president. But to the degree they can live by the code. **[inaudible 01:24:33]** was a republican. Clapper was both, right? He worked for both republican and democratic administrations. There was no political bias, because their jobs, protect the intelligence community. Sustain that level of trust

so that they could do their jobs in secret and be relied upon. I think that's part of the issue we have at hand. And I'm really kind of worried about it with the way things are going politically these days.

[01:24:57] AH: And there's so much that we could dig our teeth into here, but I want to discuss just generational change in the CIA before moving on to, undoubtedly, one of the most precocious and impressive counterintelligence operators that you mentioned in the book. And I'm thinking of your second youngest daughter. So we can come on to that one in a second. But tell us about the agency that you encountered when you went through its doors in 1984. So at the time, Bill Casey, someone that I've done some research on, he's the Director of Central Intelligence. Help us understand the CIA that you encountered then and then we can maybe explore how it's changed and the various generations that you saw coming through. But what was it like in 1984 to be Doug London? Who was there? Who were the dinosaurs? Who was the ruling dynasty? Help us understand what you encountered.

[01:25:51] DL: Well, first of all, to be fair, it's always been fun. I loved being a spy. And I loved it all 34 years. I love the work. I love the job. Because it's the mission. And it's the mission that always keeps me at it. But in the 80s, it was a cowboy organization. At least the DO was. And particularly the near east division, near east south Asia, which where I came in and joined and spent many of my years overseas.

So Casey had been an OSS operative, behind enemy lines, all that kind of stuff. So he really encouraged a lot of that esprit de corps. One of the ironies about the agency I found, and for case officers, I'm a former Marine and the Marines have that spirit of being really special and we're elite and stuff like that. And once a Marine, always Marine. There's no such attitude in the CIA. And I'm thinking, "Why not? Damn! We do some pretty cool stuff," right?

But in fact, there's like a statutory effort to like deprogram you and not think you're particularly elite or special, which I don't think is necessarily healthy. But in the 80s, I mean, we were all cowboys, everybody. And that was encouraged. And I'm not talking recklessness at all. I'm

talking about good, well-considered risks. These days – These days, unfair for me to say, in my last few years the risks were what's the political calculus? Are we going to get into trouble? How will this look? Will it get leaked? What will look like if it gets leaked? As opposed to will we – By doing that, steal the secret, and keep people alive and not get our agent killed or a case officer killed, that should be the risk analysis, right?

For an example, and I talked about this militarized attitude in the agency post-911. One of my first things I kind of stand out in my memory as a young trainee in 1984 in the **[inaudible 01:27:23]** near eastern south Asia division, was we had a visiting ambassador for one of the countries that I was sponsored for. Because as a trainee, they put me on a desk to get seasoned, right? To read cables, provide support to the field, that kind of stuff. And we had an ambassador from one of those countries. And I had the job of escorting this ambassador to see Claire George, who was the Director of Operations. The head of the clandestine service. And I was like I was all scared and nervous to begin with, right? Oh my God! I'm going to meet Claire George, who was an icon. I mean, history of being one of those great out in front, recruiter, all that kind of stuff.

And I remember walking the ambassador to the executive suite and the receptionist tells us to wait. Claire George comes out. He of course greets the ambassador politely first as he should. Shakes his hand. Then turns to me and go, "Doug, how you doing? I hear you're doing great things." I almost fainted. Claire George knows my name. Claire George was a case officer. The first thing he was in life was a case officer. And he always was a case officer. And in that sense that it made me feel like, "Wow! That's really cool." Now, a trainee doesn't get to see that? Are you kidding to even see the DDO? Dave Marlowe is actually a really good guy. And this is not fair. Because I know Dave actually tries to get out there and see the folks. And he's a great mentor and stuff. But that went away for 20 years, right?

So it was all first names. It was all you were measured by how good a spy you were, "Oh, I hear Bill had a really great hard target recruitment. Now it's like, "Oh, do you hear Bill is getting this job because he's friends with the Division Chief?" It's a different conversation, isn't it?

So the change generation – Of course is going to be generational changes. And there should be. Every generation changes. I remember being a young chief of station in the 90s, they had a chief of station conference. So every year, usually the divisions of the centers will bring all the COS's from abroad and we'll talk about it. And one of the things we were talking about was this new generation of officer. So I'm sitting in this big room, all these old cranky white guys. And I'm really young looking and stuff like that to begin with. And I'm actually part of that new generation that talked about it, "Uh, these kids today," is like Scooby Doo, "these middling kids," or whatever. Like, "What do they know? They've all been enabled." I've been hearing that for 34 years. Every generation successfully will say that about the next generation. But every new generation brings skills and gifts, social media awareness.

I mean, old dinosaurs like me trying to teach us how to use IT. My grandchild already who's three years old knows how to use social media, right? I mean, it's just phenomenal. So there's a generational imprint, which is healthy that newer generations bring because what they bring with them. That's a good thing. And the old folks just need to adopt and adjust and make good adjustments. I mean, they're going to bring good and bad, right? But the agency will look different every generation. What's changed generationally, unfortunately, that I speak of in my book was this transition from being an elite spy service to being a bureaucratic government agency, which is not going to work in great power competition, where a lot of our rivals and our adversaries got a lot better over the last 20 years. While we were focused on kinetic activity, and paramilitary, and being a policy mouth of the White House, which there have – And I do speak about this about Mr. Brennan. I think he was very focused on making the agency a player, for better for worse. Getting away from that. The Russians, North Koreans, the Iranians. I'm talking developing countries have gotten better because of the advances in technology, which they could use a lot for counterintelligence to catch us out there.

So we need to make a big investment again in how do we innovate. How do we do things like when in the 70s and the 80s and behind the iron curtain, if you would. How do we come up with new cool ways to spy that allowed us to be successful when we were blanketed by surveillance, right? Now we have these ubiquitous technical surveillance issues and biometrics and stuff.

We're not done. We're hardly done. But we need to make an investment. We need to take risks we need to make some mistakes in the process to get where we need to be to again be not just the premier spy service, because I still think CIA is, but to be so many leaps and bounds ahead of everybody else.

[01:31:32] AH: It seems like what you're saying as the operations or the real CIA, that's what it's really fundamentally meant to be about. Maybe if we're thinking about technological change, could there be a point where everything that you need to do can be done through cyber or through total surveillance or something? So the soul of the agency is really going to become more about the analytical side rather than the human operations side? So that's like a big question. I just wondered if you had any views on that on analysis and operations, the soul of the agency?

[01:32:09] DL: Okay. To sound cool to my kids, I'll say let's unpack that. Because that's one of the phrases they told me to use. There should be a balance in what CIA does. It was created with that balance in mind, that balance between foreign intelligence collection, expert analysis and covert action. Covert action should be by necessity. It should be a small but important part of the portfolio, because no one else could do it. And there will be times where we must engage in covert action to prevent a war, or to do something that we can't do in any other way. But over the 20 years since 9/11 just grew to be the priority, it seemed.

Foreign intelligence, collection and analysis goes hand in hand. CIA being created as this independent and theory objective organization didn't have its own policy considerations, was if you would a central clearinghouse, thus, central of all intelligence and was always going to be, hopefully still be, the mission manager for human intelligence. Meaning, CIA would have to deconflict, coordinate, oversee and set the standards for foreign intelligence collection. At least clandestine foreign intelligence collection, because actually at the end of the day, most human intelligence is overt. It's people in embassies doing their job, talking to foreign officials. That's a

bit of what John Brennan wanted. He wanted the CIA to be kind, if he would, sort of an overt, but a covert collector.

We were just talking to the ministries of interiors, or the ministries of security of other countries. That's a real danger. So I think the balance that where the CIA serves the greatest value is it is the premier foreign intelligence service at least in the United States. It is supposed to set the standards. And then because it has this insight across the community, it could deconflict.

So lots of 18 intelligence agencies, a bunch of people out there collecting. CIA knows what's going on. Their chief of station, their DNI rep understands working closely with the chief admission, the ambassador in a country what's in the best US interests, national interests?

In terms of a very good point of, "Do we need espionage?" We've got technology. We've got cyber. The reality is none of that works in an information vacuum. We've got the sexiest satellites, the most beautiful drones, gadgets galore, which are worthless unless there's an agent that tells you where do you look? Who are you looking for? What's the frequency? What's the phone number? What's the email address? What's the routine? What's the pattern of life? When are they leaving their house? What house do they live in? None of these great gadgets in the world work on their own. The tragedy that occurred on August 29th in Kabul where the US military took a drone strike against an innocent civilian that they thought was an ISIS K member was because of a lack of human intelligence and a lack of a local human intelligence partner on the ground to do something. So it was clearly less reliable intelligence. According to press, CIA tried to warn DoD not to take the strike in terms of did they reach the threshold for this was a valid target and were there civilians there? That's just what I read in the press.

But I know CIA – And, again, I think they need to temper down its kinetic activity. They are unbelievably good at it. The number of civilian casualties alleged to be part of those strikes are really not accurate. And I know for a fact. So they take that very seriously. They do too much of it, but they do it very well. But you didn't have the intelligence to effectively inform the drones that were looking at this person. Were you looking at the right person? You think he's ISIS. Why

do you think he's ISIS? What the human intelligence? The signals intelligence that may have come from phone numbers and emails provided by agents? That's the kind of stuff you need. So all these great tools in the world, we absolutely need them. But we talk about them being human-enabled, human-enabled technical collection. Without the human-enabled part, these machines are huge paperweights.

[01:36:03] AH: Will there ever be a point where that human-enabled action is denuded because of technological developments? For example, the example that you gave that's a tactical drone strike on a particular family or whatever. But to go back to the idea of the Central Intelligence Agency, strategic intelligence great power conflict and so forth, will it ever get to the point do you think where it's like, "Well, I don't really need to have a conversation with Doug. I can look at where he shops. What he buys. I can steal information about his DNA. I can basically get enough big data about you to relatively accurately predict how you're going to act on a particular day. So why would I bother having a conversation with someone when that conversation is inevitably going to be affected by their subjectivity during that particular day, all of these other things that are involved when we're dealing with the very interpersonal component of espionage, which was front and center in your book? So a big question, again. But I just wondered if you did any thoughts on that?

[01:37:14] DL: And thus, we get to the subtitle of the lost art of American intelligence.

[01:37:19] AH: Exactly.

[01:37:20] DL: So you could be listening to somebody's phone conversations. You could be reading their mail. You could track them hither and yon. And this is not meant to be corny, but it's actually really true. And you don't know what's in their hearts and minds. You don't know what their aspirations are. You don't know what their intentions are. Having an agent who knows that person, that tells you the context.

So I've been involved in cases where the NSA and CIA listen to a sing and cut, right? Something from a phone conversation, a radio transmission on eavesdropping, whatever the case. And they each translated the words exactly the same, completely different meanings. Because they just had the words. They really didn't know what was in that person's mind. What are they planning to do? So one of the interesting things about raw reporting that the CIA does, it's always in past tense. It's of, "As of 12 April, John Smith planned to attack this police station," because we don't know why John Smith may want to do it. And even if it's in the intel report, might he change his mind? And what might influence him to change his mind? An agent tells you that. An agent who is at the meeting with John Smith will go, "John's under tremendous pressure. He really doesn't want to do this attack. But he needs to do it to bring in more recruits and get money." That's the nugget, that if you put that in your intel report and then in the analysis, allows the decision to make, "Oh my gosh! How can we preempt this attack? Or how can we dissuade John Smith from launching that attack?" You can't get that from technology. You only get very clinical cuts and bites, and you might think it's very exhaustive. But if you can't see into somebody's mind and heart that only a human being can tell you. And I'm not trying to make it poetic and flowery, but it's really technically true. To understand what John Smith was thinking, you need somebody who's at the meeting with John Smith. You need somebody who knows John Smith. And even if you listen to all of his conversations, you'll never know that. And thus, you'll always be short on predicting, as you said, what might John Smith do? What do we need to do to protect ourselves?

[01:39:17] AH: So a human is going to be central for the foreseeable future.

[01:39:21] DL: Well, beyond the job security, yeah. I'd certainly like to think so. I think it's indisposible. And I think there's a real danger, because those who have moved away and are so proud of their technology and proud of their cyber and all of which we need are thinking we can dispense with the human. We don't need those agents as much. And then we're going to see some real blow-ups that will occur. And when they do, if they do it after action, it would be they miscalculated. They really didn't know what the intention of the individual was. Or as you said, how they would respond. How they would react?

So you need on the technical enabled side agents that get you in the door, because people imagine all these great scientists and brilliant machines. Is it a lot easier for me to give somebody a USB to plug into a computer that gets us behind it so that we can then throw our software in there as opposed to, "Do we find a way technically through pipes and papers and Tom Cruise jumping off an airplane or whatever like that?" No. You need a spy who works there who just gives you the in. And then how do we interpret all this data?

A lot of data today is open source. It's phenomenal what's open source. And it is the wave of the future. There's some pundits that say, "We don't need spying. We just need better open source." Okay, yeah, we need much better open source. We need a better ability to not only collect all this amazing data but to process it, interpret it and to analyze it. But if we're just looking at it very coldly and clinically based on documents we read, movies we see, conversations we hear, we're not going to have the full picture on the interpretation that only an agent is going to provide.

[01:40:57] AH: Could there be a case where we just need an agency that focuses on human and that's all they do? We just need an espionage agency because the portfolio of the CIA is just too broad? Like the DCI until 2004 was responsible for all of American intelligence. You spoke about covert action, kinetic, drones, analysis, bringing all the information together. Would it not be better if the CIA was just a huge analytic arm and there was a separate human intelligence agency that fed important information into that Central Intelligence Agency rather than having that as an arm of it? Because it seems to me that there's just various identity crises going on and it can depend on who the leadership are. What's kind of an any particular moment? I'm thinking if Stansfield Turner comes along and, yeah, we need to get more to technical intelligence. And then that kind of swings back to Casey. And it's like, "No. I was in the OSS. Get out there and rip and run and do what you need to do. Take some rest." Would it be better to just have some new acronym but for an agency that's just here's where you go to be a case officer. Here's where you go to get spies. Here's where you go to be a spy. It doesn't have to be part of this monolithic thing anymore where it has to constantly try to reassert itself as being the soul of the agency.

[01:42:30] DL: I think you can, no doubt, make an argument like that. Where I would throw out for your consideration is CIA primarily is supposed to be a strategic collector. So they're in fact referred to in the community as the collector of last resort. So CIA, because it's actually a lot smaller than people imagine. And particularly when you look at the clandestine service, a lot smaller than people imagine. Should be used for the most important things where the risks are the highest because it's supposed to be the best foreign intelligence service the United States has. The United States has a lot of foreign intelligence services. There are services within services, but they also have different priorities.

DoD, the Department of Defense, they may have a lot of very tactical requirements, which don't meet the level of CIA because we don't need to take that kind of risk for low-level stuff. Or sometimes even have people's trained to the same standards or using the same kind of tradecraft. I've got some issues there because I think tradecraft is tradecraft. A good case, a bad case, you got to handle them just as securely, because the consequences to them getting killed, or to the United States, the blowback is significant.

So I think the CIA still needs to be the premier service. And I think it needs to have its finger in enough pots because, as I was also saying, there's so much synergy and marriage among the ints, right? The different cliques. There's Umint. There's sigint. There's Osid. There's imint, right? Imagery. We can go down the line, right? I think there's five or six of them actually. But they all have a single common thread of umint.

So for the CIA to be really good, it has to have at least a foot in the door. And actually, CIA used to be sort of a little bit of everything. It was sort of a mini NSA. It was a mini national security agency for signals intelligence. It was a mini imagery collector. It had its own satellites. It had its own imagery analyst. And so it ceded a lot of that to the bigger agencies for this efficiency that you're saying. But because there's this need to enable these operations, CIA still has now CCI, which used to be IOC, Information Operations. It's now – Oh my God! It's part of the director of digital innovation. So they do a lot of the tech stuff because they need to sometimes have the agility to align with the agent operations and have the freedom to innovate that a bigger component like NSA and NGA just don't have. And they also have some congressionally

mandated bureaucratic tangles for like buying things, aligning things. CIA can buy things that are foreign if it's for the security of an operation, where if it's a DoD agency, everything's got to be American.

Well, if you're a spy and you can't have American components in a lot of things you're doing, right? So CIA has to have just enough of its feet across our fingers, across the different pools. Letting other agencies be the overall mission manager for sigint, for imagery collection, what-have-you. But being the mission manager for human and then having his finger in enough of these bowls that it could do the job right, but keeping them still because they're specialized in the sense of strategic intelligence, the collector of last resort.

One of the ways we went sideways, we, the agency, that is over the years, was we got involved in a lot of tactical support because we were doing other people's missions maybe because people thought we were better at it or were more agile. But we were doing a lot of combat support. And even under any circumstances, CIA needs to be doing that. But getting really into the weeds of stuff, using case officers and agents that were so low-level where we should have been more at the higher-level. What are the plans and intentions of the Taliban, of Al-Qaeda? Not what is the mood in this village towards the rebels or whatever like that? That's not a strategic mission. That's very tactical.

So I think if we kind of take what we have and just make it more efficient, but allow people to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, let CIA be central, let it be strategic, let it have the pulse across the community and be the mission manager human. Doing that efficiently then I think takes away the need for specialized service, which may not have the synergy with the other agencies. Because it's not centralized. It's like a human service. But where does it marry up closest with? Where is its insight to what NSA needs? What does you know NGA need? What does the paratroopers need? That's where I think CIA's central role really helps it do umint better.

[01:46:51] AH: And let's go on to counterintelligence. I thought that was one of the a great point in the book where you discuss your second youngest daughter. And you said that almost from the minute she could talk, she had sussed you out. She could smell the blood. Tell us a little bit more about that example.

[01:47:08] DL: Oh, it's scary. So yeah, I mean, the Russians, the Chinese, the Iranians were nothing compared to my lovely daughter. Who, I don't know, just for some reason. Early on, for her, manipulating was like breathing for one thing. So she could work around. We were at the farm doing a tour down there. I was an inspector. And the kids, they were young at the time. But I would invite the students in my class, my branch, right? Because we each had sort of what we called a branch or a class. And then we would teach across the classes. And I would say, "Look, how my daughter will work you. Look how she works the room. How she's going to be focused on you and make you feel like you're the center of attention, and what's important to you, and your bio, your background." And she was amazing at that. It was just sort of a natural thing. But at the same point, for some reason, she always thought that her father was a spy. I honestly, to this day, I really don't know where that came from. But she was looking for like secret – I think she watched Spy Kids too many times. And she's looking for secret compartments and what door would take me to that cave or whatever like that. And she was absolutely convinced for years. Until I guess she had told herself, "No." And she's older now. Because you tell your kids at different ages depends on what they need to know and when they're able to handle it. I think all my kids were like in their teens, like early teens when I told them. And she had kind of let go, but it's like, "I knew it!"

But the danger with that is what she might say accidentally. What any of your kids might say accidentally. So if she's paying attention to when you go and you come and go and what you're doing and what's different about her dad compared to other moms and dads in the community, in the national community, kids aren't dumb. But she really was suspicious. So, "Dad, why do you go out late at night for like – And why do you have a backpack? And you're not like dressed in a suit like you are during the day." I mean, just a lot of questions. So I had cover stories for her. I couldn't leave anything out. You're worried about the local intelligence service breaking in and looking at your phones. I was worried about my child, right? There's nothing I could leave

out there that I had to like or how to be able to account for. You're always protective of your contacts and what you're doing, open ones as well, right? But I couldn't leave like any names. God forbid, she ever got a phone book or whatever like that, or got a hold of my phone. And there's nothing that's going to compromise you there, because anything you put there, you know an intel service can get anyway. But it would allow her to ask questions.

So she was tough. My youngest, who we called Mr. Spock, because her like Vulcan-like hearing. I mean, she could be like three floors above and hear a conversation and ask you about it. So when you're with a family, there's a counterintelligence component to what's your persona for your family. So my kids were all very disappointed in me over the years because I thought it was really boring. Dad didn't do anything interesting. He never got promoted. He's not an ambassador. What's wrong with my dad, right? So they were like relieved when I would tell them and when they got old enough that your dad's actually a spy. Here's what I do. But here's why it's important we keep it secret and da-da-da- to protect you, protecting the people were doing stuff.

But it's a real key issue with how do you deal with your own life. I said earlier how a case officer has to create a pattern of life, routines that are deliberate and conscious under which they're going to spike. So they want to come across as boring. They never want to come across as suspicious. I mean, you want the political officer to talk to the opposition to get surveillance. You don't want to be under surveillance because they think there's something funny about you.

So then you've got your kids where your kids want you – They want to think their parents are cool. You certainly want to appear cool to your kids, but you can't appear like really cool where they can inadvertently compromise your operations. I was at one function, I talked about it in my book, where the daughter of whom you're speaking. We're at this event because, especially if you're in these difficult austere locations, people bring their families. It's a great place to watch movies or have parties when things are blowing up outside. Or it takes you a day to buy a chicken in the local markets, right? And so I was actually talking to somebody who was trying to cultivate. And it was an open thing. It was at my house. So it was still kind of like very, very, very early. I was just trying to getting into him and stuff like that. And we're chatting. And it was a

dangerous place. There was things going on. And my daughter over hears him saying, "Oh, yeah, we just kind of lock up at night and make sure we're safe and just hope for the best, and that the guards are reliable." And my daughter goes, "Oh. But now my daddy, he's so considerate. He does the food shopping at night. So he waits for us like really late. And because he doesn't want to disturb us, he goes out like the back door of the house," and so much for cover at that point, right? So how do you deal with that is really a challenge for raising a family overseas. It's fun though and it's worth doing. But yeah, it's a consideration.

[01:51:47] AH: There's a great chapter in your book about that. I could easily sit here and speak to you for another four or five hours. But I think we've done a pretty good job of covering a lot of ground. And thanks so much for your insight and your expertise, Doug. It's been really fascinating to speak to you.

[01:51:48] DL: Thank you it's been a lot of fun. Please make sure you listen and come to the Spy Museum, which is the most phenomenal institution I've ever seen. It's got incredible stuff. Some stuff I don't think should be here, but really great stuff. And while you're here, if you haven't done already, please buy my book.

[01:51:59] AH: Thank you. Thanks, Doug.

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