GEORGE W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL V. HAYDEN

November 20, 2012
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Knott: All right, thank you, General Hayden. We're grateful for this time. Why don't we begin by asking you about your first meeting with George W. Bush? We know that you served in George H. W. Bush's administration, and we were wondering if perhaps you had encountered George W. Bush during that time.

Hayden: I had not. If memory serves, my first meeting with him was after 9/11.

Knott: Oh, OK. Wow!

Hayden: Not at all unusual. I was Director of NSA [National Security Agency] at the time, and the NSA Director in the last 11 years has become really part of, I would say, the White House circle. It sounds silly, but you know what I mean.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: The NSA Director is down there a lot. I was not prior to 9/11. Head of an intelligence agency, closer to Baltimore than Washington, plenty of full-time day work just staying up there, and you weren't really drawn into much of national policy.

I was a [William J.] Clinton appointee, and in the Clinton time I was down there for a meeting or two about computer export policy, just how many MTOPS [million theoretical operations per second] computers to be exported, with [John] Podesta, the Chief of Staff, but that was it.

So now President Bush is inaugurated and we're feeling a shift-the-rudder change here, new policies and so on, but nothing at all dramatic. Then after 9/11 the attacks take place and I begin to take some actions at NSA, fully within my authorities, nothing requiring even George Tenet's approval, but I informed George of the changes that I made and actually called both intel communities to let them know. So George, in a morning meeting with the President and the Vice President, goes in and says, "By the way, Hayden called me and he's leaning forward and doing some stuff." They then said, "Well, can he do any more stuff? Is he doing everything he can?"

George calls me up and I said, "No, George, not within my current authorities, I can't," and he said, "OK, good." About a day later, George comes back and says, "I told them that and they wanted to know if you could do more if you had more authorities." I said, "OK, I'll get back to you." We met at NSA. I came up with a couple of things that we could do that were technologically possible, operationally valuable, but not within the current authorities we had, and would not have been authorized. George invited me down to explain that to the Vice President and we did that, and then the next session was in the Oval with the President and Vice

President. I laid out that if we had authorities, here are some more things that could be done. That led to the Terrorist Surveillance Program, as it's been called. That was my first meeting.

Knott: Could I take you back just a bit? President Clinton appointed you to be the Director of NSA.

Hayden: Right.

Knott: Was there any possibility of you being replaced when the new administration came in?

Hayden: That's unprecedented.

Knott: Unprecedented?

Hayden: Yes. That's considered a military position. You wouldn't swap out the Director of NSA any more than you would swap out the Commander of Pacific Command.

Knott: OK.

Hayden: It's gotten a bit different in modern times because with the DNI [Director of National Intelligence], the head of CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] is no longer the head of the intel community. There was general recognition that the head of the intel community could change. George H. W. Bush was head of the CIA for about a year.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: He actually wanted to stay on and he wasn't allowed to. The incoming President [Jimmy] Carter chose someone else. I think Bush 41 advised Bush 43 to think twice before you change out your CIA Director. That's one of the reasons I think George was kept on. But NSA has never been part of that mix.

Knott: I don't want to spend too much time on your NSA years pre–George W. Bush, but how would you characterize the agency that you took over?

Hayden: NSA?

Knott: Yes. The health of that agency.

Hayden: It was under stress, and it was under stress because number one, you had the budget bathtub of the '90s, peace dividends and so on. OK, that affects everybody, but for America's Air Force, it's not as if somebody invented a new kind of aviation that they then had to keep up with, whereas in the case of NSA, we not only had the budget shortfalls that are just fewer dollars, but there was an explosion in global telecommunications. The environment in which we were supposed to operate had changed dramatically, and so the harder we ran, the behinder we got during the decade of the '90s. We essentially had to retool the agency. This is 3G; this is my iPhone.

Knott: Your iPhone.

Hayden: Yes. If my iPhone is 3G and your infrastructure at NSA is 2G, you're not intercepting any of these, and as the world changed so quickly, you had to mirror what communication systems your targets were using.

Knott: Yes, sure.

Hayden: That was changing somewhat like [Gordon E.] Moore's Law, and there you were trying to catch up. So that was one very large challenge that the NSA had.

Knott: And you actually had a situation where your agency was down for three days?

Hayden: Yes. Again, trying to keep up with what we call the three Vs: volume, variety, velocity of communications. We kept adding to our network without really a healthy architecture or long-range planning. We just kept plugging stuff in, at which point the network just failed.

Knott: Wow.

Hayden: We were down for about three days. Now, what does "down" mean? The way we moved the stuff we collected was generally through Fort Meade. We've got a variety of locations around the earth, around the U.S. also, that do what we do, but most of the wires go through Fort Meade, and when Fort Meade goes down, nothing moves. We continued to collect and store all that, we just weren't doing anything with it, and so for a three-day period there was no output. After we got the system restored, we then worked through the backlog, but that's not a healthy place to be for an intelligence agency, working through the backlog.

Knott: Sure, sure.

Hayden: So we then put a lot of energy into revitalizing our IT [information technology]. We actually outsourced it. We gave it to a private entity called Eagle Alliance.

Knott: Called? I'm sorry.

Hayden: Eagle Alliance. Right now the computer workstation, phones, and so on at Fort Meade are private property, not government, and that actually worked.

Knott: Interesting. Could I ask you a question? We cite in the briefing book an interview you did with *60 Minutes II* in February of 2001 in which you warned that Osama bin Laden has better telecommunications technology than the U.S. government and that NSA has been behind the curve in keeping up with the global telecommunications revolution.

Hayden: Right.

Knott: So bin Laden is on your radar, so to speak?

Hayden: He is, and look, that's an easy example to pull up, all right? But here's a guy leading a medieval movement who has more modern communications than we do because he just has to go down to El Radio Shack wherever he is and pick up the latest kit, and here we are, as I said, trying to keep up. He can do it for $99, and how many millions do we need then to be able to

intercept those communications?

Knott: Sure. Can I ask you to talk about 9/11, the day itself, your memories of that day.

Hayden: Tuesday morning, crystal clear, not a cloud in the sky. I stayed up late watching *Monday Night Football*. It was in Denver, the opening of the Denver Broncos' new stadium, and I was coming in on about six hours' sleep.

Knott: Are you a Broncos fan?

Hayden: No, a Steelers fan.

Knott: Oh, that's right.

Hayden: I came in, a normal day, somewhere I've got the schedule for that day on a little three-by-five card. My executive assistant came in 9:00-ish.

Knott: What time did you get in?

Hayden: Oh, 7:00. My executive assistant came into my office at 9:00 or so and said, "A plane hit the World Trade Center." Like practically everyone else I thought an accident, probably a small plane, sport plane, hopefully there's not much loss of life, and continue with the meeting. She came in and said, "A plane has hit the other tower." I said, "OK, now we know what this is." I immediately said, "Get the head of security up here," a fellow named Kemp Ensor, and stopped my meeting. As Kemp was coming in my office door, Cindy [Farkus], the executive assistant, was coming in the other door and saying, "There are reports of explosions on the Mall," so that was a garbled report of the plane hitting the Pentagon. Poor Kemp never even said a word. I just said, "Tell everyone, all nonessential personnel, evacuate."

And so we started that announcement. Then the next decision we made was to get as many people as we could out of the two high-rise buildings at NSA. Blessedly, we have a big, long, low-rider three-story building, which is the original ops building. That's actually where our operations center is. We tried to move as many people as we could there. If you're staying, if you're essential, let's try to work in ops one, the low-rider building. Then I went down to the ops center and started doing what I did from there. Again, a great blessing. I had all the communications I needed. George called me about 10:30, 11:00.

Knott: George Tenet.

Hayden: Tenet, yes, and he said, "What do you have?" and I said, "It's al-Qaeda." He said, "Do you have proof?" I said, "Well, we're hearing the celebratory gunfire on the network."

Knott: Wow.

Hayden: So continue throughout the day, and then about dusk someone suggested to me that I should go talk to our counterterrorism workforce, so I decided to go do that. They were still in the high-rises, and pretty high up, because you have to understand we do mission at Fort Meade. It's not just an administrative headquarters, so we had people with headsets on doing stuff live.

I went and just walked through the area, a kind of presence, saying a word here and there. You understand professionally this has been a psychic blow, but most of them are Arab Americans, so there's more than just the professional psychic blow they were dealing with. I tell the story that it was striking when I was there, it was dusk. Like I said, the day was still brilliantly clear, but it was darkening and the logistics force was tacking up blackout curtains on the window because we couldn't move them, they were in the high-rise. They were high. I just had the thought, *Well, but I've got curtains in Eastern Maryland. It's going to be different.*

Knott: Yes. Maybe you can't discuss this, but had you received threats directed against your structure?

Hayden: No, not at all. Interestingly enough, [Mohammed] Atta and several of the other hijackers stayed down the road in Laurel, about two miles from our headquarters, in a motel there.

Knott: Do you think they had any sense that—

Hayden: No. Just a place to stay.

Knott: Wow, amazing. You were quoted later as saying that if the Terrorist Surveillance Program had existed prior to 9/11, some of the 9/11 operatives within the United States would have been detected. Is that accurate?

Hayden: Yes, it is. I was talking about the two guys who were living in San Diego, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, the two guys who drove the Pentagon plane. We had intercepted their conversations from the United States back to a safe house in the Middle East, but there was nothing in the content of the communication or in the physics of the intercept that enabled us to determine the call was from the United States. If the Terrorist Surveillance Program had been in place, in addition to collecting it where we did collect it, we would have collected it in a different way, in another place, that would have immediately said this thing is coming from the United States, and that would have been the distinction.

Knott: So there were legal prohibitions?

Hayden: Yes. FISA [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] made it illegal to collect information on a wire in the United States without a warrant, and it was on a wire. When FISA was first enacted, recognizing the foreign intelligence mission of NSA, they gave a carve-out for satellite communications, and if you recall in the late '70s, when this was done, most of the international calls entering or leaving the United States were by satellite, so there was a carve-out. The NSA could continue to do its work. While the law remained constant, technology did not, and now almost everything entered or left the United States on a wire, a fiber-optic cable.

Knott: Right.

Hayden: But because of the language of the statute, you couldn't collect, unless of course you had special authorization.

Knott: I was going to hold this question for later, but we've already sort of touched on this. Do

you think the American people have a healthy sense of balance between security and liberty?

Hayden: Yes, over the long term they do, and yes, the correct term, the American people, not the chattering class and not the editorial board of the *New York Times*. And so very often, when the *Times* or the *Post* or somebody runs their Pulitzer Prize candidate article exposing X, Y, or Z, there's noise on the talk shows, but outside the Beltway people are kind of, "Well, yes, that's OK. I can deal with that." The classic is when the CIA interrogation techniques were made public by President [Barack] Obama in August of 2009. It was clear to me, and in fact, *Newsweek* reports this quite explicitly, that the leadership of justice was then waiting for the outrage to explode, but it didn't. Most Americans looked at it and said, "OK, is this all of them? Is this it?"

Knott: Yes.

Hayden: A lot of them would say, "Man, I'm sure glad I didn't have to do that." I don't think this was enthusiasm, but it was, "OK. This is what you guys have been having this big issue about?" And so, yes. I actually make a living giving a speech now—not quite—but I actually gave the speech yesterday in Pittsburgh, that there is powerful continuity between President Bush and President Obama. In fact I made the point yesterday that if Governor [Mitt] Romney had been elected and had merely continued President Obama's policies, there would have been a firestorm on the left within the first six months of the administration, but there's a bit of a hall pass because it's the President's base that's not happy with him, they kind of stifle—

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: But broadly speaking, no, I think there's actually a reasonably strong consensus.

Knott: You mentioned the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Were you ever asked by the President to call some folks and say, "Hey, can you sit on this story?"

Hayden: I did it sometimes without being asked. You don't have to be asked. If you know the story is out there, you work on it. I did sit in with the most famous of them, which was the Terrorist Surveillance Program. In October of 2004, during the campaign, I sat with [Condoleezza] Condi Rice and Phil Taubman, who was the *New York Times* bureau chief here and who remains a good friend, whose class I'm going to lecture at Stanford in May.

Knott: Well, that's interesting.

Hayden: I think Bill Keller was in that meeting, the managing editor, and we at that time convinced them that it would not be a good thing to go with their story. Then in December of 2005, 14 months later, we went through the same drill with them, this time in the Oval with the President, and you had the publisher down as well.

Knott: [Arthur Ochs] Sulzberger?

Hayden: Yes, Sulzberger. The President kind of teed it up, and then he turned it over to me to explain broadly what we were doing and why it was important and why reviewing it would be harmful, but the magic didn't work that time.

Knott: Why do you think it didn't work the second go-around?

Hayden: Because the reporter who had it, James Risen, was going to publish a book with that story in it no matter what, I really mean this, and so I think the *Times* just said, "Hey, we're not going to be scooped by our own reporter."

Knott: Was it a civil meeting, or did people give legal—

Hayden: The one in Condi's office was quite civil, and I think that's because Taubman was there and he is quite civil. The one with Sulzberger and Keller was a bit more confrontational. No, that's too strong a word, but it was edgier.

Knott: Did the President show any emotion?

Hayden: Oh, yes, the President started out—Sulzberger came in and said something about, "Well, Mr. President, let me describe for you what it is we think," and the President interrupted and said, "No, let me go first, and let me tell you why." And then the President took control of the conversation.

Knott: Regarding leaks of classified information, we cite in the briefing book one instance where you and George Tenet and Director [Robert] Mueller appeared before a closed session of a joint committee.

Hayden: Yes, and then Dick Shelby goes out and tells the press. Shelby is probably not in your notes. [*laughs*]

Knott: He's not.

Hayden: But that's who did it. Yes, it was about two intercepts on September 10th. You had, "Match begins at noon and tomorrow is zero hour—" or something.

Knott: Some reference to zero hour.

Hayden: Yes.

Knott: How much of a problem is that in terms of leaks coming from the Hill?

Hayden: Actually, the legislative branch leaks less than the executive branch. That's just kind of a maxim that's true. It really is. The executive branch actually has a little more license to leak because they're the controlling authority. If the President says something, by definition it's not a leak, the same with the Vice President, whereas Congress doesn't quite have that same authority.

We were going through—this was the JIC, the Joint Inquiry Committee, I think, and it was a combined HPSCI [House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence] and SSCI [Senate Select Committee on Intelligence] event. One of the events was the tactical warning that may have been available in these two intercepts. So I said, "All right, let's cut to the chase. Let me read to you the transcripts." So I read the transcripts in which these phrases are embedded. By the way, it's almost certain that they were referring to the killing of [Ahmad] Shah Massoud, who was the

Northern Alliance leader who was killed about 36 hours before.

Knott: So they were not referring to the towers.

Hayden: Probably not. I'm not sure, but probably not. In any event, I go through the whole transcript, I read it all, and then I look up to the dais, and Porter Goss is up there and I guess it's Pat Roberts, and I said, "So you tell me, strategic warning or two bubbas pumping gas at 7-11?" These weren't leaders. These weren't al-Qaeda dedicated coms [communications]. This was dragnet stuff over Afghanistan.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: But over the lunchtime break, somebody went out and told the press, and then by 1:00 George Tenet is being told by his Legislative Affairs guy that CNN [Cable News Network] is carrying the quotes.

Knott: In a case like that, would either you or Director Tenet go back to Shelby?

Hayden: No. We complained to Porter and to Roberts, the chairmen, and they got it. They were genuinely upset too. Court of law proof it was Shelby, probably not, but it was Shelby.

Knott: OK. One of the things we like to do in these interviews is ask the interviewee to give us their impression of some of the key figures in the Bush administration.

Hayden: Sure.

Knott: I'm wondering if I could just run some names by you and if you could characterize them for us. [phone rings] Vice President [Richard B.] Cheney.

Hayden: Bum rap. I'm sorry. I'll just check and make sure that's not critical dispatches from the front here.

Very solid intel customer, knew his brief, tough client, but not mean, not mean-spirited, not abusive, just knew his stuff. They've got that whole legend about how he came out to the Agency and leaned on them for the Iraq, the NIE [National Intelligence Estimate].

Knott: Yes.

Hayden: That's ridiculous. You're from a university, right? That's like leaning on tenured faculty.

Knott: Nobody can touch us.

Hayden: You know what happens when you do that? [*laughter*]

Knott: Yes, right.

Hayden: So it's just crazy.

Knott: The idea that he was—and I have to throw this out there because it's out there—that he was pulling the strings, that the President was—

Hayden: I really became part of the administration in the second term. There is no question in my mind who was President. Clearly.

Knott: Did you ever witness a situation where the President and the Vice President were in disagreement?

Hayden: The summer of 2007, with regard to whether or not we should bomb a nuclear reactor at Al Kibar, Syria.

Knott: Cheney was a yes?

Hayden: [*laughs*]

Knott: OK.

Hayden: Your instincts are right about that. Do you want the long story?

Knott: Please.

Hayden: I'm sorry. [phone rings again] Let me just check. I apologize. Life moves on even though we're having fun here.

Knott: Exactly.

Hayden: Jim Lewis from CSIS [Center for Strategic and International Studies]. I'll answer it later. He's coming to teach my class tonight. And here's another Steelers fan saying, "Oh, God, we've got to go with Charlie [D'Donte] Batch." All right.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: So, Al Kibar is a nuclear reactor in Eastern Syria. We got firm knowledge of it in April of 2007, and now the question is are you guys sure, given previous estimates with regard to nuclear developments along the Euphrates River.

Knott: I want to ask you about that.

Hayden: Hey, we're one for two. And so we wanted to know, (A) are we sure, and (B) if we are, what are we going to do about it? We really did work very hard on this. It was very challenging because we couldn't let it leak, and so we had to keep the circle pretty tight. You get more confidence the wider the circle, and so there was just a difficult balancing act. By midsummer of '07, we had a meeting, didn't even have it in the West Wing. We had it in the Residence so it would not appear on the calendar, because it was very important to keep our knowledge of this secret. Otherwise, if our knowledge ever leaked, we'd have the Bashar al-Assad Montessori School and Daycare Center right next to it in 15 minutes. We were doing it in the Yellow Room, in the Residence, and as normal, everyone is there: the chairmen, Joint Chiefs, SecDef [Secretary

of Defense], SecState [Secretary of State], DNI, me, Hadley, and so on, the President, Vice President. So the President says, "All right, what's the intel?"

I said, "Well, Mr. President, I've got four sentences. One, that's a nuclear reactor. Two, the North Koreans and the Syrians have been fooling around with this stuff for 10 years. Three, the North Koreans built it, and four, it's part of a Syrian nuclear weapons program. But bear with me. There's more. That's a nuclear reactor, high confidence, take it to the bank.

"We've held this thing every which way, gave it to some private sector folks we trusted, gave it to some of the labs, and we all say it's a reactor. Two, the North Koreans and the Syrians have been doing this for a decade. You can take it to the bank with high confidence. We've got it. We know who's been traveling. They've been cooperating. Three, the North Koreans built it, of course they did. They're the only ones who have built this kind of reactor since the mid-1950s, and it's almost a carbon copy of Yongbyon, but we've not been on the ground. We haven't seen them, so medium, medium confidence. And finally, it's part of a nuclear weapons program certainly. There's no other use for this kind of reactor. It's not going to generate electricity. It's not going to create isotopes for a medical program. Why would you take the political risk of doing this unless you're going for the gold? But Mr. President, I don't see the other stuff. I can't find the reprocessing facility. I've got no testing and developing of a warhead, so I think it's part of a weapons program, but I can only give that to you at low confidence."

The President, within two or three minutes, in response says, "My preemption doctrine does not apply. The doctrine I articulated after 9/11 about preemption talks about imminent threat. Mike just said he has low confidence that it's part of a weapons program, and therefore if we deal with this, it will be diplomatically." Then of course the Vice President said, "Let me offer an alternative view," and he did. That's the only time I've seen—and it was the Vice President offering his views for the President's consideration. It wasn't an argument between the men or anything.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: He just laid out why he thought we should act.

Knott: I wonder if I could get your take on the WMD [weapons of mass destruction] situation in Iraq. We've got you quoted here in the briefing book as saying that the NSA had gathered intelligence on Iraq's WMDs, and you found the evidence to be massive but inferential.

Hayden: I think I said circumstantial.

Knott: OK. What happened there?

Hayden: We had tons of it, but it was circumstantial. It wasn't like ah, there it is, that's got to be it, click, all the tumblers move and the safe door opens. There was a lot of it, but again, it was inferential and circumstantial. It was: Why are they doing this? Probably because they need that for a nuclear weapons program. Why are they buying that material? Well, it's dual use, but I think it's for a nuclear weapons program, that sort of thing. I think the error in logic for everyone was we began with a hypothesis, they're doing this, and then we just looked for the evidence that supported the hypothesis. And if you do that, you can really build up a pretty good body of stuff.

I actually said that to Condi privately *before* we went to war. I said, "Condi, I've got a roomful of stuff on this, but it's all circumstantial."

Now, to round this out, Mike Morell, who is now the Acting Director at the CIA, when he was talking to President Obama about Abbottabad, said, "We had more circumstantial evidence that Iraq had WMD than we have circumstantial evidence that bin Laden is in that compound."

Knott: Wow.

Hayden: So it comes back to the craft, it comes back to the art form. This is what you do. Right here, wrong there.

Knott: There's been a lot of talk that people like "Curveball," I think was his code name, and some others, some Iraqi dissidents, were playing the Bush administration.

Hayden: Not the Bush administration. They were playing the Germans, and then we were getting information from the Germans, and we were probably giving the information too much credibility. Again, back to we were proving the hypothesis. When we look back on it, I think no one disagrees that it was mishandled. But I also point out that it's our fault, not the President's, not the Vice President's. This is tradecraft on the part of the intelligence community.

Leon Panetta had written a little bit when he was out of government about the administration cooking the intel, and the very last thing I said to him as I left the building was, "Leon, that's just not right. We just got it wrong."

Knott: How did he react?

Hayden: He kind of nodded OK. He had written some stuff out of government. You've got to stop saying it. It was our fault. We just got it wrong. Nobody pressured us.

Knott: Interesting. We've noted in our briefing book that when President Bush delivered his speech at West Point in June of 2002 outlining the Bush Doctrine and the legitimacy of preemption, Bob Woodward says that at this point you concluded that the invasion of Iraq was likely. Is that accurate?

Hayden: No. I don't know why he would say that. I mean there is a point. Woodward overwrites stuff, you know?

Knott: Have you been interviewed by him?

Hayden: Yes. In fact, for that book, under the recommendation of Steve Hadley. He pushes things together, all right? My strongest reaction from the West Point speech was oh, hell, that's really a burden for intel, isn't it? This guy is going to go to war on our word. That's really challenging. That was what I took from the speech. On the going to war, I figured out by mid to late fall of 2002 OK, we're going to war. I know what going to war looks like. We're going to war. No one called me. I wasn't privy to any meetings downtown. When you're doing something for three decades, you pick stuff up.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: It was just clear. So I began to make decisions at NSA. I think I spent about $400 million saying, "OK, we're going to war. Let's start moving things around."

Knott: I took us off track. I wanted to throw some more names at you for your reactions. You've talked about George Tenet. He remains something of a controversial figure, this notion that he had told the President that the WMD thing was a slam-dunk.

Hayden: I think George doesn't think he said that, but we did say they had WMD, and we parsed it with nukes, chems, bios, missiles, and UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles]. I was in the room when we all voted on the NIE, and there was broad consensus except for one item from two agencies that had to do with the aluminum tubes coming in. It was DOE [Department of Energy] and State, and I forgot who said what, but one of them said the aluminum tubes are not for their nuclear weapons program but agreed that there was a nuclear weapons program, and the other one said the aluminum tubes are not for a nuclear weapons program and we're not sure they have a nuclear weapons program. That was it. Those were the only dissents, so he had pretty much everyone in the room.

I like George. George is a friend. He's going to call me in about 45 minutes on another matter.

Knott: Can we listen in? [*laughs*]

Hayden: A good guy, tough job, incredibly different set of difficult circumstances. He's the guy running around town in the summer of 2001 saying, "Hey, they're coming." He's the one who declared war on al-Qaeda in 1999.

Knott: So he's running around town saying they're coming and people are not listening to him?

Hayden: Yes. Now, to be balanced, he wasn't saying they're coming here. He does say the system is blinking red, but the anticipation was against America, Americans, or American interests overseas, which you know, just habit of thought.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: It's East Africa, it's the *Cole*, that's the pattern that had been established. That August 6th briefing in the PDB [President's daily brief], al-Qaeda determined—give me your topic, I'll find the PDB article you want that should forewarn the President.

Knott: So too much has been made about the August 6th memo.

Hayden: Yes.

Knott: Do you think that was partisanship at work?

Hayden: Yes. We're going to see a replay of that with Benghazi, about was the President told? Was the President told about the deteriorating security situation?

Knott: Could I ask you, any recollections or reactions to John Ashcroft, the Attorney General?

Hayden: A friendly guy. I didn't have a whole lot of workings with him. The most important meeting I had with him was I think January of 2002, in which he and I and John Yoo went to the chief of the FISA court and explained the program to the FISA judge, Royce C. Lamberth. He did a broad overview, turned it over to me for the mechanics, and then turned it over to John Yoo to explain the legal theory behind it.

Knott: What about Don Rumsfeld?

Hayden: We're good friends now.

Knott: Not so much then?

Hayden: It wasn't awful, it wasn't bad, but he had his views. My first meeting with him was in the spring of 2001 after he had become Secretary. I think it was his nickel. He's pulling people in. I came in with a little slide deck, I'm going to explain to him what NSA does, and that was the first syllable I had exchanged with the Secretary of Defense since I had been Director of NSA. I had never talked to [William] Cohen.

Knott: Interesting.

Hayden: Not a word. So I went in and started laying it out, showed the org chart, and he stopped me and said, "Who do you work for?" I said, "I work for you and for George." He said, "Which line is dotted and which line is solid?" and I said, "They're both solid. I suppose if somebody in this building paid a lot of attention to me that would cause a problem, but it hasn't been an issue yet." I probably shouldn't have said that. [*laughter*]

Knott: How did he react?

Hayden: I don't know. But it was true. I hadn't talked to anybody in Defense. No one in Defense was giving me—there was an Assistant Secretary of Defense for C4I, Art Money, the Assistant Secretary. I think protocol-wise that was kind of even with me, and he didn't have much authority over me. So we were taking direction from the DCI [Director of Central Intelligence]. The DCI was the guy calling me every day saying do this, do that, and so on. So that was my first meeting with the Secretary.

In 2004, with the impending passage of the Intelligence Reform Act, Jim Clapper and I were concerned that this act was going to do away with the DCI, who actually had a fair amount of power because he was D/CIA [Director of the Central Intelligence Agency] also, and were going to give it to a DNI who wasn't going to be D/CIA. So he'd better put a lot of bricks in his rucksack in the legislation, otherwise we're going to end up with a weaker center than we had before. So we made that view known at a theoretically off-the-record session at Wye River with a bunch of senior DoD [Department of Defense] executives. It became known to the Secretary of Defense within about two hours of Clapper and me talking, so we were invited to lunch. More on the up and up than I'm describing. Steve Cambone, who is also a very good friend.

Knott: I wanted to ask you about him.

Hayden: He was the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, and Steve said, "If you guys feel that way, you've got to come in and tell the Secretary why you do, because he likes you guys." So we went in and had lunch. I used to be the negotiator, Panmunjom, with the North Koreans. Just reminiscing.

We came in, Clapper and I are on this side of the table, Cambone, [Paul] Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld over here. I thought, *The only thing missing here is the flags.* He kind of laid into us because genuinely he feared in a time of war losing control over NGA and NSA.

Knott: NGA?

Hayden: The National Geospatial Intelligence Agency. Jim was head of NGA and we both argued that we were going to end up worse off if we don't give this guy real authority. Jim argued more strongly than I did, which is quite surprising, given that he later became the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. He argued that they should actually be moved out of the Department of Defense. I didn't. I simply said that you've got to give the DNI real authorities, otherwise he's going to be feckless, because he's not going to have the informal authority that comes from running the CIA. Tenet would call me routinely and say, "Hey, my guys were just in here." "OK, George, I've got to go do this." Never was the antecedent of my guys his little community management staff. The antecedent of my guys was his CIA team. And so now the DNI is not going to have that team.

The last thing I said to the Secretary as we were leaving after having the nicest Mexican food—it was quite good, enchiladas—I said, "Mr. Secretary, this is going to be really bad unless you can be generous on this." That's the last thing I said to him. It didn't have that much of an effect. He did the right thing bureaucratically. He defended his interests.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: The DNI comes out with more than a brick shy of a load in doing what he had to do. That was the end of that, no more animosity. Now, in private life, he'd call me over. His offices are around here somewhere. We were chatting. He wanted maybe background for his book. I let him know that I was going to go to Albuquerque for a speech and then drive up to Colorado Springs for another speech. "Hey, you can stay at my house!" We stayed at his house in Taos, so a very friendly relationship. Between you and me, I think he appreciates people who push back, and I did. I wasn't chewing the carpet or anything, but kind of stood my ground.

Knott: His resistance to these reforms, would you say that damaged—

Hayden: Yes. He had Duncan Hunter. These are all honest people operating according to their own definition of what's best for the country. Duncan Hunter at the eleventh hour put a passage in the legislation that preserved the authorities of the Cabinet-level officials at the expense of the DNI.

Knott: Oh, I see, so that was at the behest of the Pentagon.

Hayden: Hunter was chair of the House Armed Services Committee.

Knott: I see. Did you have any dealings or any impressions of Douglas Feith?

Hayden: Very limited dealings.

Knott: You know the stories of him setting up a separate intelligence.

Hayden: I know. That's kind of in my view our failing with regard to WMD on steroids. In other words, "I got my idea, now where's the evidence?" So you have an offhand meeting between an Iraqi intelligence service official and an al-Qaeda member. Ah! Proof of an operational relationship between the two, whereas no, it's not. Intelligence services talk to a lot of people. You ought to see our log. It doesn't mean we're working with them.

Knott: Sure. You talked about Steve Cambone. Anything else to say about him?

Hayden: I like Steve. Steve was good. Steve went out of his way in the USDI job, the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, to be an honest and fair broker, and we remain very good friends. He and I, we're part of a team that just coauthored something for INSA, which is the Intelligence and National Security Alliance, on analysis of the 21st century, so we stay in touch. We go to the same church.

Knott: You become the first Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence. I believe I've got it, April 2005.

Hayden: That's about right.

Knott: Could you tell us about how that came about in terms of who gets in touch with you?

Hayden: The legislation recommends that—[phone rings]. Sorry, I don't mean to be rude.

Knott: That's fine.

Hayden: I was just making sure nothing else is happening out there. My wife would be slapping my hand if she were here.

The legislation strongly recommends—I don't think it requires—that the Director or the Principal Deputy have extensive military experience, so when the President chooses [John] Negroponte, they look in my direction for the PDDNI [Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence] job, and I'm selected on those grounds. By that time I had been at NSA for six years too, so there's a certain rhythm here. That was, at that point, the longest serving director, by far, in the agency's history.

Knott: Did you know John Negroponte prior to this?

Hayden: No. But again, we became pretty close. We're pretty good friends.

Knott: And your impressions of him?

Hayden: Obviously, he was a diplomat, and so he's bringing that background to the job. He brought a certain gravitas to it. The rule of thumb I had with regard to who was going to be the

first DNI is that when the press-op took place and the President walked out with the new DNI, most of America wasn't saying, "Who's that with the President?" This was somebody who already had some credentials.

Knott: That's a good point, sure. What were your priorities? What was on your agenda?

Hayden: The first thing was getting organized. The law was very unspecific as to what the structure should be, so we're doing white butcher paper taped up on the walls of the Old Executive Office Building saying, "How should we organize ourselves? How many deputy directors do we need? What should they be doing?" It was very fundamental stuff.

Knott: How much of this may have involved—there's concern at Langley, right, of the outcome?

Hayden: Oh, God, yes, and unfortunately there was significant and actually self-destructive pushback from Langley about this.

Knott: This is during Porter Goss' time there?

Hayden: It's Porter's time there, but it wasn't Porter, it was his deputy, Dusty [Kyle Dustin] Foggo, and Dusty waged guerrilla warfare against the DNI. Unwise. It just wasn't in the agency's interests.

Knott: I want to ask you about the CIA. There were points during the Bush administration where it almost seemed as if there were folks over in Langley who were undermining the President.

Hayden: I've heard that and I know that there are people in the Oval Office who believe that, and Josh Bolten told me that, and I said, "Josh, that's just not true. I have not found those people."

Knott: Well, Michael Scheuer, in his book.

Hayden: Mike, yes.

Knott: OK.

Hayden: Mike goes to the same church Cambone and I go to. There's this little Catholic thing going on.

Knott: Yes, it sounds like it. He says that as long as he was criticizing the Bush administration, he was given the green light to publish, anonymously at first. But when he started talking about some problems at the Agency, he was shut off.

Hayden: I just don't know that. I do find it amazingly weird that a serving CIA officer gets to write a book, but that's before my time and I don't know.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: And look, when Mike was out there talking when I'm Director, there was at least one

time. To Steve Kappes, my deputy, I said, "Steve, do you know Mike?" He said yes. "Could you call him and tell him he's not being helpful and that what he's saying out there is just not useful?" He said yes, and so he called him.

Knott: But it was the impression at least on the part of some folks in the White House that this was going on.

Hayden: Oh, yes. I mean, you've got the whole Paul Pillar story. Are you familiar with that?

Knott: No, actually.

Hayden: I think I'm getting this right. It's all before my time. Paul is giving what he thinks is an off-the-record story about the run-up to the war on Iraq. I've forgotten exactly what Paul said, but it was that they were intent on war with Iraq. It wasn't driven by the intelligence, or it was something like that. That actually got out, and of course the administration—Paul is now teaching at Georgetown.

Knott: Right.

Hayden: He's no longer with the Agency.

Knott: Well, even the whole—

Hayden: And actually, Paul was an advisor to the Obama campaign.

Knott: Oh, is that right?

Hayden: Yes. And still writes occasional—I like Paul, and he sent me nice notes on a couple of my op-eds and so on. For example, on the Benghazi thing, he says, "Oh, quit hyperventilating. This is not a big deal." "Oh, Paul, maybe a little bit."

Knott: The whole Valerie Plame [Wilson] thing gets dragged into this as well.

Hayden: It does.

Knott: Could you talk about that?

Hayden: Sure. I think it's tragic what happened to "Scooter" [Irve Lewis Libby]. You know, "Guilty of politics." Now, was he uncareful? Yes. Was he truthful? Comparing Scooter's story to Tim Russert's notes, how do you try to put a guy in jail for a jump ball like that? But it was an inherently ugly story. Scooter was tough. He played hard. Again, never mistreated me. I like Scooter, he's over at the Hudson Institute. I occasionally go to their events. We talk. "How are you doing? Are you writing fiction anymore?" He used to write novels.

Knott: Yes.

Hayden: I ask, "Are you doing that?" "Yes, I am." "Good, that's good." So I view it as tragic, not so deeply malicious. When the story came out, the Agency is almost compelled to file a crimes report. There are scores of crimes reports filed every year, probably three figures,

hundreds of crimes reports. Nothing ever happens to them.

I had this story in the *New York Times* that's got classified information. OK, thank you. But this one got legs because of the politics and what [Joseph] Wilson said, and then clearly the Vice President's office pushing back and trying to discredit him. And certainly he deserved to be discredited. I mean, he did not come back and say this wasn't happening. His report actually leans you just slightly in the direction, *Man, there's something here,* with the Iraqis and the Niger report and so on. But then he writes the op-ed—again, I wasn't there, but my understanding is that it was not totally consistent with what he had actually said in his report, except I'm sure there was a lot of anger. But George has almost no choice. He just has to file the crimes report.

Now the really tragic thing is Valerie Plame's relationship to the Agency was classified and confidential. That's the lowest rung on the ladder. I see stuff in the newspaper every day that's way up here and it just doesn't go anywhere. But the special prosecutor, Patrick Fitzgerald, pit bull. Judy Miller, time in jail, I mean it just goes on. I become personally involved when Valerie wants to write a book.

Knott: How do you become involved?

Hayden: I'm the Director.

Knott: Of course. OK.

Hayden: And now she submits the transcript for review. Everything I write has to be reviewed by the Agency. Even if it's bass fishing in the Monongahela River in Pittsburgh, it goes to the Agency for review. The PRB [publication review board] was fairly hard on the certain aspect that she—

Knott: PRB, I'm sorry?

Hayden: The publication review board. She wanted to reveal more of her previous status than they felt appropriate, and frankly it would have been an unprecedented step, so they said no and even recommended to her, "Why don't you fictionalize that account?" I cannot go into detail, but what someone of her background would do and meet with, and so on. She really dug in her heels and she wanted it as she submitted it. She did a bit of an end run. I had a couple members of the Senate call me and accuse me of bending to the Vice President and censoring this book. I said to the Senator, "Senator, the Vice President doesn't even know this book exists. He and I have never talked, and he doesn't even know it's here."

At one point I figured, *OK, I've got to show a little more ankle here*. So Steve Hadley and Mike McConnell and I would meet about every two weeks and go over stuff. At one of those meetings at the very end I said, "Steve, I've got one more thing for you. I'm going to tell you something. I do not want you to say a word. I don't want you to nod, I don't want you to—OK? I just simply want to inform you. Say nothing. Valerie Plame has submitted a book and we are reviewing it. We have some issues with it. It's our problem. That is all you need to know." He almost blanched and said, "OK, Mike, anything else?" "Thank you," and that was it. So that was the total involvement of the administration in this. I was trying to be very careful, a firewall.

Knott: Were you interviewed by Fitzgerald?

Hayden: No. I got the [John] Durham interview.

Knott: The what interview?

Hayden: Durham, the destruction of the videotapes.

Knott: Let's talk about that.

Hayden: No, let's go get a Coke. Anybody else want a Coke?

[BREAK]

Hayden: My wife keeps telling me that every time I start along these lines I actually remember a lot of that stuff.

Knott: Part of the reason we do this is not everybody does write a book, so we want to make sure we don't lose these recollections. Is a good way to boil down your title First Principal Deputy?

Hayden: That's it. Unfortunately it's very clumsy. My security detail calls me "P. Diddy." Does that help?

Knott: I like that.

Hayden: "Hey, it's the P. Diddy."

Knott: Are you heavily involved with the creation of the National Counterterrorism Center?

Hayden: No, but it may have come down to the legislation, and there was an evolution from the CIA-CTC to a community TTIC, Terrorism Threat Integration Center, under John Brennan of current fame, to the NCTC [National Counterterrorism Center]. I will tell you, despite my saying the DNI is a brick shy of a load and so on, if we don't blow it up it will work. I'm fond of saying the last thing we need is Congress lifting the hood and ripping out carburetor wires one more time. Despite the challenges to the DNI, I say strongly, publicly, and with confidence that the NCTC is an almost unalloyed success story.

Knott: Great.

Hayden: It's been under three very strong directors: [John] Scott Redd, Michael Leiter, and now Matt Olsen. You don't get the NCTC without the DNI. Let me explain the math.

Knott: Please.

Hayden: Under the old system the DNI would have been the DCI. The DCI is also the D/CIA [Director of Central Intelligence Agency]. OK, got the math there?

Knott: Yes.

Hayden: OK. Now we're jumping over here to the NCTC. The NCTC is a blend of foreign and domestic, intelligence and law enforcement information. There is no way the American culture puts a center that blends foreign and domestic, law enforcement and intelligence information under the nation's chief espionage chief. It will never happen. Maybe the price of getting the NCTC is creating the DNI, because the DNI doesn't run American espionage. That's my take on the NCTC. You take good Americans, put them in a place, focus them on a problem, they'll do good things, and things will get better the more they work.

I do think it's really quite good. So good, for example, that when asked I say that is a *very* good model for America's National Cyber Defense Center, because if you look at the head of the NCTC, he has throw weight in his own right. I know he kind of works for the DNI, but he's in the room with the President, and the President is saying, "Hey, Mike Leiter, tell me—" and the DNI is sitting there just kind of nodding or something, because the DNI can't be involved in this. So although he is technically under the DNI, he's got bureaucratic and intellectual authority because of the center. So again, *check*, that really is a good thing to come out of the legislation.

Knott: I'm going to use the P. Diddy. It's just a lot easier. When you're in your P. Diddy group—

Hayden: Or you can simply say "as Deputy."

Knott: When you're serving as Deputy, this whole question of who's going to brief the President, the new arrangement—

Hayden: Right. Never a question. It's in the law. The law says the Director of National Intelligence is the President's senior intelligence advisor, period.

Knott: But there was a question at Langley, wasn't there?

Hayden: They were just pissed.

Knott: Pissed off.

Hayden: There is no way it wasn't going to be Negroponte. It's in the statute that he will be the President's senior intelligence advisor, and so he's got to be in the Oval every morning. By the way, neither he nor the D/CIA briefed the President. The PDB briefer briefs the President. So the question is, who's going with the PDB briefer? Well, the President's senior intelligence advisor. How many times do we have to take this up?

Now, the Agency is reeling, all right? Keep in mind what's going on here. You've got yellow police tape around Dusty Foggo's office; you've got Porter with the goslings there. Familiar term to you?

Knott: No.

Hayden: Porter brought a half a dozen or so Hill staffers, affectionately known to the Agency as "goslings." They isolated Porter from the workforce. I know Porter, a very good friend. This layer just made it impossible. We had just gotten the exposé from Dana Priest on renditions, detentions, interrogations. "Battered child syndrome" would be the phrase I would use. And now, oh yes, one more thing. You're not in charge.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: And so there's a real psychic bill to pay. Do you know that Negroponte and Porter were classmates at Yale, undergrad?

Knott: I think we interviewed John Negroponte and I believe he said that.

Hayden: So there's some hope that you can build the personal relationship, but Porter was such a hands-off manager and Dusty was just being so obstructionist, up to and including vehicles. "No, you can't have vehicles." "What do you mean I can't have vehicles?"

Knott: Wow.

Hayden: Early on, Negroponte sent out a message, at my suggestion, to all the station chiefs in the room saying, "In addition to your current duties, you are also my representative as the DNI to your local services." If you step back from it a little bit, it should have been viewed as good news by the CIA. He wasn't picking the NSA guy out there; he was picking the station chief. And I'll be damned if Dusty doesn't send a message out saying, "Disregard first telegram until further notice." Just don't bother.

It was so bad that as Deputy, I actually went to CIA and had a meeting in George's conference room, now it's Porter's conference room, with senior leadership, saying, "Guys, you know me; we're not trying to screw you. The legislation says stuff has got to happen here, but come on." It actually was considered a nice gesture, the CO_2 almost went down a little bit, but it was just very difficult. It had an awful lot to do with the Agency's prestige in a very difficult period.

Knott: Was there ever a point where people were trying to talk to Porter Goss and say, "Hey, look"?

Hayden: Negroponte was.

Knott: And it just was not—

Hayden: Again, Porter was hands-off. It was hard enough for me when I got their replacement order, and by that time the worst had already happened. They had lost most of what they were going to lose.

Knott: So you get to the CIA in May of 2006?

Hayden: Yes, late May.

Knott: How are you received?

Hayden: Pretty well. I'm a reasonably known quantity, even though I stayed in uniform. I wore my uniform to work. It saved me tough decisions in the morning. Everyone else is in a coat and tie and I'm in a light, short-sleeved blue shirt.

Knott: Right, right.

Hayden: So I get sworn in. Well, first of all, I get the phone call. "Hey, Porter is going and the President wants you." I say, "I'm really happy where I am. I don't think I need to go do this." "Let me repeat the question." So I see President Bush on a Friday.

I get the phone call on a Thursday. Negroponte is up in New York. He calls me, and by this time, with the yellow police tape around the exdir's office, *OK, they're going to make some changes*. They call me and let me know that the President is going to ask me. So I walk out to my executive assistants, all of whom were exiled from CIA. Two—Mary Jane and Mary. I took them because they had nowhere else to go. These are people who are the immediate personal staff of the D/CIA, and when Porter came in he cleared them out. I don't think Porter did it. I think Pat Murray did it. I think this is gosling work, you know. These women had 35 years of service and nowhere to go. My chief of staff came in, who is an NSA guy who had been on loan to the CIA and then came to me as P. Diddy, and said, "Mary and Mary Jane are out of a job." I said, "We'll take them."

I went out to Mary and Mary Jane after this phone call from Negroponte and I said, "Find Steve Kappes." Steve had been fired by Porter, or actually Steve resigned over a whole bunch of things. Do you want me to explain what happened?

Knott: If you don't mind.

Hayden: Sure. The goslings are going crazy, so the Agency fights back and leaks a story on Mike Kostiw, who had been a former Agency officer, about stealing a pound of bacon 10 years ago. The CIA guys, you know what they do for a living, right? When they decide to play hard, they play hard. By the way, Kostiw was the best of the goslings. He's a great guy, he served well, but they sent Kostiw out. Pat Murray goes to Steve. It's Steve and [Michael] Sulick and I can't remember which one it goes to. It's the DO [Directorate of Operations /CIA] and the Deputy DO, and starts yelling at him and says he wants the Counterintelligence Center to find out who leaked this story. He wants them fired right away. Sulick says, "No, that's not what we do." Then Pat goes to Kappes and says, "You've got to fire Sulick." They are very good friends. Kappes says, "No, I'm not doing it." That was a Friday, and they came in on Monday and both quit.

Steve is very highly regarded. I go back out and say, "Find Kappes." They look at one another, *Hmm, what's this mean?* I get Steve on his cell phone in London at Charing Cross Station and I say, "Steve, did you ever consider being the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency?" And he says, "That would depend a bit on who was the Director." I said, "Well, Steve, I'm not at liberty to discuss that with you at the moment, but I am making the phone call." He says, "I'll get back to you." About two hours later he called me and he said, "I talked to Kathleen [Kappes]. Yes." He said OK.

I get invited into the President's office the next morning and I said that I'd like to bring Steve Kappes back. Kappes had worked directly for the President on the negotiations with the Libyans to get rid of their nuclear program. And he said, "Kappes, yes, he's a great guy. Is he coming back?" I said, "Yes, sir," and he said, "That's good." So we leaked Kappes' coming back as Deputy almost as soon as they leaked that I was going to be the Director. This is not a DNI takeover.

So then we go through D/CIA confirmation and I get sworn in in the West Wing and come up and have my first meeting. I said, "Blow into the paper bag, get your CO_2 levels back to normal. This stuff's over. Just go back to work. I'll take care of the other stuff outside." About halfway through the questioning—I had done it in Q&A [questions and answers], the place was full, "the Bubble" there, the auditorium, you had people almost in the rafters. Who's this new guy?

About halfway through the Q&A, a guy in the back asked me, "What do we call you?" Four stars, I've got ribbons and so on. I must admit I hadn't expected the question, and I simply said, "Whatever makes you feel comfortable." I didn't know it at the time, but that apparently was a big deal. I then went from the Bubble to my conference room. My whole staff was there, none of whom I had hired. I reminded them of that fact and said, "As far as I'm concerned, you're my staff, and if that's not good for you, you've got about 48 hours to come tell me. Otherwise, we're pressing on."

From the outset my approach was to settle these people down. I actually said in the Bubble, "No one sent me up here to blow anything up, so let's just settle down and we can go back to work."

Knott: During your confirmation hearings—and I'm trying to remember if it was these confirmation hearings or for the Deputy job. Were you pressed at all on the TSP [Terrorist Surveillance Program] questions?

Hayden: It's the D/CIA job. TSP doesn't become public until after I'm Deputy DNI.

Knott: OK. How much of—

Hayden: Not a whole lot.

Knott: Not a whole lot.

Hayden: There's some question sessions, so everybody gets the necessary B-roll for the—

Knott: The necessary what?

Hayden: B-roll, the newsreel roll for the folks at home. The final vote was 82-15.

Knott: And it's true that it's not as if Congress had not been briefed on aspects of this program almost from the start.

Hayden: The first brief was about six weeks after we started the program. We kept attendance tight, gang of four, chair and ranking and so on, but as the program goes on, by the time it hits the *New York Times* I think we're up to about 30+ members who had been briefed on the

program.

Knott: Is it frustrating, as an intelligence professional, to know that folks have been briefed, but then when something goes public, they're going to go out and beat the crap out of you?

Hayden: Sure, yes, it is, it is. I'll put a plug in here for Mike Rogers and Dutch [Charles Albert] Ruppersberger, chair and ranking, currently, of the HPSCI, who passed those opportunities up since they've been in those positions the last two years. When something blows up they say, "Well, we're going to look into it, but you know, this is hard work, and these are good people." So "We'll let you know, but we're going to go look into it," rather than "I'm outraged and we'll get to the bottom of this."

Knott: The same phenomenon occurred with the enhanced interrogation techniques.

Hayden: Oh, yes, and I wasn't there for almost any of that. I was the guy with the broom behind the elephants in that picture. Can you see?

Knott: Yes.

Hayden: As near as I can tell, the key members of Congress were briefed, and briefed quite thoroughly.

Knott: So coming over to CIA, your top priority is to sort of just settle things.

Hayden: Absolutely. Settle them down, get back to normal, get out of the newspapers.

Knott: Going through the briefing materials last night, you seem to put a lot of stock in this notion of public outreach, for lack of a better term. You do a Charlie Rose interview; you do some other media. Is that part of this whole attempt to calm the waters?

Hayden: It is. It's a little counterintuitive too, because I actually said in my confirmation hearing that the CIA needs to get out of the news as source or subject, and yet here I am talking somewhat to the press. Number one, I felt comfortable doing it, and number two, I'd learned at NSA that if the only time you're talking to the press is when you're accused of something, you're really in a hole. We wanted to create kind of a reservoir of knowledge about us in the press so they wouldn't just—I've got a lot of phrases to describe this. All stories about us were quickly walked to the darkest corner of the room, and you wanted people to pause a little bit before they did that. "Well, that could be true, but it doesn't sound like those guys. Let me make a call," that sort of thing. So we tried to do that. Another big issue. I had an advisory board. We keep the names confidential.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: You'd recognize them, the Carly [Carleton] Fiorinas of the world, folks like that. I had a Jesuit priest on it. I gave them three hard problems: one was our IT, back to the NSA problem, and one was recruiting. We didn't have a problem recruiting to look like America, we had a problem recruiting to look like the world so we could do our work. The third was transparency, and the question I gave them was, How do we conduct espionage inside a political culture that

demands more transparency from every aspect of national life every day? Anyway, talk about what you can talk about, don't talk about what you can't, and try to build up some reservoir.

Dave Petraeus is suffering a bit now, but he brought credentials and he brought persona to the Agency. "Oh, Petraeus said it. Wow, OK." That's not me, but I could build up a certain—the CIA seemed to be pretty candid about that. I was on *Meet the Press* with Tim Russert just about a month before he died, and I was very candid. We got wonderful, wonderful blowback on that from people saying, "Wow, he just kind of answered the questions."

Knott: This was pretty much your idea?

Hayden: Look, you can probably tell I'm a Steelers fan, right? If you've got good running backs, let me tell you what the game plan ought to be: Run the football. I had a wonderful public affairs office. George Little, who is now Leon's public affairs guy, was my number three.

Knott: Wow, OK.

Hayden: Mark Mansfield, Paul Gimigliano, and George. I talk to people now in the press and they say, "Oh, he's just awful. They don't tell you anything. You guys were helpful, 'If you go with that story you're going to be embarrassed.'" You don't have to quite tell secrets, but you know.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: I'm not going to warn you off of that, but they were skilled at that, and so I was playing to a strength with those guys. They said, "You ought to go on *Charlie Rose*. He lets you talk for an hour. That way you don't have to do it in a sound bite and you can explain."

Knott: Sure. When you become—

Hayden: By the way, the Charlie Rose thing was so good. The guy said, "Charlie, we're at an hour." He said, "Keep taping." He actually did it in two days.

Knott: Nice. When you become DCI, how frequently are you engaged with the President?

Hayden: Good question. A lot. Officially, religiously, without exception, once a week, Thursday morning, but that wasn't the only time. You're at NSC [National Security Council] meetings or special meetings, or Hadley wants you to come down and so on. The Thursday morning meeting was in addition to the PDB, and what you did there was to update the President on covert action and sensitive collection. It was an operational meeting and I got that every Thursday, so plenty of exposure. In that sense, the Agency need not have worried, that C still stands for what it used to stand for, and you're down there a lot.

Knott: How much is Iraq dominating other discussions?

Hayden: By the time I'm down there?

Knott: Yes.

Hayden: I get there in May.

Knott: I believe the surge is—

Hayden: Next January, January of '07. I get there in May. Iraq looks like one of Dante's [Alighieri] circles of hell. I had a Monday, Wednesday, Friday evening meeting with a lot of people, not hundreds, but 20, so it's not just key staff. Monday and Wednesday are terror, and Friday is Iraq. At one of those Friday meetings there was some young analyst who came in and briefed me on a white paper they're about to publish that Iraq's at civil war. That's a politically loaded term. I said, "Let's go to Iraq. Let's make sure we know what we're talking about."

So we went to Iraq; they came with me. We visited a lot of folks. I left from there and I went on to Kabul and Islamabad, and then I came back and asked, "Where's the paper?" "Oh, you still want the paper?" Yes! So they came back and they decided on their own not to call it a civil war on the grounds that if there are five academics in the room we would have seven definitions of what constitutes a civil war, we don't need to play word games. Let's just describe to the President what's happening.

I took that briefing down to the President personally in late August and said, "Mr. President, I just got back from Iraq and it's very bad." It had an emotional impact on the President.

Knott: It did?

Hayden: Yes, I could tell. He wasn't mad or yelling back at me, but somebody he liked and trusted was saying this was very bad.

Knott: Had he not heard this?

Hayden: No, I think he had, but now he had another observer, kind of fresh eyes. Immediately after the midterms we go into a full-court press on what to do, and I mean it was full court. Kappes and I would trade off. I'd do the morning, he'd do the afternoon, and vice versa. We were constantly meeting, and out of that comes the surge. We offered cautions about the surge. We said we agree that five brigades of professional, nonsectarian combat power will make Baghdad safer. It's going to push the violence down, but that's not your endpoint. Your endpoint is political change, a government that's more inclusive, and so on. I said that Nouri al-Maliki is a low-probability shot. He spent his whole life in exile, a conspiratorial view of the world, not inherently inclusive in the way he approaches politics. The President listened to it and he understood, but then he decided we're going to surge.

I think the President took our warning to heart, because he had a videoconference with Maliki about every two weeks, kind of doing the coaching and mentoring. How's it going? You really need to be doing this, you need to be doing that. So for the fall of '06 and January of '07 this was really very intense in Iraq. [phone rings] Can I get this?

Knott: Absolutely.

[BREAK]

Hayden: We're back to where's the outrage. Let me elaborate on that because that's a *Newsweek* article written by a guy who was really wired at the Department of Justice. They actually leaked those damn documents and they actually—I know it's [Eric] Holder all right, but they just say a senior justice official decided to release the documents, and now they're quoting him and wait for the outrage to begin.

Knott: Wow, yes.

Hayden: And they manipulated the release. They actually began to feed the press stories on Friday, even though the declassification was on Monday. So the Agency is like this, because it's still secret.

Knott: Sure, sure.

Hayden: So they can build up the whole press story. And again, the national reaction was the one I gave you that says, "I'm sorry, is this the whole list? Is there more here? Am I missing something?" Which was good. All right, so where are we?

Knott: Well, let's keep talking about this. We were talking about enhanced interrogation techniques, your attitude toward them.

Hayden: I didn't do it, all right? Unfortunately, I got to be the spokesman but I didn't do it.

Knott: Right.

Hayden: I mean I'm coming in afterward. Now, we did have a program while I was Director. We had 13 techniques historically; I reduced it to six. Four of them happened to me in Catholic grade school. One, two, three, four. Now that's two-thirds of the enhanced interrogation techniques. Facial grasp, attention grasp, insult slap, the tummy slap. The other two were sleep and diet. So I'm not the guy. My wife insists that people put that on the record.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: I'm not the guy, but I am the guy who comes afterward and then has to describe it. I am very careful with my words, but I will give you the full treatment here.

Knott: Please.

Hayden: Honest men can differ. I got it. If you don't want your government doing that, just say so. Now, some people think you may be buying some risk, OK? No, I just don't want you doing it. I said, "God bless you, we come from the same political tradition, I understand that perfectly." The argument I would make—by the way, SSCI got a report that's going to come out here. I don't know.

Knott: The Senate Select Committee?

Hayden: Yes. One week, one month, one year, I don't know. They've been working on it for four years, and it's only the Dems. The Republicans left. So it's going to come out and say it didn't work? I guess honest men can differ about that, but there was no one inside the CIA. I got a graduate degree on this in the summer of 2006. It's all I did. You asked when did Iraq heat up. Late August on. Late May to late August, it was just EITs [enhanced interrogation techniques] and renditions, detention. What are we going to do? What should I tell the President? What tools do I have to have, and so on. There was no one inside that Agency who doesn't believe, to their creator, that this really helped. And so the sentence I give is, "Look, you just want to say, 'I don't want you doing it. It's inconsistent with who we are as a people.'" I said, "God bless you. I can understand that, but you don't get to say, 'and it didn't work anyway.' You've got to buy the risk."

Knott: So there's no doubt in your mind?

Hayden: No, there really isn't. There's no doubt in the minds of people who did it.

Knott: So the road to Abbottabad begins here. Is that accurate?

Hayden: I have actually chosen my words very carefully on this, and there were some op-eds out there. One important thread, not determinative in itself, because none are, but one important thread to Abbottabad begins with knowledge about the couriers, which begins with three detainees, all of whom had enhanced interrogation techniques used on them. I can tell you that that remains the Agency's formal view. And what's very revealing is when they asked Leon about this.

Knott: Leon Panetta.

Hayden: Yes. After it. He agreed. He said yes, it provided important information. They asked Jay Carney, who's got a dog in the fight but not this dog. In fact, he would be spring-loaded to go the other way, and the best he could say to the question, "Did information from EITs—" yada-yada-yada, and he said, "There are many threads of intelligence that led to this success." Which is coded for "I don't want to admit it, but yes." But even I am careful with my words.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: Simply saying an important thread, but not the only thread.

Knott: Sure, sure. How much of your time did you have to spend on this issue and the rendition question, the black sites?

Hayden: All summer of 2006. I went down in August to Steve and said, "OK, Steve, here's the plan."

Knott: Steve Hadley.

Hayden: Hadley. "Let's empty the black sites. We are not the nation's jailers, we're the nation's

intelligence service. We don't need to be keeping people for years. Now look, Steve, I know the intelligence value of these people *never* gets to zero, but by and large, we've squeezed this thing about as much as we can expect to." So there are other reasons now that become more compelling, which are, What's the public narrative? What is it this nation is doing to defend itself? And so here's what I think we ought to do. Let's empty the black sites. Those we can get to Guantanamo, we'll send to Guantanamo, those that will not go to Guantanamo, we will send them to their home countries or countries that have an interest in them for counterterrorism reasons, with all of the caveats about how they'll be—it's really a sweet spot. You've got to get a caveat that they won't be mistreated and you've got to get a caveat that they won't be released. So, not easy, not easy.

Knott: Yes, sure.

Hayden: On Labor Day weekend 2006 I get a phone call, and it says, "Elvis has left the building," which means there was a C-17 en route to Guantanamo with 14 al-Qaeda senior leaders. That allowed the President then, on September 6th, to go out and say we didn't close the sites. The press frequently says that the sites were closed in 2006. No, they weren't. We made it very clear we weren't closing them. We were emptying them, but we were keeping the option on the table.

I put two people through black sites, Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi and Muhammad Rahim, one an Iraqi, the other an Afghan. They're both now in Guantanamo. We changed the procedures. We put time limits on how long we would keep someone. We would never bring anyone through the front door without a concept of where the back door was and where they would go. We reduced the techniques from 13 to six. We told Congress what all the techniques were. I attempted to engage Congress in a conversation as to do you think these are the right six. This is 2006 now.

Knott: The political climate has changed.

Hayden: Dems in control of both houses, everyone's pointing to the 2008 election, the guy in the White House is badly weakened, and they've got a CIA Director coming up here saying, "Hey, I want you to agree with me on how we want to—"

Knott: Not going to happen.

Hayden: Not going to happen. It was awful. So that's it.

Knott: I believe shortly before you take over at Langley you have this—I'm not sure you're involved in this at all, but this whole incident with Mary McCarthy.

Hayden: Well, before me. Mary apparently talked to Dana Priest, fed her some stories. Porter went real hard over when the story leaked. He demanded polys from a large number of the workforce.

Knott: Polygraphs.

Hayden: Yes. Mary comes up "deception indicated," and Mary is retired, and that's it. She was just retired, that's all. Now, it's a little ignominious—get your stuff, put it in a paper bag, walk

out of the building—but no further harm was done to her, and frankly, I'm fine with that. I get my own case of anger when some things are in the press, but you know, life doesn't come at you in right angles. We're a pretty open society, we talk about a lot of stuff, and where that line is it's hard to tell.

Knott: Is this an ongoing problem?

Hayden: It's a consistent problem, yes. We live in a transparent society and we're a secret espionage service. Go figure. So yes, it's constant. Now, so what do we do? Oh, I've got it. We'll change American political culture. So the answer is we just have to deal with it. My way of dealing with it is talk about what you can talk about and protect the rest.

The most successful covert action I conducted while director no one knows about. Now, when everybody was talking about these targeted killings and whoever is doing that or so on— there's some stuff you don't know.

Knott: So the successes go unheralded.

Hayden: If they go heralded, they're not successes.

Knott: OK. Let's talk about the UAVs and the use of drones.

Hayden: I need to be careful here because our government has never confirmed that these are being flown by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Knott: OK.

Hayden: It's a well-kept secret as to who's doing this.

Knott: Can we go down this path at all?

Hayden: Let's try it. Give it a shot.

Knott: I mean it's proven to be, particularly during the Obama years—

Hayden: OK, let's talk about this. So in late 2007 we analytically are getting alarmed at CIA because we're seeing training camps resurrect a la Afghanistan—smaller, but a la Afghanistan in Pakistan. A lot of the student body are people who wouldn't cause you to raise your eyebrow if they were next to you going through the passport line at Dulles in your latest flight from the United Kingdom. And so we really began to talk to the President, and I used my Thursday morning meetings to continue to say, "Mr. President, we're seeing this." I probably never said this to the President. Even if I didn't, it was the message, and it was simply this: "Mr. President, knowing what we know now, there's no explaining our inaction after the next attack takes place."

Knott: OK.

Hayden: All right? There's no defense. So we pushed and pushed and pushed. In July of 2008,

the President agreed to give CIA enhanced authorities to do additional things, with a little more headroom, a little more discretion. Beginning in July of 2008, the *Long War Journal*, which is a very good website that talks about terrorists, do or die, sees a dramatic spike in frequency of key al-Qaeda leadership dying. The point I want to make, because you said especially under President Obama, is that if you normalize the *Long War Journal* reporting for these events for the last six months of 2008, but normalize it for a 12-month period, it is precisely the same number of those events in 2009. It's only in 2010 that there's a knee in the curve, and one speaking theoretically could perhaps create a hypothesis that that's the product of things that having been in the pipeline, are now available to new folks.

Knott: All right, very good.

Hayden: And so it was a conscious decision to be more aggressive, believing that we had the political space to do it in our politics and in Pakistan's politics.

Knott: I was going to ask you about the [Anwar] al-Awlaki hit that takes place during President Obama's administration involving an American citizen being killed in a drone strike. What kind of reaction do you think that would have produced had that occurred during the Bush years?

Hayden: The bonfires would still be burning in Lafayette Park. I said this yesterday in Pittsburgh. I was talking about terrorism for the Jamestown Foundation. I went to the football game and stayed for the speech, and I said there has been incredible continuity between the 43rd and the 44th Presidents, despite the campaign rhetoric in 2008. I thank God for that, that's a blessing.

Now, I've got some complaints. We don't detain anybody anymore, put interrogations aside. Interrogate someone? We don't capture anybody. I think that's a big deal, but other than that, amazing continuity. And I said, you know, in a perverse way, if you're really focused on the War on Terror, maybe it's a good thing the President was reelected. Let me tell you why. I actually wrote this to Governor Romney as part of the transition. I said if the Governor is elected and all he does is merely sustain the current policies of the Obama administration, all hell is going to break loose.

There is so much pent-up frustration on the left about targeted killings, indefinite detentions, military commissions, state secrets, no habeas to prisoners at Bagram, and so on. The left is just—in fact, it may even spill out in a second Obama administration, but it clearly would explode in a Romney administration, and so you get a bearable, survivable, national consensus because a liberal Democratic President is doing these things as opposed to a conservative or a moderate Republican.

I have actually used the line. I was being interviewed by the *New York Times* and I used that bonfire line, and Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti said, "Can I use that?" I said, "No, it's a little too inflammatory, no pun intended." It's remarkable the things the President has been able to do that if George Bush would have done, would just be—I mean to do this Libya thing with Bush as President. Have George Bush say, "This is going to be a thing, it's not a war, it doesn't apply." Or have George Bush say, "I do think Congress is in a recess. I'm going to make some recess appointments." Sorry, I'm betraying my prejudices here, but it's just like, What are you doing?

Knott: That's fine, sure. I had asked you earlier to comment on some of the personalities in the Bush administration and I left out two key names that just came to me. One is Condoleezza Rice.

Hayden: Condi and I met in 1986 when I was a lieutenant colonel and she was an intern on the Joint Staff. I don't think we've ever become really close, but we've been acquaintances since that time. She was on '41's NSC staff, as was I, and so I think she and I had a real comfort level in talking with one another.

Knott: We had a mention somewhere in our briefing book of her asking for help from you in terms of—it was following the revelation of, I believe, the warrant—

Hayden: Yes, it's the *New York Times* having the story of the TSP.

Knott: Yes, yes.

Hayden: Remember I mentioned I talked to Phil Taubman, the bureau chief, and Risen, in Condi's office.

Knott: OK, gotcha.

Hayden: It was a late and stormy night in October, it was raining and we were in there, it was dark, and none of us were unaware that we were going to elect a President in three weeks, and this would be a big story.

Knott: Sure. What about Colin Powell?

Hayden: Not much contact at all. He gave me a wonderful recommendation when Negroponte called him up about, "Hey, I want Hayden to be my Deputy. What do you think?" But we've never been close.

Knott: The perception from the outside, and again, you may not feel comfortable answering this one, but the constant combat between Rumsfeld and Powell and their people.

Hayden: I saw that, but like you, only from the outside. I never saw it from the inside. Keep in mind, in the first administration I'm not down in the Oval very much. It's not until 2005 and the Deputy DNI job that I get down there.

Knott: I don't think we specifically touched on yet the SWIFT [Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication] program and the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program. Could you talk about that revelation and any role you may have played?

Hayden: I wasn't central to that, but I know the background and I know what the *New York Times* ombudsman finally said about it. Oh, gee, that's very nice he feels bad about it after letting the story out.

Knott: It was hard to see what the news, what the—

Hayden: Well, OK, so here's one for you. In this outreach program, I tried with the press. I'm

up in the editorial room of the *New York Times*. It's me; Bob Deitz, who was my counselor, not my general counsel; Mark Mansfield, who was my public affairs officer; and I'm sitting across the table from Bill Keller, the managing editor, and who's the woman up there?

Knott: Jill Abramson.

Hayden: Jill Abramson. So we're having this lunch. We went out to Andrews, flew up to LaGuardia. The only thing we're doing is having lunch at the *New York Times* and it's a part of *Hey, we're not bad people here, you know.* Keller, by the way, still calls me. We still have conversations. I would not call him a friend the way I call Taubman a friend, but he calls me and we have respectful conversations saying, "Mike, help me understand this," sort of thing.

So we're in there and we had to walk down the hall looking at the—"Oh, there's the Pulitzer Prize for the Terrorist Surveillance Program, there's the Pulitzer Prize for—" you know. [*laughter*] They were there. So we're talking and it's pretty candid, and finally I said, "Bill, I've got to ask you. Look, even I know there's a civil liberties quotient with the Terrorist Surveillance Program. I got it. I knew it was very sensitive. We knew it was always going to end up on your front page. That's why we did it so carefully. I don't think you should have done it, but I understand. What are you doing with the SWIFT Program? Because everything you used to justify going with the TSP Program—you didn't tell enough members of Congress, you didn't tell Congressional staff, who are apparently the brains up there, you did it without a warrant and you didn't have outside oversight—all those things actually are part of the SWIFT Program." As God is my judge, he then said, "Well, the President was a lot weaker by then."

Knott: Wow.

Hayden: We all got back on the airplane and said all right, what did he say? We all agreed, he said, "The President was a lot weaker by then."

Knott: That's kind of amazing. Let's shift gears a bit. Could you talk about the CIA's work in terms of—and again, I know there are certain limitations here, but in terms of the Iranian nuclear program. How much of your time was devoted to that?

Hayden: A lot from about midsummer of '07 to the release of the NIE in December of '07. This is very curious. I usually get slapped from my left side, and this is where all the bruises are on the right side.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: I mean people are coming after you. First of all, they blame [Vann H.] Van Diepen and one other guy who were NIOs [National Intelligence Officers] or something and they were the revenge of the analysts after the Iraq thing. I pointed it out. I said, "Hey, they didn't write that. My guys wrote that. I know their names and I'm not telling you their names, but they wrote it." Kappes and I had them in our offices for two successive afternoons playing stump the dummy.

These kids may be right and they may be wrong, but they sure do believe what they wrote, and they had good answers for this. They were drafting the NIE to bring it up-to-date. It was a 2003 NIE and they were going to bring it up-to-date in the summer of '07. They were pretty much

going to give you the same conclusions the '03 one did, which was Iran is determined to build a nuclear weapon. But they were going to soften the confidence levels a little bit, not because they had contrary evidence, but simply because the evidence was older, the evidence had aged. So it was just kind of well, then we're back to the Al Kibar high-confidence meeting. It doesn't mean they didn't believe it. Let me just tell you how big my stack of evidence is.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: Then we began to get additional information that put the project on hold, and the most I can say to you is that the decision to say that they had stopped this narrow aspect, which was truly weaponization, not fissile material, not delivery systems but the weaponization, the miniaturization and so on, was based on the evidence of absence, not the absence of evidence.

Knott: OK.

Hayden: So we went with it, clearly an unhappy story for the administration, because it seemed to take the wind out of their sanctions' sails. Much to the credit of the administration, the President agreed, almost insisted, that we make the findings public, because over the course of the years the findings of the earlier estimate had been largely made public. Iran is determined to have one and now you're shaving points off of that, so he just felt on conscience he had to say that. It made it harder for the Bush administration to do what everyone knows had to be done. Frankly, I think over the long term it's made it easier for the Obama administration, because when the American intelligence community is the most conservative voice, you can't claim the Americans are hyping the threat. Now, you take a dip there for a year or two because of the estimate, but when you've got the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] actually tending to be a little more accusatory than American intelligence, it strengthens your argument.

Knott: So you didn't get any irate phone calls from the Vice President and his office?

Hayden: No, no.

Knott: Saying hey, what are you guys doing?

Hayden: Let me be clear. When we briefed him on it, I would say he was disappointed. But no, not at all, not a syllable.

Knott: Is North Korea very much on your plate?

Hayden: Yes it was, and it was on our plate for two reasons. One, there was a pretty strong rush late in Bush's second term to get an agreement, and these guys are grievous sinners with regard to Al Kibar as the Syrians. Now remember, we were going to keep Al Kibar secret, and the Israelis go and bomb it but don't claim they do it. You had people out there in the press saying, Who did that? What the hell happened? I don't know. And so we're staying silent about it. We're not commenting on it at all, and this is creating a problem because you've got Al Kibar and the North Koreans—it's the most grievous act of proliferation in recorded history, building a Yongbyon-style reactor in their country. It can't get any worse than that.

Knott: OK.

Hayden: And yet now we're negotiating an agreement with the North Koreans on their nuclear program. We know they did that, the Congress does not, or no more than eight members of Congress know. And so there were these countervailing tensions; don't dance on the grave of the Al Kibar strike because Bashar [al-Assad] may go do something stupid. Don't say what you know, but if you don't say what you know, we're rushing toward a nuclear agreement with a country that's done a really bad thing, and Congress had a right to know that.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: So you have countervailing lines. By January of '08, the Agency decided the lines had crossed and that the argument for making Al Kibar public overwhelmed the argument for making Al Kibar secret. It took us until April to finally win that argument and we went public in April. That's one aspect of North Korea. In addition, we were adamant that without very invasive verification procedures we would make no claim that we, through intelligence, could verify a North Korean nuclear program. There was no way we were going to get those invasive verification protocols from the—so we were essentially saying, "Don't look to us to verify this," which again was an unwelcome story to some, mostly in State, not in the White House.

Knott: How much of your time as Director was spent dealing with the folks up on the Hill?

Hayden: A lot. I made a conscious decision that one very important aspect of our transparency was the Hill. So in September of 2006 we go full Monty [completely exposed] on the detention interrogation program. We made available to them everything except the location of the sites, and since the President didn't know the location of the sites, I didn't feel compelled to tell the Congress, and they didn't make a big deal about that. They did the modest posture, but they really didn't want to know.

So we set indoor records. We'd chart all of our dialogue with Congress, and all of our numbers were off the chart. Hearings, private briefings, Congressional notifications, informal notifications, they're all recorded. The columns for the 110th Congress are like this, and the normal columns were down here. Didn't do a damn bit of good.

Knott: Why do you say that?

Hayden: It was designed to create a dialogue, to get Congressional buy-in for what we were doing, and they were so fractured, so politicized by that point, that we didn't. This is about getting support, it's about playing team ball.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: Actually, the phrase I used was, "This has got to be America's program, not the CIA's program, not the President's program." It just didn't work. Near the end of my conversations with Leon Panetta I said to him, "Leon, I think I'm leaving you a good Agency, hitting on most cylinders most days, except for Congress. I've tried everything I know and we're just no further along. Now, with your background, having been a member, this may be an area where you really can make a difference."

Knott: Do you know if he was able to make a difference?

Hayden: Yes, he was. He did well on the House side. He didn't work the Senate very much at all, but having been a former House member and knowing the people there, he worked it very hard.

Knott: Do they make it difficult for you to do your job?

Hayden: In the 110th Congress, yes. Now look, I get oversight. I understand the constitutional need for it, but it's inherently difficult. If I'm drawing you concentric circles of executive prerogative, I've got intelligence, I've got human intelligence, I've got the CIA, I've got covert action. Covert action is way out there on the edge of executive prerogative, and a constitutional system that intentionally sets up tension between the two political branches. And so it's just spring-loaded. Then when it's spring-loaded in a heightened political season with a weakened President, and the Congress, in both houses, is controlled by the opposition party, and the Congress knows the war is going to be a Presidential election issue—

Knott: Yes, sure. Do you ever get pressure from the Hill to purchase particular programs or that kind of thing?

Hayden: I never did. That's more over in the defense budget, and they don't have to pressure us, they just put it in the bill.

Knott: All right. When you think back on your days as Director, do you have a particular achievement that you're most proud of?

Hayden: Yes. The proudest one remains secret because it's so difficult.

Knott: Oh, that's right. You did mention that.

Hayden: But other stuff—I think I normalized the Agency, got it back to center line, kind of comfortable with itself in doing what it could do. I felt good about that. It wasn't easy. There were lots of pressures, not especially from the White House, but it was public, Congressional mostly. I did have to live with this White House. You've got some people out there in the legislative branch trying to get their revenge. I actually said to Josh, "Josh, this is not true." He said, "Mike, that may not be true, but don't bring it up." [*laughs*] I got it. Josh was simply telling me it was an article of faith.

Knott: Sure. Did you spend a lot of time with foreign intelligence heads?

Hayden: Yes.

Knott: That kind of coordination activity?

Hayden: Yes. Between the two of us, Kappes and me, we went to over 50 countries in 31 months, and we had a lot more than 50 come and visit us. And a lot of those 50 we went to a lot more than once. So yes, a very important part of the job is dealing with liaison services.

Knott: How much confidence did these foreign intelligence services have in the CIA particularly in terms of leaks and media exposure?

Hayden: It is a corrosive thing when information leaks, and it makes other nations hesitant to cooperate with us.

Knott: So a lot of times are you trying to reassure?

Hayden: Yes, you are, and trying to point out the mutual benefit. And frankly, we're big and powerful and rich and they're not, and so why don't we—you know, you have a lot to offer.

Knott: Right.

Hayden: They're not rich or big or powerful, but they're focused, linguistically agile, culturally knowledgeable. It's a good relationship. It can be difficult at times. You can't help a partner do something or suggest a partner do something that you're not allowed to do yourself, and so they're operating under different legal regimes than you are. Their law allows them to do some things you're not allowed to do. Their security situation has convinced their government to have them more forward leaning than our government has allowed us to be. I try to say it that way because I'm saying there's not a purely ethical plane here, it's just different, and so you have to be careful what you're sharing and the purposes to which it might be put.

Knott: I see, I see. Are there particular foreign intelligence services that you have a certain amount of admiration for?

Hayden: The Aussies are number one.

Knott: Really?

Hayden: Yes. They're big, big enough to matter, and they're easy to work with. Culturally, they're most like us. There's a little of an urban legend about the British. No, it's the Aussies. The British are good. John Scarlett was my counterpart at MI6. John and I are still good friends. He and I were on the phone on Sunday, just talking about some stuff. We've got a lot of good partners, but if you ask me, for a combination of competency, size, and ease, it's the Aussies.

Knott: Where do the Israelis fit in the picture?

Hayden: The most volatile combination of caution and intimacy you can possibly imagine. [*laughter*]

Knott: Caution due to—

Hayden: There are no permanent friends, only permanent interests, as someone has said previously. I can't get into detail about partnerships.

Knott: I understand.

Hayden: But let me just offer you the hypothetical. Do you think Mossad's legal authority mirrors mine, or do you think they have more? [*laughter*]

Knott: Point taken. All right, for the concluding questions, I would like to focus more on

President Bush. There's a perception out there in some quarters that this was not a particularly intelligent person. Could you comment on that?

Hayden: Very fact-based, very—I'm looking at Bush's second term. A very common occurrence, "Hey, that's not what you told me six months ago."

Knott: Oh, really?

Hayden: Oh, yes.

Knott: So a good memory?

Hayden: Oh, yes. Incredibly interactive. Josh hit upon something that Mike—he loves the intel group. We did it six days out of seven and it was live. You've seen the recent commentary about whether or not it's Memorex for President Obama. Marc Thiessen is the one who wrote that, and I said, "Marc, be a little careful here. The President has got to decide the style in which he learns. Some people read. Some people learn orally. You know you've got to give some slack here." President Bush was an interactive learner. So Josh hit upon something called "deep dives" for the last two years of the administration. The PDB is a bit better than CNN headline news in terms of depth, but it is never BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation]. Josh was afraid that the President was so reliant on this that he wasn't getting enough depth on some issues.

How do we do depth but respect the President's time? We hit upon this concept where we would give him the longer articles, magazine length, not newspaper length, *Atlantic* length, not *Washington Post* length the day before. He would read that overnight and then he would come into the Oval and we'd talk about that article. In the PDB process he's paging through the book, reading while you were talking. We thought, *Oh, these are too long*. Give it to him the day before, he reads it the night before he comes in. And then rather than having the PDB briefer brief him, we brought the authors of the article in, so it was an opportunity for him to be face-to-face with the analyst. It was wonderfully successful.

Knott: Interesting.

Hayden: They came away with a deeper understanding of what the President needed, how the President thought about issues, and so on. Most of the time the briefers were CIA, and very often I would talk to them the night before. The article is written, it's gone, the President's got it. They give me a courtesy copy and then I say, "OK, have you done this before?" "No, sir."

I start drawing the Oval Office for them and I say, "There are two chairs in front of the fireplace. Don't sit there, but do sit on the couch, right next to the Vice President. It's the Vice President, President, you sit here, Hadley is going to be over here, you sit here. Now, what's your most important sentence?" And they go ba-ba-ba-ba. "No. What's your most important sentence?" Ba-ba-ba-ba. "No, no, *sentence.*" They give me a sentence. I say, "Good, because that's all you're going to get. Let me tell you how this works. You start talking and this man starts interrupting, and now you're in a scrum, and so you've got to be able to present this in the dialogue, not in the monologue, because he is going to be very interactive." That's not somebody who is disinterested, that's not somebody who is unintelligent, and certainly not somebody who is unknowledgeable.

Knott: I'm asking you to engage in conjecture here, but why do you think that image took hold of this man not being quite up to the job or not particularly intelligent?

Hayden: I'm not the first one to tell you this. The President looks one way in front of five thousand people, another way in front of five hundred, and another way in front of five. But in that group of five or ten, he's just very astute and knowledgeable.

Knott: We conduct these interviews in the hopes that 50, 100, 150 years from now, it will help people get a picture of a particular Presidency. Did you ever see any flashes of anger, any range of emotions on the part of this President?

Hayden: The range of emotion when I came back from Iraq and gave him the somber story was sadness, concern.

Knott: Did he seem deflated?

Hayden: No. Anger and concern. I remember one time—and I tell this story publicly on myself—we were talking about Iran and he asked a bunch of questions. We got some in and I figured, *This is a great day. I'm glad this is over.* I'm leaving, but it's shaped in such a way you've got to walk toward his desk to get out, to come back, and so he intercepts me and he stops and he says, "Mike, on Iran—" and he just starts poking me. We had a nice relationship, so this was fairly unusual. He says, "Mike, I don't want any President ever to be faced with only two options when it comes to Iran." I told that to David Sanger for his book, and unfortunately, David overwrote it, as in therefore the President was opting for covert action.

We weren't talking about covert action at all. He was saying, "Look, guys, I need some help here because at the end of the day if we don't figure out something to do, some President, maybe not me, is going to be at the fork in the road with the sign saying, 'Do something or do nothing.'" That's all that was about, and Sanger wrote it into a big, "Ah, he opted for covert action." No, he didn't. But yes, an emotional moment.

Knott: OK. If his intellect was not particularly appreciated or it was misunderstood outside of a small group of folks, were there other things about either him or his Presidency you think were misunderstood?

Hayden: Yes. He was very careful. Some said we were just lawless, you know? Look, we really lawyered up, mountains, stacks of information as to what you can or can't do with a prisoner. You may disagree with the decision, but you can't say he's lawless. I'm betraying a little bit of prejudice here. President Obama just says—I'm sorry, I'm skipping a lane here. "Let me tell you the limits of religious liberty. Let me tell you what constitutes a religious organization." I can't imagine George Bush doing that, I just can't, and so the rule of law—he pushed up against that edge really hard, but then again we all thought we were in extraordinary circumstances. But it was never disregard, never at all. Never "I'm going to do this on my personality. People are going to accept this because of who I am." He didn't.

Knott: Would he press you on where's bin Laden?

Hayden: Yes, routinely.

Knott: "How are we doing in terms of—" routinely?

Hayden: The last year of the administration I'd walk in for that Thursday morning meeting and he would just look at me, "So where are we, Mike?"

Knott: So he would have liked to have seen that happen on his watch.

Hayden: Oh, yes, you bet. The only good news in the story is that the plotline began in late 2007.

Knott: Have you met him since his Presidency came to an end? Do you keep in touch with him?

Hayden: I have an email address that I use very sparingly. He and I went hunting in Utah about a year ago for about three days on the Hunt Oil Company's ranch.

Knott: How was that?

Hayden: It was fun. He, Jim Baker, me, and the Hunt family, three days on the mountaintop tracking large mammals. Relaxed, talking politics with Baker a lot.

Knott: He's kept an extremely low profile as an ex-President.

Hayden: A very low profile, yes.

Knott: Did you read his memoir?

Hayden: I have it. I have read selected portions of it. There's an interesting story about that. He came out to the Agency; this is August of 2008. Russia had invaded Georgia, and so he had decided not to fly to the ranch. Again, back to unfair comparisons. Whereas the current President can go to Vegas for a fundraiser, the President decides he's not going to his ranch with Russian troops in Georgia. Josh Bolten calls me, and again—I'm being catty here, but going back to image and misunderstood. He was being very careful. The man quit golfing. You know that, right?

Knott: Yes.

Hayden: He refused to golf in his second term because of the War in Iraq. He just did not want the parents of kids in Iraq seeing the President golfing, so he just stopped golfing. So he decides not to go to Crawford. Josh calls me up and says, "Hey, Mike, we're not going to Crawford tomorrow. We've got a full day. The President was wondering if he could come out. What do you think, Josh?"

Knott: No?

Hayden: The President comes out and it's the best of all visits because there's no prep. We didn't have to paint the curbs or anything. He just came out. No magnetometers. We laid two things on for him, three. A visit to our guys doing Georgia, in which he sat with Russian order of battle guys, Georgian order of battle guys, the south Caucasus political guys, the President of the

United States, two hours. “I don’t think that’s right.” “Well, it was—” “Oh, no, he didn’t say that.” I mean just a full-sided scrum. It was quite remarkable.

Then we went to the Counterterrorism Center and they had lunch in the cafeteria. By this time we never announced the President was there, but word got out. There were people in the rafters; they’re up in the upper deck, this deep-throated roar as he comes in. We had set up a table with seats for about 20, and the rule was you had to be here at least three years. You can’t be here more than seven. That’s who he wanted there, and we had burgers and fries set up for the President three times because he worked the rope line for about an hour.

Knott: Wow.

Hayden: Just people there waiting. They had their lunch with the President, had pretty cold French fries, and we kept swapping them out. Finally got to the conversation, and one young woman who was an analyst for Al Kibar, went up and she asked permission and I said sure. She went up and gave him a coin that folks who worked on Al Kibar had done, and in essence it was, “No Core, No War,” make this go away without starting a general war in the Middle East.

Knott: I’m sorry I’m not sure—

Hayden: No core, no war. The goal was we’re going to make this go away, but in the process, we’re not going to start a general war in the Eastern Mediterranean. That was what we did. And so she gave him the coin and then he said, “So what do you do around here?” and so on. One of the women, it’s always one of the young women, says to him, “What are you going to do, Mr. President?” He says, “I’m going to write a book.” “Really? Tell us about your book.” So he actually laid out the decision points approach. “I’m going to take 10 decision points and I’m going to describe the decision points and I’m going to start with my drinking problem, and we’re going to talk about cells, medical ethics—

Knott: Stem cells.

Hayden: —“stem cell research, and then we’re going to 9/11,” and so on. So we got a little sneak preview as to what his plan was.

Knott: Something you mentioned about the President not golfing the second term triggered something with me. As Director of the CIA, did you ever—you hear Presidents talk about one of the worst things that happens—[phone interruption]

Knott: One or two more questions and then we’ll wrap it up.

Hayden: Oh, sure. OK.

Knott: When you mentioned the President not golfing in the second term and his concern about the parents, did you, as CIA Director, ever have to contact relatives?

Hayden: I had an officer who was killed in an automobile accident in Kazakhstan. She was assigned to Kyrgyzstan, and the capital of Kazakhstan was moving from Almaty to Astana. We had to move vehicles and so she volunteered. “Hey, yes, we’re going to Kazakhstan.” She was

driving. It was a two-car convoy, and there was a slow-moving truck coming at them, two-lane roads on a rise, and a semi trailer came out to pass the truck and she was hit head-on, and the car caught fire. It was just a horrible death. She was from Charlottesville.

Knott: Oh, jeez.

Hayden: She lived on a farm a little north of the city. The casualty notification came to me and we did what we did. And then late Saturday I said to ask the family if they wouldn't mind if my wife and I came down. My wife is wonderful. She was at the Agency as much as I was.

Knott: Wow.

Hayden: We're used to a military culture in which you've got these broad support structures, because we've been expeditionary since Bunker Hill. The CIA is not, and now you've got them doing things without the traditions underpinning it. And so we drove down to Charlottesville and sat on their front porch. It was their only child. And then we met the casket at Dulles and had a ceremony there and so on. That was the most immediate.

I talked to the spouse of a young military officer who was working near our forces. By the way, this is going to sound self-congratulatory, but the next day I was in the chief of staff of the DO's [Directorate of Operations] office and he says, "Everybody knows you went to Charlottesville." That's all he said.

Knott: Wow, jeez. I'd be remiss if I didn't ask. This is not a wrap-up question. This is something I should have asked earlier. Was your relationship with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and with the FBI Director a healthy one?

Hayden: Bob [Mueller] was a good friend. That Thursday night massacre at the hospital where they were trying to revive John Ashcroft and Al Gonzales and Andy Card over there, I don't know what the hell happened, I really don't, but I believe Andy Card. I think they actually—and Al Gonzales. You've got the drama in the *Post* of Comey running up the steps to throw his body in front of the Attorney General saying, "Don't sign, John, don't sign." I don't know what the truth is or I don't care. Everybody in that room is a friend of mine.

Knott: But you're skeptical of the dramatic account that has appeared.

Hayden: Yes. I don't think Gonzales would have said, "OK, Andy, hold the paper"—[*laughs*] You know? I don't think that's going to happen. But that Saturday after that happened—this is a really ugly time—Mueller called me at home in Fort Meade and said, "Mike, you know this is not about you and me at all. We're good."

Knott: And that was—

Hayden: That was it.

Knott: —pretty much the relationship throughout your tenure.

Hayden: Oh, yes.

Knott: Good cooperation?

Hayden: Yes. Well, he was the head of the FBI, after all. I'm being overly candid with you, but the FBI is not good at this yet.

Knott: Still?

Hayden: Yes. When I was Director they weren't that good at it. It's just a cultural thing.

Knott: This being—

Hayden: Intelligence collection as opposed to law enforcement. Predictive analysis as opposed to after-the-fact kind of forensics.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: Organizing things by broad topical area rather than by case file. Writing things down so everybody else can read them rather than relying on an oral record. But Mueller is fine. We're close.

Knott: Good.

Hayden: Why do you ask?

Knott: Why do I ask?

Hayden: Yes.

Knott: There's just this constant theme of problems between the CIA and the FBI, a historical track record.

Hayden: There are historical tensions, but it's not Bob Mueller's fault or mine.

Knott: Sure. Last question. How do you think the Bush administration should be viewed by future historians?

Hayden: Better than it's viewed now, and I do think that. Number one, sooner or later, somebody other than me is going to write, "Gee, this Obama guy seems to be doing a hell of a lot of this Bush stuff." And he's not pulling 3,000 citizens out of rubble. I actually made the point, I said, "What is this guy capable of?" No disrespect for the President, but what is this President capable of doing if we've got 3,000 dead people tomorrow morning? So I think that will kind of center align.

Jack Goldsmith's books have been useful in pointing out that this wasn't lawless. It may have been flawed, but it wasn't lawless. By the way, in my claim to fame, in the Terrorist Surveillance Program the FISA courts ruled twice. We take as a given that the President has inherent constitutional authority to authorize surveillance without a warrant for foreign intelligence purposes, which is different from law enforcement.

Knott: Yes.

Hayden: Twice they went out of the way to say it, so I think that will calm. I get to go to a lot of places now. People invite me to different things. I run in circles that are very different from the ones—so at 9,000 feet in Montana, I was the guest of Eric Schmidt. I could throw a rock in every direction at every meeting and not hit a Republican, I'm convinced. I'm talking with some folks and they're just stunned at how weak President Obama has been on Africa compared to President Bush, and how he is beloved in Africa. I had dinner with Bono last week. Sounds like I'm name-dropping.

Knott: I'm impressed.

Hayden: It was a big dinner. There were 20 or 25 of us, and Jim Jones, the former National Security Advisor.

Knott: Oh, sure.

Hayden: He invited people like us to meet him and be supportive of what Bono was doing. But he had nothing but kind words for President Bush. Bono said, "I went in there and I was just totally blown away." He knew what he was talking about, he knew the subject, he knew the details. A lot of my liberal friends are saying, "Why are you talking to this man?" I said, "Because he knows what he's doing."

I think those kinds of things will come out. Iraq is going to be hard to overcome, but maybe in the wider field of view you don't get Tunis and Cairo without Iraq. I don't know.

Knott: The Arab Spring.

Hayden: Yes. And so on. He did keep the country safe, and let me tell you something I never heard while George Bush was President, as Director of CIA, from Republican and Democrat, in or out of government, any branch of government: "Whatever you do, Hayden, don't overreact to this thing." There was no stomach in this nation for doing anything other than everything. Actually, I want to talk to you about that. You said something earlier.

Knott: Sure.

Hayden: You were talking about President Bush and Obama and what was acceptable and not, the political blowback and so on. This is worth everything you're paying for it, so very two-bit psychology. There are members now—I'll just mention names. Senator [Dianne] Feinstein, she's very harsh on things done during the Bush administration. Can we go off the record?

Knott: Sure.