

Remarks
by
Robert M. Gates
Director of Central Intelligence
at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of
The Office of Strategic Services
and
Dedicating the OSS Memorial

CIA Headquarters
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Ambassador Dick Walters once observed that Americans have always had an ambivalent attitude toward intelligence: When they feel threatened they want a lot of it. And when they don't, they tend to regard the whole thing as somewhat immoral. The trouble is, without good intelligence, you won't know when you'll need it. You won't see the threat coming.

Six months ago, we gathered here to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the attack at Pearl Harbor—an attack which caught us by surprise, claimed 3,000 American lives and drew our country into the largest and most costly war in the history of the world.

Our country learned a terrible lesson at Pearl Harbor—that the times demanded a strong intelligence service to warn our country and to keep it secure. Fifty years ago, from the ashes of the Pearl Harbor tragedy, the Office of Strategic Services was created.

Today we pay tribute to the members of OSS and their leader, General Bill Donovan—whose vision gave birth to OSS, and whose courage and character gave it direction.

Today we celebrate the accomplishments of that elite organization—which, working in secret, fought not for conquest but for liberation. They achieved tremendous success—organizing resistance groups, rescuing downed airmen, locating important targets to be bombed, and preparing the way for the allied invasions of North Africa and Europe. In more than 40 different overseas posts—from Casablanca to Shanghai, from Stockholm to Pretoria—the OSS contribution was enormous and their work helped to speed the end of the Second World War.

There is another reason why we are gathered here this afternoon. We are here to dedicate this memorial—to remember and honor the lives and the memories of the brave men and women of OSS, who had the courage to join the battle behind enemy lines, and who fell defending freedom in distant lands.

I'd like to focus on one such here as representative. In mid-1944, Captain Rod-erick (Steve) Hall parachuted into enemy-held territory in the Italian Alps. There he obtained the plans of the entire Axis defense system in the Brenner Pass area, which

he smuggled out to the Allied high command. He also blew up 5 railroad and 15 highway bridges, disrupting German and Italian communications and frustrating their efforts to resupply their troops. Steve Hall was later captured by the SS and strangled by them.

Before his capture, Captain Hall managed to smuggle out a letter to his parents. He wrote:

"The feeling of being hunted is something that can never leave you . . . Asleep or awake the threat never leaves you; and I have not laid down yet to sleep without a cocked pistol at my right hand.

"It has not been sport, but rather a deadly business--an unending struggle to plan each tiny detail for days ahead, when you really don't know what's going to happen in the next fifteen minutes. If you make the slightest error, someone dies; I found that out quickly. It seems as though life and death has been in my hands since this started. It was the one feature of this job I did not foresee, and would have avoided with all my heart. I have saved many, many lives that would otherwise have been lost--Nazi prisoners, circumstantial cases, petty cases--for the law of the partisans before I arrived was death for anything or anyone, shady. But, for the rest, and for my mistakes--well, I guess I've forgotten how to smile.

"If there has been any recompense for us, it has come . . . from the reactions of the people--persecuted, starved and enslaved by the Nazis. We've been able to bring them medicines; a few comforts of life; a little money; but mostly hope."

Captain Hall concluded his letter by saying, "This job hasn't been world-shaking and may never be recorded even in Army records . . . But I've told about it, so that you will know, even if it hasn't been as much as many, many others have done in this war, at least I've done something."

Each of the 119 names inscribed in this book of honor tells a similar story of accomplishment, of duty, of quiet heroism and of tremendous sacrifice. Together, their lives of selfless dedication and devotion to country set an example for all Americans--and form the bedrock for the strong and proud heritage of American Intelligence.

All of us in American Intelligence owe a debt to those intelligence officers who went before--who blazed the path that we now follow. Who understood, as George Meredith put it, "It is a terrific decree in life that they must act who would prevail." Who strengthen us by their courage and hearten us by their valor. And in the fraternity of intelligence, we are bound today by what bound us 50 years ago--the same loyalties, the same traditions, the same beliefs.

It is appropriate that the memorial we dedicate today faces the north wall—a wall that commemorates the bravery of 54 CIA officers who also fell in the line of duty. Together, these simple memorials remind us that while the years have passed, the world is still a dangerous place—and the work of intelligence still calls for risk, for courage, and for sacrifice.

As we face a turbulent, unstable world in a time of global revolution, the need for intelligence remains as real as in 1942. A few months ago the President described this need in a visit here. He said:

“Our world without the Cold War confrontation is a safer world but it is no Garden of Eden. This is not the end of history. Men and nations still have their propensities for violence and for greed and for deceit. We need a strong Intelligence Community to consolidate and extend freedoms gains against totalitarianism. We need intelligence to verify historic arms reduction accords. We need it to suppress terrorism and drug trafficking and we must have intelligence to thwart anyone who tries to steal our technology or otherwise refuses to play by fair economic rules. We must have vigorous intelligence capabilities if we’re to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And so this is truly a life or death mission. . . . In sum, intelligence remains our basic national instrument for anticipating danger—military, political and economic. Intelligence is and always will be our first line of defense.”

With this memorial, and in future Memorial Day ceremonies, we will not forget the sacrifice, the dedication and the patriotism of the men and women of the OSS.

And now, I’d like to invite Geoffrey Jones, President of the Veterans of OSS, to make a few remarks.