



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504

<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

November 18, 2004

The Honorable Porter Goss
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Director Goss,

I write to express my deep concern about recent reports in the media about developments at the Central Intelligence Agency. In particular, I fear that actions, perhaps taken by your staff, may have a significant and negative effect on the Agency. These concerns have been heightened by the recent publication of the text of your recent communication to Agency employees.

I want to begin by restating my strong belief that the task before you is critical. The Central Intelligence Agency needs reformation if it is to meet the tasks and threats of the 21st Century. I was pleased that you committed to leading such necessary reform in your statements before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence at your confirmation hearing. I want you to know that I will support your efforts to accomplish this vital task.

Reform, however, must be carefully and thoughtfully managed. At least according to news reports, many at the Central Intelligence Agency are now demoralized and fearful. I recognize that change is difficult, sometimes painful, but I believe that you have a responsibility to ensure that such difficulty is minimized. This duty flows not only from common decency, but from hard-nosed practicality. If you are to be successful in changing the Central Intelligence Agency you will need to build consensus and a sense of shared mission to the Agency. I am concerned that recent developments run counter to that goal.

Perhaps even more important is the issue of politicization of our intelligence services. I believe that America needs, perhaps now more than ever, an effective foreign intelligence capability. I also know that having such a capability presents dangers to our system of democratic government.

Secret agencies, schooled in intelligence tradecraft, are likely to be abusive and counterproductive if they become associated with an administration, a political party, or a specific person. It is critical that our intelligence services carefully preserve both the appearance and reality of complete disassociation with politics and party, remaining neutral and unbiased.

Politicization carries with it other dangers. The Intelligence Community's value to the nation comes primarily from its ability to produce analytic assessments of foreign conditions and our adversaries that are straightforward, honest, and unbiased. If your analysis reveals a particular policy to be ill-advised, so be it. In fact, intelligence may be most valuable when it warns us of the dangers of a particular policy or course of action. If we lose that ability, and intelligence becomes simply another mechanism to sell a policy initiative, then our nation will be endangered.

Thus I was particularly troubled by your communication, widely reported in the press, to Agency employees dated November 15, 2004. In particular, you wrote: "[a]s agency employees we do not identify with, support or champion opposition to the administration or its policies." I hope that what you meant was that Agency employees neither **support nor oppose** administration policies." But that is not what your communication said. Rather, it is likely to be interpreted as requiring Agency employees to bias or select their intelligence collection and analysis to ensure that the facts and conclusions presented do not conflict with stated policies. Later in the same communication you said it well: "[w]e provide the intelligence as we see it -- and let the facts alone speak to the policy-maker."

But your communication will be read as a whole, and your unfortunate choice of words is likely to cause confusion at best, and mislead Agency employees at worst.

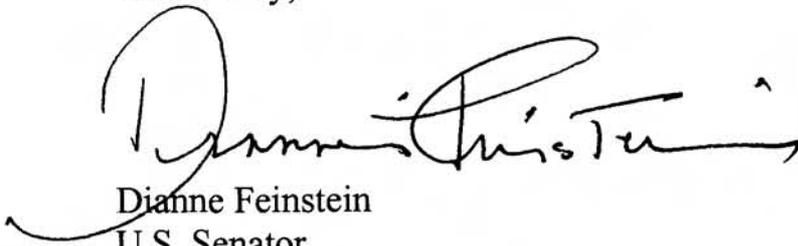
This is particularly important in what I believe to be the most critical role of intelligence – when our nation considers going to war. In that case, as well as others, the policymakers who desperately need your intelligence analysis are not just an "administration," but include the Congress. It is the Congress where the responsibility both to declare war and appropriate funds for its prosecution reside. From that perspective your communication is particularly problematic. It seems to assume that Agency employees should not provide intelligence to legitimate intelligence consumers who may

“oppose” the views of the President. That, simply put, is not how our Constitutional system works.

I hope you will reissue your guidance, providing absolute clarity in your meaning. Agency employees, as well as ordinary citizens, need to be certain of your intention – to create an Intelligence Service that moves boldly and effectively, providing the best available intelligence, unbiased and fairly assessed, to policymakers throughout the government.

At your confirmation hearing you promised me, and my colleagues from both parties, that you would be vigilant in preserving the Intelligence Community’s commitment to its traditional role, standing apart from policymakers, “speaking truth to power.” I hope you will hold to that promise.

Yours truly,



Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator

cc: Members of the Select Committee
on Intelligence