



(U) InSIDer's View of History: Meeting President Reagan

FROM: SIGINT Communications
Unknown
Run Date: 06/10/2004

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(U//FOUO) Here are some stories from NSA'ers describing their encounters with President Reagan. Thanks to all who sent in their anecdotes!

From: [REDACTED]
Org: Requirements Analysis Center (S16)

(U//FOUO) As luck would have it, I did meet the Reagans in Berlin when they hosted a "Birthday Party for Berlin" in the late 80's. As President Reagan was speaking, a folding chair fell over (loudly) in the balcony. Mrs. Reagan turned white for a second, but the President in his typical humorous way, simply looked up and said "You missed me." The entire group let out an anxious sigh followed quickly by laughter.

From: [REDACTED]
Org: CIA Liaison Support Group (F51)

(U//FOUO) Like many on the White House staff, my most direct contact with President Reagan was during a grip-and-grin photo opportunity for those of us assigned to the White House Situation Room where I was a watch officer from January 1986 to March 1988. What struck me most was that he was shorter than I expected - not the larger than life figure that you expect from television - but he still had that warmth that everyone talked about. The other weird thing about it was that the rest of the National Security Council were filed out of the conference room and sort of followed the President going through the receiving line.

(U) My only other direct contact with him was on West Executive Avenue, which is between the West Wing and the Old Executive Office Building. As usual, the Secret Service was clearing a path for Reagan when he was walking between the buildings, so I was told to stand off to the side. The President was 20 feet from me and sends a wave and smile in my direction. I, of course, think, "Whom was he waving at?" I look and realize I'm the only around. Somewhat embarrassed, I quickly turn back and gave him a big wave in return.

(S//SI) My most notable indirect contact with him was his use of an update on terrorist bombing of a US Air Force bus by the Greek "November 17" terrorist group. I, along with another NSAer, wrote a one-paragraph update on the bombing, which went to President Reagan. About 15 minutes later, we were watching CNN do a photo op in the Oval Office. Almost immediately, a member of the press asked about the bombing in Greece. To my amazement, the President responded just about word for word with the note we had



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sent up a few minutes before. That's when I knew that he had a near-photographic memory.

(U//FOUO) The biggest question in the minds of many was how engaged the President was. While I can't speak to the larger issues, I can say that I've been a "fly on the wall" during a National Security Council meeting and was quite stunned to hear the President as an active and forceful participant in the meeting. Just another small way he changed my perception of a man that had been shaped by a press that really didn't know him.

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From: [REDACTED]

(U) I did get the honor to meet President Reagan when he dedicated the Ops-2 buildings. I remember that I was not planning to attend his visit to the agency, because I thought the crowd would be too large and that the parking would be impossible. But when the time and date arrived, I told myself that I would try to see him, if the parking was not impossible. I drove to the main four buildings and was fortunate enough to find a distant parking spot. I walked to the back of the crowd who were waiting for the President's helicopter and him. I waited for a several minutes and thought that I would not be able to see him because of the distance between the podium and me. All of a sudden, a lady from protocol waved the small group I was standing with to the last row of seating in the VIP section. That row was nearly empty and they wanted to fill it. I sat 50 feet or so from President Reagan when he addressed the Agency workforce.

(U) I remember him telling a story about how he was going to get to NSA. He said he was told to go to 12th and K street and that he would be picked up by an unmarked van and taken to NSA. He told us how much he valued our contributions to national security and the global prominence of United States. He told us that most of America and the world did not know of the significant of your work, but he knew and he wanted us to continue our labors in silence.

(U) I have great respect for him, because he had a vision, a national strategy, and the ability to communicate them. I am saddened for my, the country's, and the world's loss, but I am also enthusiastic and optimistic about our future. I have learned much from him and other great leaders over the years. I know that great leaders have a vision of the future, a strategy on how to get there, the ability to communicate them to everyone, and can laugh every once in a while at themselves. On Friday, I will reflect back on his vision of America, the situation we were in at the time, and the rapid growth the agency experienced in the 80's. I will also keep alive his vision of how great America is and will be in the future.

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DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108