



## CIA Stories: The CIA is Born

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**Speaker 1 in Video:** This is a Russian PT-76, the current Red Army amphibious tank, it is now the property of the United States. It was not given to us by the Russians, nor did we purchase it, nor did we capture it in battle. You could say that it was obtained, all 15 tons of it, through intelligence channels, or you can say we stole it. Once upon a time, spying or espionage was a fairly straightforward game. But we have come a long way rather quickly from Mata Hari. There is something new in the science of spying. It's not just stealing military hardware and secret plans, but using tanks and plans and men to promote our policies around the world and sometimes to overthrow governments we don't like. In the spy business, the dagger is replacing the cloak and that is what this program is about.

**Abby Martin:** During the past few years, the Central Intelligence Agency has embarked on a rebranding campaign to market itself as a noble, inclusive and even woke organization. This is in part to erase its dark history, which was once more widely known in the United States. It struggled through decades of controversy, saw their methods scrutinized in the public eye, and they had a reputation for being immoral and unethical, to say the least. But the post 9/11 era opened an opportunity to rehabilitate their image, gain new approval in the public eye that now they're a force for good. And all that assassination and death squad stuff, well, that's all in the past. Their current rebrand is just the latest phase of this makeover. And in a climate where they now have widespread acceptance and popular culture, academia and news media. Which is why it's so important to document their true legacy and explore why these operations are not just part of their history, but part of their present, that under this progressive veil, they remain the same sinister organization. It's a huge topic to explore, spanning seven decades and a seemingly infinite list of crimes. But before we jump into the CIA stories ranging from the utterly absurd to the downright evil, we need to understand how and why the CIA was created in the first place. To do that, I'm joined by Douglas Valentine, author of several books on the CIA, including *The CIA's Organized Crime and the Phoenix Program*, *America's Use of Terror and Vietnam*. Douglas, thanks so much for joining me. Can

you first start by explaining exactly how and why the CIA got its start?

**Douglas Valentine:** The CIA grew out of the Office of Strategic Services and World War Two. President Roosevelt knew that the United States was going to eventually have to get into the war, and he wanted to be able to have a force that could report to him on what was happening around the world. That's why it's called the Strategic Services Group. It would be able to go into places where the United States military was not conducting operations. It would be able to go into places that the Germans and the Japanese occupied. In its job during World War Two, it was going into occupied territories clandestinely to insert teams in that nobody knew they were there. And this involved creating false documents, smuggling people into countries and establishing them undercover in the occupied territories. Their first job was to conduct sabotage and subversive activities against the occupation forces. And they did the same thing in Burma and in Indochina and in China itself. They were a clandestine unit that was secretly inserted into occupied territories, established themselves undercover, and then began to conduct sabotage and subversion and psychological warfare operations to try to undermine the morale of the occupying forces. They also then, as they established themselves in these occupied territories, would begin to organize with the resistance in order to actually fight the occupational forces, to create militia groups that would actually engage in paramilitary battles, and established significant agent networks all throughout the world. One of their jobs apart from sabotage and subversion and psychological warfare, was to collect secret intelligence, to create agent nets, which nobody knew about.

**AB:** That's really interesting. So they were playing what could be seen as a good role during the war by working with communists against Nazi and Japanese occupation forces. So what changed after World War Two?

**DV:** So all these things were in place at the end of World War Two. The president at that time, Truman, wanted to keep the OSS in business, but the military in the State Department, especially J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI, did not want the OSS to continue to exist. Those three forces, the military, the military establishment, the State Department, which was involved with trying to conduct political operations with the world - and the military was trying to conduct military operations around the world - and the FBI, which was involved in intelligence, those three parts of the government did not want the OSS to exist. At the same time, the military was demobilizing. The military at that time, the US armed forces had 12 million people in uniform around the world and all those guys wanted to go home. And within a year the military was down to like just over a million people. 90 percent of the soldiers of World War Two went home and they were glad to go home and people were sick of the war. But and this is where the CIA comes into being, the Soviet Union was making gains in Western Europe. It was conducting psychological warfare and agent operations inside Italy and inside France and throughout Western Europe. And the same thing in Asia. Communist China would not actually emerge until 1949, but they really posed a great threat to American industrialists. And so President Truman decided he needed to keep the vestige of

the OSS in place. And over the next two or three years, that initial force, which was originally called a central intelligence group, continued to exist in Europe and Asia. And it was very small groups of people. The strategic services units were part of the military and they continued to conduct military covert operations in Europe and in Asia against the communists and in those countries. The Cold War had begun. And the CIA in its initial phases was aimed 100 percent against the Soviets and the Chinese communists. That's what it was existing to do. And it steadily grew and so did its operations. And its operations were the same as it was in the OSS. They would send teams, basically three types of groups into areas that the Soviets occupied in Europe or were contesting with the Soviets in Europe and likewise with the communist Chinese.

**AB:** And what were those three types of groups and what did they do?

**DV:** One kind of group was involved in Special Intelligence. And that's setting up agendas that nobody knows about so that you can know what the enemy's plans and strategy are. This early group, which became the CIA at the end of nineteen forty seven, created what was called a foreign intelligence unit, and they would work with friendly governments and the intelligence services of friendly governments and the police forces of friendly governments so that they could establish bases, in France and Italy, where they were operating into these areas in Europe that were occupied by the Soviets. Those are secret intelligence networks. That's considered the cloak and dagger stuff for the CIA. And then with the military, they were sending the paramilitary groups to work with resistance groups inside these occupied territories. And they would create militias like they do all over the world now. And they would arm them and they would bring in guns and communications, radios and stuff like that. And then the third group was called political and psychological operations and that was basically handled in coordination with the State Department. The whole idea of these political and psychological operations was to shape political and social movements in countries all over the world. And this was not paramilitary and it's not secret intelligence. It's a covert action. It's setting up newspapers, radios, TV stations, businesses, trying to influence labor unions and international organizations. And at the time it was called, according to the compatible left, trying to get people who weren't sure whether they were going to go over to the Communists, come back over to the west.

**Former CIA case officer in Video:** The institutions of power which are penetrated and attempts are made to manipulate them, are the political parties, the security services, the military institutions, the trade union organizations, especially the youth and student movements, cultural organizations, professional societies, and in a very big way, the public information media.

**Speaker 2 in Video:** We need powerful radio stations abroad operated without governmental restrictions to tell in vivid and convincing form about the decency and the essential fairness of democracy.

**DV:** And this was really where the CIA began to emerge after World War Two and as it began to contest the Soviet Union. And the communist Chinese was really starting to make its inroads with these political and psychological covert actions.

**Speaker 3 in Video:** Even in Tibet, where rebels fight the Chinese communists, there is the CIA. If it would help, the CIA would recruit the Abominable Snowman.

**DV:** And then the Korean War erupts and right after the People's Republic of China was formed. And at that point, paramilitary operations, the military aspect of the CIA started to emerge as equal in importance to these political and psychological operations. And that's when the CIA, its paramilitary branch, started operating all throughout Southeast Asia into South America and parts of Europe. And all of this coalesces in 1950 through 1952 for the CIA as we know it, as a result of Korea, the creation of the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, getting the atomic bomb and beginning the battle for the satellite countries in Eastern Europe, when all of that started to climax around 1952/ 53/ 54, that's when the CIA, as we know it, emerges fully intact.

**Speaker 4 in Video:** This is the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States government. Everybody knows it although the sign on the gate reads Bureau of Public Roads.

**DV:** It is highly organized, it has an administrative staff, it has agents all over the world, which is one of the most important features of it. It has a whole scientific and technological branch that comes up with all sorts of fancy ways to spy and wage war and smuggle things in and out of countries. And that whole research and development and scientific division of the CIA was one of the four most important branches of the CIA- the technological aspect.

**Speaker 5 in Video:** These are some of the tools of your trade, weapons of democracy. Learn them well.

**AB:** And their targets became very specific at this time. What criteria would make you subject to CIA operations?

**DV:** Getting into the philosophical and historical origins of the CIA, why the United States is a capitalist country, you know, and why it finds communism so threatening and it involved the part of the CIA which was engaged in economic warfare. You have to understand all those dynamics in order to understand why the CIA was created and why it goes after the communists. And that's, that's a whole other thing.

**Speaker 6 in Video:** America is the major obstacle that stands between the grave digger and his intended victim. Here is target number one for the Reds and who is in the bull's eye? You

are, you are, you are...

**DV:** During World War two the OSS worked very closely with communist resistance groups all over the world. The OSS was working with Mao Zedong in China against the Japanese. They were working with the communists in France and Italy against the Germans. And then all of a sudden at the end of the war and this was one of the reasons why J.Edgar Hoover did not want to see the OSS continue in existence, is because he felt it was riddled with communists and he felt it was riddled with drug smugglers. So, I mean, the OSS dealt with criminal gangs. That's how it was able to smuggle agents in and out of the country. So they hired hundreds of American Mafioso into their ranks so that they could hook up with criminal gangs in Italy who paved the way. So the OSS was not at all American in a sense, a kind of group. But they in order to compete on the world stage after World War Two, these are the kind of people that it needed, the all-American boys from Yale and Harvard or Texas Tech or Texas A&M, they moved into the leadership positions and then they ran laws that hid from public scrutiny the composition of the CIA and who they were using those agents early on. There was a lot of controversy about all these kinds of people that they hired and so was the CIA involved. There was one guy in particular, if I remember his name correctly it was Lawrence Houston. And he created all the legal moat, if you will, around the castle of the CIA so that nobody in the public, unless I had the highest security clearances, could actually understand what these operations were doing and who the people were who were involved. Because they were still using the only way you could spot the spy on communists was to recruit communists.

**Speaker 7 in Video:** Because our English friends would say, isn't that a bit sticky? Diplomatically I mean...

**Speaker 8 in Video:** Sure it is, is real sticky.

**DV:** One of the problems they had in Korea, which started in 1950, is they originally hired thousands and thousands of Koreans- the CIA did and turned them into a mini army and set them against North Korea. And it turned out that there were all North Korean agents and the whole thing was a big failure. So that they had to start figuring out, well, how can we get these people who we're not quite so sure of to do our evil deeds. And this is why it took so long for the CIA to actually organize itself and organize its own counterintelligence division so it could start weeding out the people who are hustling it. As well as the dastardly people that they needed to do its dirty deeds. And all of that took close to ten years before they could figure out how to do it. But believe me when I tell you, they have it all ironed out now and they know how to do it seamlessly all around the world. Plus which, all the covert operations that they put in place starting in 1946, a lot of them have grown, the newspapers they put in place, the radio stations they put in place. One of the things that was very controversial was they were hiring Nazis, thousands and thousands of Nazis to fight against the Soviets and a lot of people of good conscience didn't think this was like, you know, the all- American way

to do things. But it was necessary for the CIA to fight the communists in order to hire guys like Reinhard Gehlen, who had run the German military intelligence agent nets into the Ukraine. And the CIA hired this guy and kept his intelligence network in place. And, of course, this guy, Lawrence Houston put in the legal barriers to prevent anybody from knowing that this was happening. But this is the sort of thing that the CIA was doing and what was why the military didn't like it, the State Department didn't like it, and the FBI didn't like it. It was starting to operate in a way that unless you go back to slavery and Jim Crow and the smashing of labor unions and the oppression of immigrants in the United States, didn't comport with the image that the media was trying to sell to the American public after World War Two. Which was that the United States had saved the world for freedom and democracy. And the media was working once it got on board to try and turn the CIA and these guys who were assassins and psychopathic murderers and completely amoral individuals who are kept on a very short leash, sometimes not so short by these Harvard and Yale guys who were stepping out- the executive management of the CIA and they had pretty much learned how to handle these guys. But they also needed a compliant media to sell the CIA and neo colonial imperialism, which was what the CIA is all about, not just rolling back communism, but taking over the former colonies of the French and Dutch and English empires, which had been devastated by World War Two. And part of the whole purpose of the CIA historically was to displace all these former colonial powers and to take over their colonies. The queen's crown is speckled with jewels from Burma and India. You know, England had made, France had made fortunes for its industrial league by taking all the tin and rubber and oil out of all these countries around the world and now the United States wanted it. And so they were working against all their allies as earnestly as they were working against the communists. And all this stuff had to be hidden from the American public so that Congress could appropriate billions and billions and billions of dollars for funding the CIA and covering for it, so it could advance. And again, this goes back to the history of philosophy of what America is. This endless expansion. As soon as the continent had been conquered and once slavery had been eliminated, there was no place left for the American industrialists to go. Unions were being created and people were starting to get a fair wage and there were things like a 40 hour work week on the horizon. And so all these industrialists, in order to continue making huge profits, had to move overseas. And the World War Two and the OSS paved the way for all the military bases, the 800 military bases that are around the world, all of those military bases, except for a few that were established at the end of World War Two, all those military bases that now exist, the CIA paved the way for all of that clandestinely. And that's, that's the role that historically the CIA plays in terms of America's rarely expressed but implicitly understood, divine right to rule the world.

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