

could perform. He had to cultivate a personal relationship with the president of the United States, who alone could authorize CIA covert action. He had to massage the two intelligence committees in Congress, which wrote the agency's budget and continually reviewed its operations. And he had to keep up morale among the Langley rank and file. Within months of his arrival Woolsey had pulled off a stunning triple play of failure, some of the agency's senior officers felt. Woolsey forged strong connections with some CIA officers at Langley, especially those involved with technical and satellite intelligence collection, Woolsey's main professional focus. But he alienated many others, especially those in the Directorate of Operations. While awaiting Senate confirmation, Woolsey consulted his acquaintance Duane Clarridge, founder of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center. Clarridge concluded from their talk that Woolsey was "paranoid" about being "co-opted" by the insiders at the CIA, especially the career espionage officers in the Directorate of Operations. Some officers there saw Woolsey as aloof and untrusting. Worse, in closed hearings on Capitol Hill, Woolsey picked early fights with key senators who controlled the CIA's funding. And worst of all, Woolsey alienated President Clinton, the CIA's most important client.⁹

Woolsey did not have a private meeting with the president during Clinton's first year in office. Typically, CIA directors have an opportunity to brief the president first thing each morning, presenting the latest intelligence about global crises. But Clinton was a voracious consumer of information with scant patience for briefers who sat before him to read out documents that he could more efficiently read on his own time. The president was a night owl, prowling the White House residence into the early morning hours, reading briefs and working the telephone, sometimes waking members of Congress or journalists with 2 A.M. phone calls. In the morning he was often rough and slow to reenergize. Many of the senior White House staff avoided him until he came fully awake. Clinton's national security team, led by Tony Lake, found Woolsey a grating character: arrogant, tin-eared, and brittle. They didn't want to sit and chat with him in the chilly dawn any more than Clinton did. Woolsey met weekly with Lake, his deputy Sandy Berger, and Secretary of State Warren Christopher, but the White House team concluded that Woolsey was too combative. They found him too quick to argue his opinions on an issue and unable to calmly analyze all the available intelligence. Woolsey was a bulldog for his own point of view, especially if the issue involved the merits of technical intelligence.¹⁰

Try as he might, Woolsey could not get a meeting with the president. When a pilot on an apparent suicide mission crashed a single-engine Cessna into the

south lawn of the White House in September 1994, the joke quickly circulated that it was Woolsey trying to get an appointment with Clinton. The joke angered Woolsey when he first heard it, but in time he became so accustomed to his pariah status that he began to tell it on himself.

Woolsey saw the White House as totally uninterested in foreign affairs. There was no appetite for strategy, no disciplined process for thinking about the big issues, he concluded. The Cold War had been won, Boris Yeltsin in Russia was a friend of America, and the Clinton team had decided not to be too tough on China. The White House's one creative aspiration in foreign policy, Woolsey thought, was the global pursuit of free trade, as evidenced by the personal effort Clinton had put into passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Otherwise, Woolsey interpreted his inability to see the president as much more than a broken personal connection. Clinton and Lake, Woolsey believed, both saw the CIA as just one more instrument for shaping domestic politics. In their minds, as Woolsey saw it, the agency's job was to help manage crises such as Bosnia, Haiti, and Somalia with an eye toward minimizing their political fallout in the United States. As the months passed, Woolsey grew not only alienated by the Clinton White House but disgusted by what he saw as its crass emphasis on electoral politics.¹¹

Unencumbered by presidential direction or oversight, Woolsey was free to push the CIA in whatever direction he chose. As he settled into the director's office he concentrated on a campaign to refurbish the nation's spy satellite system. During the 1980s, as an arms control negotiator who depended on covert satellite photography to monitor adversaries, Woolsey came to believe that America's spy satellite capability had decayed dangerously. He understood the issues well. At Langley he put together a classified slide show that demonstrated how urgent the problem had become and what investments were required to fix it. Woolsey presented the spy satellite briefing again and again at the White House, in Congress, and at the Pentagon, lobbying hard for new funding. He was persuasive.¹² By what he chose to emphasize he also signaled that the CIA's major challenges lay in technical programs, not in human spying. By leaving the CIA alone, the White House had limited means to evaluate whether Woolsey's emphasis on technical intelligence, as opposed to human intelligence, was the right one or not.

AS WOOLSEY SETTLED INTO OFFICE, two young men of Pakistani origin living separately in the United States worked through the last logistical problems of their terrorist conspiracies. One of them lived with a roommate

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