

The Spymasters: CIA in the Crosshairs

LEON PANETTA: That memory of going to Arlington to bury one of my officers from the CIA, Elizabeth Hanson, is one that will be with me for a long time. They put their lives on the line to serve this country, and that's what Elizabeth Hanson did.

I knew that the CIA officers were there because I ordered them to be there. I had to bear some of the responsibility for having taken this risk.

NEWS BROADCASTER: Initial reports indicate the bomber was being recruited by the CIA as a source.

NEWS BROADCASTER: This was the worst single loss of life for the CIA since 1983 when a truck bomber blew up the American Embassy.

LEON PANETTA: This person obviously turned out to be a double agent and had blown himself up as well as our officers. It's hard to find the words when suddenly you're told that seven of your officers have been killed and others seriously wounded. What went through my mind was the families out there who within a few hours were going to be informed that someone who they loved had been killed.

We spent a lot of time trying to figure out who were the ones who pushed that button. We have a lot of sources that we rely on, spies, and so we immediately asked the question: Who the hell was involved in this tragic suicide bombing? We were able to get pretty good intelligence.

And so we knew who the individual was. This was a bad guy, and he was clearly a leader, been involved not only in going after our officers, but in killing members of our own forces in Afghanistan. And it was on the day of Elizabeth Hanson's funeral that I got a call from our Operations Center. They thought they had pretty good information about where this individual was.

Unfortunately, this individual had family and wife and children around him, and so one of the tough questions was, you know, what should we do? If there were women and children in the shot, we normally would not take the shot.

I remember calling the White House, and they were aware how tough a decision this is and basically said, "Look, you're going to have to make a judgment here," so I knew at that point that it was a decision that I was going to have to make. I mean, I'm the one who's going to have to say Hail Marys here.

I was raised a Catholic. I believe in my faith, and I rely a great deal on my faith, you know, throughout my life. I've always carried a rosary and always said a hell of a lot of Hail Marys in

tough situations, and suddenly, you know, I found that I was making decisions on life and death as Director. And those decisions are never easy, and frankly, they shouldn't be easy.

I felt it was really important in that job to do what I could to protect this country. So I passed on the word. I said, "If you can isolate the individual and take the shot without impacting on women or children, then do it, but if you have no alternative and it looks like he might get away, then take the shot."

And it did involve collateral damage, but we got him. These are tough decisions, and you're damn right, they are tough decisions. But, you know, this is a war. This is a war. 9/11, these people didn't hesitate a moment to kill 3,000 people and take down the Trade Centers and hit the Pentagon. These are individuals that would not hesitate to attack us again.

In the end, what you do I think has to be based on what your guts tell you is right, and that's really what it's all about. You have to be true to yourself as to what you think is right and hope that ultimately God agrees with you.

• • •

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIPTIONIST

I, Jennie Malloy, do hereby certify that the above-referenced excerpt of a video recording was furnished to me by Stephen M. Elliott, Trial Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice, and thereafter reduced to typewriting by me or under my direction; that I am not related to any of the parties in this matter; and that this transcript is a true and accurate record of said video recording to the best of my ability.

I hereby certify a pledge of confidence, and I will not discuss or release the content or any information contained herein.

Jennie Malloy
Malloy Transcription Service