

Disinformation Central Intelligence Agency Politics

## Did CIA Director William Casey really say, "We'll know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false"?

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### 15 Answers



Barbara Honegger, studied at Stanford University

Answered Nov 25 2014

I am the source for this quote, which was indeed said by CIA Director William Casey at an early February 1981 meeting of the newly elected President Reagan with his new cabinet secretaries to report to him on what they had learned about their agencies in the first couple of weeks of the administration.

The meeting was in the Roosevelt Room in the West Wing of the White House, not far from the Cabinet Room. I was present at the meeting as Assistant to the chief domestic policy adviser to the President. Casey first told Reagan that he had been astonished to discover that over 80 percent of the 'intelligence' that the analysis side of the CIA produced was based on open public sources like newspapers and magazines.

As he did to all the other secretaries of their departments and agencies, Reagan asked what he saw as his goal as director for the CIA, to which he replied with this quote, which I recorded in my notes of the meeting as he said it. Shortly thereafter I told Senior White House correspondent Sarah McClendon, who was a close friend and colleague, who in turn made it public.

Barbara Honegger [bshonegg@gmail.com](mailto:bshonegg@gmail.com)

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Greg Smith, studied at University of California, Santa Cruz

Answered Sep 22 2014

Ex-DCI Bill Casey's quote was attributed online as reported only by Mae Brussell, and so, I bounced it off Barbara Honegger because I knew she worked for Mae B back in the day, and here's what I got on the ACTUAL SOURCE (talk about luck! - I extracted actual email addresses):

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Barbara Honegger

Date: Sun, Sep 21, 2014 at 11:19 PM

Subject: Re: Conference on THE WARREN REPORT AND THE

JFK ASSASSINATION : FIVE DECADES OF

SIGNIFICANT DISCLOSURES

To: Greg Smith

I told Mae about it when we worked together ...

On Sun, Sep 21, 2014 at 10:32 PM, Greg Smith wrote:

Thanks Barbara! That's priceless. The web attributes it to Mae B only, and therefore, it's discounted in chat and group conversations on social media. You might want to give it better street cred? Your call!

On Sep 21, 2014, at 8:59 PM, Barbara Honegger wrote:

- > Seriously -- I personally was the Source
- > for that William Casey quote. He said it
- > at an early Feb. 1981 meeting in the
- > Roosevelt Room in the West Wing of
- > the White House which I attended, and
- > I immediately told my close friend and
- > political godmother Senior White House
- > Correspondent Sarah McClendon, who
- > then went public with it without naming
- > the source ...

> On Sat, Sep 20, 2014 at 2:49 PM, Greg Smith wrote:

>

> Love to, but can't break away. I'll definitely get the DVD for future very intense scrutiny! On that note, in the words of the infamous William J. Casey, "We'll know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false."

>

> On Sep 17, 2014, at 1:25 AM, Barbara Honegger wrote:

>> I'm going to try to go to the historic conference.

>> Please try to as well...

>> Barbara

>> On Tue, Sep 16, 2014 at 8:34 PM, Jerry Policoff wrote:

>> Re: Conference on THE WARREN REPORT AND THE  
>> JFK ASSASSINATION : FIVE DECADES OF  
>> SIGNIFICANT DISCLOSURES

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Bill Bray, Former (Retired) Research Scientist at Central Intelligence Agency

Updated May 11 · Author has **622** answers and **413.5k** answer views

I am not familiar with that particular quote, but that sounds like the hubris of the CIA. You have to understand, you put a janitor in charge of the other janitors, and he becomes king shit of the janitors. And so it goes all the way to the point where you put someone in charge of an agency which no longer answers to the president, the senate, congress, the UN, or any force on Earth, there is no way you are not going to have anything but a problem. JFK wanted to dissolve them for that reason, 6 months later...

If you really want to take the Dr. Bill acid test, go into Google AdWords. That is where they sell key words to the highest bidder so that their site floats to the top (no it is not 'free information highway,' that's how Google became a multi-billion organization). Watch the key words that are floating to the top. Then, look at tomorrow morning's headlines in Google, Yahoo, MSN, etc. You will find that magically the minds of Americans predicted the next day's news.

This of course is not the case. The multi-trillion dollar surveillance of Americans that they told you is to 'protect you from terrorists,' and so on is not what they are doing. All cell phone calls (the verbal content, referred to as meta-data), emails, text, are monitored. Since the Patriot Act portion that allowed this to expire, they used the clause 'on American soil,' literally and monitor everything via the communications satellites. There are also an estimated 20,000 drones OVER (BUT NOT ON) US soil, monitoring verbal communications that are not electronic. This can be done via unidirectional microphone, or by bouncing a laser off your window. That includes car window.

The [Welcome to FBI.gov](https://www.fbi.gov) web site collects information, but is easier to access at [Mass Shootings](https://www.massshootings.com) . In 2016 there were 384 mass shootings, almost 100 of which were listed as 'terrorist motivated.' So, the multi-trillion dollar surveillance network is not to 'protect you.'

The system is designed to gather information on the 'collective thinking,' like the Borg, of the American public, and then design tomorrow's news and media, literally overnight, to cattle herd you into a nice neat profile of behavior and commerce.

Again, take the acid test. Look at what you have access to, AdWords, and then watch tomorrow's headlines magically appear. At first you might think, well that's what people are interested in so that's what's in the news. Then, as you look at the flow of headlines regarding international campaigns, what the President said yesterday, what the senators and congressmen are doing or being accused of, it starts to get a bit freaky. Do this for several days, and you will see.

If this doesn't convince you, you fit a nice neat profile of behavior and commerce.

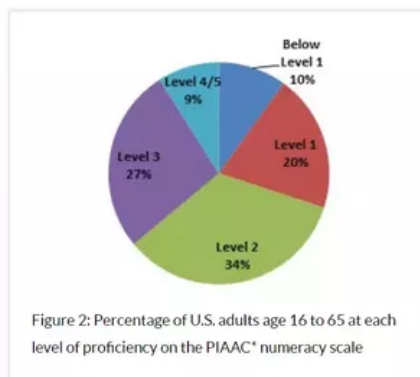
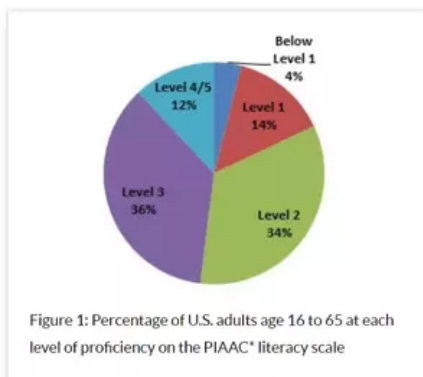
Otherwise, explain the multi-trillion dollar surveillance network's failure to prevent 384 mass shootings last year, of which about 1 in 4 were 'terrorist motivated,' and I think we already passed that number this year.

You know the system is in place, the NSA admitted it publicly. The reason they say it is there is obviously not true, as per a hundred terrorist motivated events each year, hundreds of mass shootings, most of which never make it into the 'fake news.'

Every time the President says 'fake news,' your brain says 'conspiracy theory,' and hardens your cognitive belief, your religion, the media.

That is why Bob cannot put Santa on his lawn, Muhammad is offended, and Sid cannot put a Menorah in his window, because Bob is offended. So we did what the Romans did, establish a state religion. Everything you know, were taught in school, has changed. Not because the facts have 'evolved,' but to funnel you into a literacy level of about 6th to 8th grade. Quantum Theory, since Bikini Atoll has only 'proven' one incontrovertible thing, it can blow stuff up. Other than that, everything is hypothesis.

*The proliferation of preposterous hypotheses of the hypotenuse of the Major General's hippopotamus is both laborius and labotemus, I am the Major General I resolve by the quadratical of the magical uncertainty of Heisenberg's fanatical misuse of the Major General's hypothesis.*



this is from [Understanding Literacy & Numeracy](#)

level 4/5 is the ability to read complex information and glean information from it, or in numeracy, the ability to do algebra and above. You will note that only about 1 in 10 function at this level. The vast majority function at about 6th to 8th grade competency.

Wake up and smell the trash.

Standard English has changed 12 times just this century. This is more than once per decade, and is currently being replaced by Simplified English and Simplified Technical English ASD-STE100. The reason being that the functional level of literacy has required being so. The Simplified English is about a 1,000 word vocabulary, about the same as my Border Collie.

1.

1904–1929. Hendrik Poutsma: A Grammar of Modern English (5 volumes).

2.

1909–1932. Etsko Kruisinga: A Handbook of Present-day English.

3.

1909–1949. Otto Jespersen: A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles.

4.

1931/1935. George O. Curme: A Grammar of the English Language.

5.

1945. R. W. Zandvoort: A Handbook of English Grammar.

6.

1952. Charles C. Fries: The Structure of English: An Introduction to the Construction of English Sentences.

7.

1984. M. A. K. Halliday: An Introduction to Functional Grammar.

8.

1985. Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik: A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language.

9.

1999. Douglas Biber, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey Leech, Susan Conrad, and Edward Finegan: Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English.

10.

2002. Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum: The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language.

11.

2006. Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy: The Cambridge Grammar of English.

12.

2011. Bas Aarts: Oxford Modern English Grammar.

Keeping you stupid keeps you under control. If this were not the case, disinformation would not be a goal.

3.3k Views · View Upvoters · Answer requested by Vulky Sellars

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Geoffrey Widdison, Engineer, reader, thinker, dreamer. Scientist, scholar, Latter-Day Saint.

Updated Mar 27 2015 · Upvoted by Marc Bodnick, Former Stanford PhD student in Politics · Author has **6.9k** answers and **28.1m** answer views

Almost certainly not. Look at that quote. That doesn't even sound like something a human being would say. That sounds like something a person would say in someone else's paranoid fantasies. And what's the source? Do you think we have public records of CIA staff meetings? Or do you figure that one of his staff decided to go public with that? In which case, who? And where were they reported?

It's hard to say for certain that someone *didn't* say something, but there are so many made up "quotes" floating around that I'd be unlikely to believe something like that unless I knew where it came from.

UPDATE: With the addition of Barbara Honegger's answer, we now have a source for the quote. We also have critical context around it, which makes it much more plausible. He was evidently referring to a campaign to spread false information in the public sphere in hopes that it would reach Soviet Intelligence and present them with bad data. Certainly a troubling precedent, but not as sinister as it sounds out of context.

29.9k Views · View Upvoters · Answer requested by David McKerracher

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Thommy Berlin, works at Musicians

Answered Nov 15 2014

It's completely true.

Not that it matters. No conservative I know retains the ability to think off script, let alone rise above his indoctrination, and neither the script or their indoctrination allows this to be real.

So as far as they're concerned, it simply isn't possible.

Neither was David Stockman's admission that the idea of 'trickle down' was to bankrupt the federal government so they could finally do away with social security, while making themselves filthy rich...

Or Reagan being a traitor for negotiating with the Iranians BEFORE he was

elected....

Or Bush II stealing the 2000 election....

Well...it's a LONG list....

Neither is global warming, Republican racism, or the fact that killing people is ok....as long as those being killed aren't conservatives and those doing the killing are making a profit.

9.3k Views · View Upvoters



William Petroff, B.A. in political science

Updated Sep 22 2013 · Author has **1k** answers and **2.9m** answer views

Who knows. He himself is long since dead and we're so far removed from the purported occurrence that anyone who could be reasonably believed to have knowledge of the alleged meeting probably wouldn't remember anything so exactly.

That being said, it's worth pointing out two things:

1. As far as I can tell, there's only one "source" for this attribution, a journalist named Mae Brussell. That's it. No one else, to my knowledge, has ever corroborated this. A single source tends to be problematic in that you have little way of knowing if it's in fact accurate; if a quote was transcribed incorrectly, or misunderstood, or made up all together, we'd be none the wiser.[1]
2. We don't have any idea of the context in which the alleged quote was said. All that there is is the single sentence which, all on its own, becomes pretty worthless unless you want to imprint pre-existing beliefs on it. Without the larger context of the statement, we have no idea whether or not it was actually said in the manner in which subsequent people have clearly intended it to come across as. For all we know, it could be the punch line of a joke or even some very worthwhile advice about trying to make disinformation so believable to the Soviets that it's even believable to Americans, rather than something that sounds ominously dark.

[1] Adding to this was the fact that Brussell had a reputation for being something of a conspiracy theorist. While that, in and of itself, shouldn't necessarily make what she claimed wrong, it certainly means that we ought to adopt a much more stringent approach to dealing with stuff she said happened.

31.3k Views · View Upvoters · Answer requested by David McKerracher



Don Harmon, former intell analyst, former coll. poli sci professor. (1999-2013)

Answered Jan 21, 2017 · Author has **558** answers and **181.8k** answer views

About two years ago, one Barbara Honneger said in Quora that she was there. But I can find no credible news source that affirms this.

It is possible that Director Casey said it without any negative significance for the American people. **How?**

Assume that CIA launched disinformation in a hostile country to impact them. Then international news agencies picked it up and it got published by media in the US. If the disinformation were harmless to the US, then our Federal Government would not comment and would let the disinformation stand. To repudiate it might have bad effects on national security. Would this be a case of the CIA lying to the American people? No.

3.2k Views · Answer requested by Dana Baucom



Matt Egan, former intelligence officer

Answered Sep 8, 2017 · Author has **2.4k** answers and **1.1m** answer views

It does appear he said something very much along those lines, though I doubt it meant what it appears to mean absent the context. He made the statement not long after he became the Director of Central Intelligence, during a discussion of the fact that, to his amazement, about 80 percent of the contents of typical CIA intelligence publications was based on information from open, unclassified sources, such as newspapers and magazines. Apparently, and reasonably, he judged that about the same proportion of Soviet intelligence products was probably based on open sources, as well. That meant that CIA disinformation programs directed at the USSR wouldn't work unless what was being disseminated by US magazines and newspapers on the same subjects comported with what the CIA was trying to sell the Soviets. Given that the CIA could not possibly control the access to open sources of all US publications, the subjects of CIA disinformation operations had to be limited to topics not being covered by US public media. To be sure, some items of disinformation planted by the CIA in foreign publications might subsequently be discovered and republished by US media. I'm guessing the CIA would not leap to correct those items.

But that is a far cry from concluding that the CIA would (or even could) arrange that “everything the American public believes is false.”

1.2k Views · View Upvoters



Don Harmon, Will not confirm or deny duty with certain US agencies.

Answered Aug 25, 2016 · Author has **741** answers and **177.3k** answer views

No. Various false sources claim “my friend said (he or she) heard it at a meeting. . . .” but the quote appears only in fringe group blogs and websites. Is it possible? Yes, possible, but it is hard to imagine without documentation that the generally sharp Casey would say something so stupid and damning for the CIA, an organization in which he had great pride.

2.8k Views · View Upvoters · Answer requested by Joseph Jeson



Melissa Melton, studied at Missouri State University

Answered Jan 13, 2015

I love how people are still arguing this quote isn't real EVEN AFTER THE SOURCE OF THE ORIGINAL QUOTE AT THE WHITE HOUSE IN 1981 comes in here and personally vouches for hearing it with her own ears where and when... Guess the contents of the quote ARE true.

7.8k Views · View Upvoters





David Chen, Software Engineer at Vimeo (2012-present)

Answered Jan 13, 2015

The best answer is here: [Barbara Honegger's answer to Did CIA Director William Casey really say, "We'll know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false"?](#)

11.4k Views · View Upvoters



Ozgur Zeren, Author at ViaPopuli.com

Answered Oct 22, 2014 · Author has **1.3k** answers and **4.7m** answer views

He doesnt need to have said it. CIA has run many disinformation campaigns against american public.

### [Operation Mockingbird](#)

8.3k Views · View Upvoters



Ido Sarig, lives in San Francisco Bay Area

Answered Sep 10, 2013 · Author has **1.4k** answers and **1m** answer views

Almost certainly not. As pointed out by others, there's a single, uncorroborated source for this - a minor radio talk show host, who did not say where she got this info, and was known as a conspiracy theorist.

6.4k Views · View Upvoters · Answer requested by David McKerracher



Fred Landis, Investigative Reporter

Answered Sep 9, 2013 · Author has **13.7k** answers and **17.8m** answer views

The American public has never been the primary target of any disinformation campaign.

The CIA once had influence in a number of English language publications abroad, some of which stories were reprinted in the US media. This was known as "blowback", and unintended in most cases.

The CIA fabricated a story that the Russians in Afghanistan made plastic bombs in the shape of toys, to blow up children. Casey repeated this story, knowing it to be disinformation, as fact to US journalists and politicians.

5.8k Views · View Upvoters



Mike Leary, Psychotherapist in private practice, Individual-Marital-Parenting-A&D

Answered Sep 9, 2013 · Author has **4.8k** answers and **14.3m** answer views

Judge for yourself what conservatives want.

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