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# WITHDRAWAL SHEET

## Ronald Reagan Library

**Collection Name** NORTH, OLIVER: FILES

**Withdrawer**

DLB 6/1/2005

**File Folder** INCOMING - 12/06/1985 - CLASSIFIED

**FOIA**

F99-008/2

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WILLS

35

ID	Doc Type	Document Description	No of Pages	Doc Date	Restrictions
12553	LETTER	ROBERT OAKLEY TO JAMES HOLLOWAY <i>R 3/5/2007 F99-008/2</i>	3	12/6/1985	B1

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**PENDING REVIEW IN ACCORDANCE WITH E.O. 13233**  
**Ronald Reagan Library**

**Collection:** North, Oliver: Files

**OA/Box:** Box 32

**File Folder:** Incoming - 12/06/1985 - Classified

**Archivist:** loj

**FOIA ID:** F99-008/2 Wills

**Date:** 3/13/2007

DOCUMENT NO. & TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
12553. letter	Robert B. Oakley to <del>Admiral</del> James L. Holloway, 3p	12/6/85	open 2/24/10 KMU

12553



*copy circulated per ELP*

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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*file in*

December 6, 1985

Dear Jim:

With all of the day-to-day work plus preparing for our trip, I have had time for only a quick once-over of the first draft of the report and the latest draft of those issues papers on which consensus is still being developed. Parker will provide more detailed comments, but my general observations are for you personally and, if you agree, to be shared with Don Gregg.

First, the issues papers look very good, with two or three exceptions where more information on what is occurring should produce acceptable fixes. The Hegelian process has worked well in producing realistic, useful agreed papers. More importantly, in many areas the process plus the catalytic effect of the existence of a dynamic, probing Task Force led by the Vice President has produced substantial progress by single agencies and on interagency issues which had long been dead in the water. Obviously, recent terrorist incidents have contributed to the positive reaction but the input of the Working Group has greatly facilitated the emergence of agreed programs and courses of action.

Second, the report needs a lot of work; primarily because it has not been through the same sort of vetting process as the issues papers, but also because there seems not be much awareness of how the report is likely to be used. Once approved by the President, it will become something close to gospel or dogma--to be followed almost blindly by many and to be attacked by others. This means

Admiral James L. Holloway, III,  
Executive Director,  
Vice President's Task Force on  
Combatting Terrorism,  
730 Jackson Place,  
Washington, D.C.

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BY LOJ, NARA, DATE 3/5/07

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-2-

thinking about the dangers of being too detailed or constraining or too frank, particularly since the secret report will certainly leak and be compared with the public report as well as scrutinized by potential political critics of the Administration and by foreign governments. The fact that a number of recommendations and ideas dropped from the issues papers or made less binding have crept back into the report as observations makes this consideration all the more important. The exogesis which will inevitably take place later needs to be taken carefully into account now. I imagine that the Packwood Commission has encountered a similar problem.

Third, the report and issues papers, taken as a whole, convey a very clear impression that there is a solution to international terrorism and that it lies primarily in the better use of active measures by the United States Government. In my judgment, this is as erroneous a conclusion as it is dangerous. Over the past year, there has been a substantial increase in terrorism abroad, beyond our power to affect directly since it originates, develops and acts in countries controlled by other governments. Our knowledge as well as our capability to stop or stunt the growth of these movements and to attack them militarily or legally or psychologically is severely constrained. As CNO you constantly ran up against the problem of needing the cooperation of foreign governments to conduct certain operations. With terrorism it is much more important, and the politics of getting others to cooperate with us are even trickier. Even in the active measures area, there should be a lot of emphasis upon getting others conditioned, trained, equipped, politically willing to do the job themselves and to seek our assistance. We can never do the job alone and current trends foresee a lot more terrorism abroad for a long time, no matter how effective we are unilaterally or in getting other governments to cooperate. Given the power of the gospel, if the Task Force report is open to the interpretation that a lot of progress can be made unilaterally by better organization, and more resources, or that it can be made in the near term even with others, the public and Congress will justifiably ask in a couple of years why the failure and who is responsible. As the Working Group says with respect to the past conduct of public diplomacy, do not promise or imply a promise unless you can make it good.

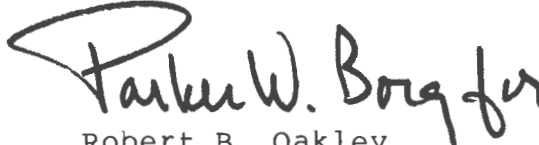
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-3-

Finally, I believe that the report very badly overstates the political impact of terrorism--on this country and upon other countries' perception of the strength and will of the USG. The fact that there are so few casualties combined with the fact that terrorism takes place abroad reduces what could be a major problem, and does so by minimizing the direct responsibility of the USG to prevent or resolve or retaliate for terrorist incidents. The three Beirut bombings were different and had a major impact because USG security seemed so faulty. We should not overdramatize the importance of the problem, lest we play the terrorists' game and needlessly arouse the Congress and public opinion. The polls do not show, at least not yet, that terrorism is an issue of overwhelming political concern such as nuclear armament, inflation, etc.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert B. Oakley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

Robert B. Oakley  
Acting Ambassador-at-Large  
for Counter-Terrorism

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