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The CEO and the CIA



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By **JIM GERAGHTY**

May 5, 2015 8:30 PM

How Carly Fiorina managed and advised the 'poobahs' at Langley.

One week after 9/11, Michael Hayden, the director of the National Security Agency, the electronic surveillance arm of the U.S. government, had a long list of problems. High on the list was the fact that the NSA needed a ton of new high-tech equipment, particularly servers, right away, to handle a vastly expanded, critically important workload.

Hayden called up the CEO of Hewlett Packard, Carly Fiorina. “HP made precisely the equipment we needed, and we needed in bulk,” says Robert Deitz, who was general counsel at the NSA from 1998 to 2006. Deitz recalls that a tractor-trailer full of HP servers and other equipment was on the Washington, D.C. Beltway, en route to retailers, at the very moment Hayden called. Fiorina instructed her team to postpone the retailer delivery and

have the driver stop. An NSA police car met up with the tractor-trailer and the truck proceeded, with an armed escort, to NSA headquarters in Fort Meade, Maryland.

It was an early moment in the close professional relationship between Hayden and Fiorina. Five years later, President George W. Bush named Hayden director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Upon assuming control at Langley, Hayden decided that he wanted to create an ‘External Advisory Board.’ He once again turned to Fiorina, and she went on to chair that board.

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The most obvious knock on Fiorina’s newly announced presidential bid is that she has never been elected to any government office. But during the Bush presidency, Fiorina walked the corridors of the CIA and other high offices of government, assembling recommendations for national-security policy and developing a close working relationship with some of the most powerful officials in the administration. She’s already begun to cite these years in an attempt to counter those critics who say she lacks the experience needed to be commander-in-chief.

When Hayden moved to the CIA, Deitz became his senior counselor. He served as the CIA’s main liaison to the advisory board, although he says Hayden and Fiorina had regular private lunch meetings.

“The board had a lot of egos — these were people from academia, retired three- and four-star generals, big poobahs from private industry,” Deitz remembers. “It was a challenging board to run. She would generally sit quietly, ask questions, but you never got a sense she was dominating or big-footing — but by the end of the meeting, she had gotten exactly what she wanted. . . . Polite, but you couldn’t push her around.”

During the Bush presidency, Fiorina walked the corridors of the CIA and other high offices of government, assembling recommendations for national security policy and developing a close working relationship with some of the most powerful officials in the administration.

At first a member and then the chair of the advisory board, Fiorina had “more or less the highest” security clearance, Deitz says. The board would meet roughly twice a month, running through an agenda determined by what was concerning Hayden the most.

The final two-and-a-half years of the Bush presidency marked a particularly tumultuous time for the CIA. Hayden’s predecessor, Porter Goss, a former CIA clandestine officer and congressman, resigned after a turbulent one-year tenure marked by complaints about his management style. The new position of Director of National Intelligence altered the old hierarchy, and Goss and the DNI, John Negroponte, fought turf battles. Outside of Washington, General David Petraeus began his “surge” in Iraq in January 2007, the Israelis launched an airstrike against a suspected Syrian nuclear facility in September 2007, and Russia invaded Georgia in the summer of 2008.

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A particular concern for Fiorina's board was the rapid unraveling of the intelligence community's culture of secrecy. Classified information appeared in the U.S. press with disturbing regularity. In perhaps the most spectacular example of how some CIA personnel were willing to disregard rules and laws about the secret nature of their work, Michael Scheuer, then working for the CIA as a special adviser to the chief of the bin Laden unit, wrote and published an anonymous book criticizing U.S. foreign policy and the Bush administration's approach to the War on Terror.

Deitz says one of the big questions before Fiorina's panel was, "in light of all the leaks in the intelligence community — and remember this is pre-Edward Snowden — does foreign intelligence as we know it have a future in this country?" The board's specific conclusions remain classified, but Deitz says that they concluded that it was "unclear" if the intelligence community could continue to function without major adjustments, and recommended specific changes.

Deitz is now supporting Fiorina's presidential bid; Hayden has signed on as a policy advisor to Jeb Bush's campaign, but told CNN that Fiorina "contributed a great deal," and that her work "helped me with my judgment." Hayden did not reply to a request for comment from NATIONAL REVIEW.

#related#"I can sense your antennae quivering," says Deitz, after mentioning Fiorina's work with Hayden during his NSA years. "He had relationships with many, many of the senior poobahs in the high-tech community. It had nothing to do with implanting spyware or any of that kind of stuff. The conversations were, 'where is high-tech going?' These innovations were coming out at the speed of light."

Fiorina's previous work at Hewlett Packard did bring her face-to-face with some key foreign leaders who were undoubtedly on the CIA's radar during those years. When she addressed the 2001 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, a month after 9/11, she found herself as Vladimir Putin's opening act.

"How you position yourself in relation to your competitors can mean the difference between success and failure. Applying this principle to today's program, I keep wondering how it is that I got positioned to speak in the slot before the President of the Russian Federation — on the subject of change, no less," Fiorina said in her remarks. "Hewlett-Packard has been at the center of a lot of change in our 62-year history. But President Putin was elected president in the first democratic transition in Russia in 1,000 years. Talk about giving new meaning to the word 'invent.'"

During that summit, Putin and Fiorina had a 45-minute private meeting. "We [HP] did business in Russia, and we had employees in Russia," Fiorina says in an e-mailed statement to NR. "He was interested in meeting me and I was interested in meeting him. He told jokes and I took the measure of the man."

The time immediately after 9/11 probably marked the pinnacle of U.S.-Russian relations under Putin, who was then widely seen as a tough, knowledgeable ally against Islamist fanaticism. Russia's aggression beyond its borders in the years since — most notably in Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine — means he's likely to be a top-tier foe of American interests for as long as he continues to call the shots in Moscow.

By this year's CPAC, Fiorina was contrasting her skeptical view of Putin with that of the likely Democratic nominee.

“Like Mrs. Clinton, I too have traveled the globe. Unlike Mrs. Clinton, I know that flying is an activity, not an accomplishment,” Fiorina said. “I have met Vladimir Putin, and I know his ambition will not be detoured by a gimmicky, red reset button.”

— *Jim Geraghty writes the Campaign Spot for National Review Online.*

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