

David Cariens - The Analysis Writer

[00:00:00] Welcome to analyst talk with Jason elders like coffee with an analyst, or it could be whiskey with an analyst, reading a spreadsheet, linking crime events, identifying a series and getting the latest scoop on association news and training. So please don't beat that analyst and join us as we define the law enforcement analysis profession.

One episode ahead time.

Thank you for joining me. I have many aspects of your life for progressing. My name is Jason elder and today our guest has 16 years of intelligence and crime analysis experience, and he spent 31 years as a CIA officer with a total of 55 years of experience.

Overall, he's an expert in intelligent writing. He's authored books, such as intelligence and crime technology, a glossary of terms of acronyms and a handbook for crime and intelligence analyst. He teaches intelligence analysis for both the FBI and FINCEN after a family member was a victim in a mass shooting in 2002.

He now examines and analyzes mass shooting. You can often find him [00:01:00] every year presenting at the IALEIA conference, please. Welcome David Cariens,

David, how are we doing? I'm fine. Thank you, Jason. Good to see you.

It is good to hear from you and see you as well. So I am glad we are doing this. I quite of. An set of experiences that you have here.

So I hope I did your intro

justice. Ah, that that's fine. That's fine. , I'm afraid too much of me in an introduction would put everyone to sleep.

definitely don't wanna do that. Let's see here. I think it was 2010 at the IALEIA conference in Nashville that we met. And I had the pleasure of sitting through your intelligence writing class.

And for those that ever get an opportunity to be to see his David's presentation, I highly, highly, highly recommend it. It is fantastic. So here today, we're gonna talk obviously about writing and certainly we'll [00:02:00] talk about your time

at CIA and we'll get into your law enforcement experience. And tips for, for writing for the audience.

So, okay. So, but let's start from the beginning. How did, did you discover the law enforcement analysis

profession? Okay, well actually I, I'm gonna going to define it slightly differently. I'm gonna say, how did I discover the intelligence profession? Okay. It was completely by accident. I didn't really know that much about it.

I was a student working on my PhD in German and Polish history sitting on a nice fall day with a window open of. Five of us in the professor's office with a seminar, talking about Germans in the 18th century and some God forsaken town in central Germany. And I kept thinking, there's got to be something more to life than this

And I had, you know, after spending seven years in school, I, all of a sudden I had this epiphany and I've gotta have a break. There's something else gonna so I, [00:03:00] after class I talked with my best friend and he was a former military intelligence officer, and I said, Dick, I don't wanna do this anymore.

What am I gonna do? I was gonna, I had my whole life pointed toward being a German Polish history, profess. And he said, have you thought of intelligence? And I said, not really. I said, you're gonna tell me about it. And so he said, it's really interesting. Why don't you go to the placement office on campus and see what they can set up for you?

So I went over I told them I would talk to anybody , you know, anybody that might be interested. And this may come as a surprise, Jason, but there's not a huge demand for people with Polish, German history backgrounds. . So I interviewed everybody that would talk to me and I got one job interview out of all of it, and it was CIA.

Wow. And I had no idea what I was getting in for when, when I was intrigued by it. But [00:04:00] frankly, my total idea of intelligence was the James Bond movies. Okay. Mm-hmm I, because I just hadn't given it any thought and I thought I had some reservations and I thought, well, what have I, what have I got to lose?

So they flew me to Washington a couple of times cuz I was, I was in the bay area and interviewed me and hired me. And here I am , that's how I got started. I didn't get into police intelligence, however, until after nine 11 and the nine 11

commission in their in their report and in their work with, with Congress, it was determined that the intelligence community would adopt a lot of the CIA standards in terms of writing and presenting intelligence.

And there were about a dozen of us that would start with the FBI. And there were about a dozen of us who were asked if we would be willing to teach at the FBI academy. At that point I was the I had been. [00:05:00] By the, the head of the, the training unit at CIA university to train all of the new analysts in, in intelligence analysis, writing, and briefing.

And I said, sure, I'd love to go down. So we, we the interesting, interesting side note on that is if you remember from the nine 11 report, everybody in the intelligence community got a black. For now. Okay. Well, the FBI really got a black eye and if an organization can suffer from some sort of depression, that was the case in the FBI.

Because if you remember when I, well, at least when I was growing up the FBI, these were the guys, they made movies about the, the TV shows about them and they, they were always held up in high esteem. Now, all of a sudden nationwide they're being beaten severely about the head because of, of nine 11. And by the way, that's not what happened to them at that time is really not fair.

We could have a whole, a whole broadcast on [00:06:00] that one. But, but at any rate we were told to go down and the, the funny thing was you see the CIA. In nine in, in 2005 and 2006, we were still the new guy on the block. We were formed in 1947. The FBI goes back to the end of world war I. So we were one of the things I still remember from the briefing about going down is you will not mention CIA while you are there because their nerves and sensitivity is this really raw.

So we had to only talk about the intelligence community yeah. While we were there, we were given instructions on what we could say and not say that's, that's how sensitive the program was. And then from that I was asked by you, I, I heard you in one of your broadcasts, you mentioned Lisa Palmeri. Okay.

Well, Lisa had asked the CIA for someone to teach intelligence and crime analysis at the IALEIA LEIU conference. And my [00:07:00] name was the one that was put forward. And that's how I started with L I U and IA. And from that, from that audience, then I began getting requests to teach classes and it just simply blossomed into something that I never dreamed.

It would, I was almost as busy teaching for, for about four or five years as I was when I was a full-time employee, because the demand was so great. So that's a long story, but that's how I came to it. And I, I should add very quickly before we move on the work with, with the police intelligence, I found absolutely fascinating because I was dealing with very bright, dedicated people who were.

Addressing intelligence problems that I never had to address ne they, they were never, they were not on my screen at all at any time. And it was fascinating to work with them in terms of, you know, organized crime, drug trafficking human trafficking, child pornography, things, things of [00:08:00] this nature. One of the classes that I helped teach at the FBI academy involved working with mid and more senior level analysts.

And we actually worked with them on live problems, papers that they were working on. And I found it absolutely fascinating and very rewarding to see that these, these principles that, that I, well, frankly, from a personal standpoint, that in some way I was helping them to improve the products that they were, that they were turning out.

So. Yeah, I should, also, before we go any further, tell you that, that yes, I have been doing this for 55 years. I'm still doing some teaching and some speaking and I absolutely love the profession. Nice. It is. It is. It's terribly difficult to give up because it is so rewarding, not in terms of money, you'll never get rich and I'm walking proof of that.

But the, in terms of the job re you know, the. Sense of satisfaction and reward. If you [00:09:00] have, if your analysis is read at any level, whether it's state local, federal government, and a high level level policy maker makes a decision that pertains to the safety of this country and its citizens based on what you write, man, that is job satisfaction.

That's, that's hard to equal. I will tell you I've been there. Yeah. Yes.

I agree. So I, I think it's interesting. The, you mentioned the FBI mentioned the CIA and they're just really. Two different siblings together because the FBI seems like they're always in a lot of cookie jars. They're out in front, they're in public, they're in a lot of news stories.

Whereas the CIA, I feel, it's not news stories that they're in. It's like rumors that they are like doing secret experiments on people or, or what. Right. Right. I know.

And then there's, and then

there's the NSA. Basically for the most part it's been under the radar, I think, but the, the lone exception with the NSA is when [00:10:00] they, there was a wire tapping stuff that went on right back, I think 2008.

But other than that, the NSA you, most people don't even know about at all. So I, I find it funny that you have these three sibling agencies and they really behave very differently.

Well, they have different, they have three very different charters. And, and that's why, and if you, if you recall this, the CIA, our charter is only to do foreign intelligence.

Mm-hmm, strictly prohibited from doing anything in the United States until recently. Okay. And when I say until recently, this is, this is what I mean that when I was at the agency, suppose you were following a, the CIA was following a terrorist mm-hmm and that terrorist, we were building the case against him.

We're following him. We're looking at his connections, we're doing all of these things. And he comes into the United States. Well, we had to handle the case. The case over to the FBI time was lost. And in some cases, the terrorist was lost. It was [00:11:00] inefficient. So there, there are instances.

If, if we have an overseas case in the individuals, it's my understanding. I was never an operations officer. Sure. But it's my understanding that if you have a terrorist coming into the United States, that that we could now work with the FBI and, and we work very closely with them, which is a, this is one of the really good things to come out of nine 11.

Okay. Is a, is a much closer cooperation between all three of the organizations. And I jokingly, well, let me, let me also say before the, the stop to think of what the two organizations, the FBI and the CIA are set up to do, the FBI is set up to track down the criminals. As I said, the drug traffick or what, whatever it is, bring them to justice.

Try them and, and lock 'em up. Mm-hmm that, that's what they do now. What is the CIA set up to do? CIA is set up to gather clandestinely intelligence overseas in effect, the CIA is set up to [00:12:00] get people to break the law. because you see, you may not wanna hear that. Mm-hmm but, but if you recruit a spy in country X, what is that spy doing?

He's breaking that country's law, isn't he? Yes. You see mm-hmm so, so you are absolutely right. There's a whole difference mentality and between the two organizations and that also. Spills over into our products because the FBI who's the main product of the FBI. It's the legal community. So their reports can be used in litigation.

Therefore they are argued differently. They are argued to legal standards. CIA reports are not argued to legal standards. Okay. So there is a complete difference. As to what you will accept in terms of evidence and what is the threshold, and , when do you write, for example, I've written intelligence that has gone into the president's daily brief.

That's been based on a three [00:13:00] sentence press announcement out of a communist country. Mm-hmm, , that's really not going to happen in the FBI because they need the evidence. They, they operate under, under a different standard. So the marriage between the two organizations and they are working together closely, and this is a tremendous plus in the, in the wake of nine 11, I'm, I'm really pleased.

You have FBI analysts sitting next to, to CIA analysts sitting next to state department people. This is, this is a huge step forward. But, but you still have, each organization has its own requirements. And was set up to do certain things and somehow these all have to be blended and melded together.

Okay. Hmm. Okay. So you

mentioned that you weren't a field officer with the CIA. No, but you're CIA officer. How would you describe the work that you did in your 31 years with, as a

CIA officer? Well, I, I was an intelligence analyst. Mm-hmm I was a [00:14:00] political analyst and my specialty, my area of specialty was Eastern Europe.

Okay. And specifically I was a Baan analyst. I worked in I started out when I first joined, joined the agency and, and people will think, well, this is typical government. Since my background in Eastern Europe, would've been in Poland, where do they put me? They put me on Bulgaria, which is about as far away from Poland in Eastern Europe, as you can get

Okay. I didn't know what else to do with you. Yeah, they did. Yeah. They, what are we gonna do this young guy. But as a bonus to sweeten the pot, they not

only did, did they give me Bulgaria? They gave me Albania, so , but I was happy to have him.

I, I was thrilled with it. I had a great time. I was concerned about I didn't really, I'd had one course history course in the Ottoman empire and that's the closest I came to knowing anything about the Balkans. I had a mentor who worked with me and I said, I don't know anything [00:15:00] about, and, and he said about this to share, and they said, well, don't worry.

We have a program for all new. And you will be rewriting our national intelligence survey. This is a publication that no longer exists, but it was sort of a, a basic encyclopedia, many encyclopedia of a given country or region that covered everything, politics, economics, military culture, music, art at every, everything mm-hmm

And, and they would give you about six months to, to review what existed and then to do research and update it and bring it up to date. So that was their approach to bringing, but they also had you doing current intelligence under the supervision of senior analysts. So I, I was also writing some current intelligence on Bulgaria, but the whole time I was building up my speed you might be interested in a little war story on this.

Sure. All right. Because of my concern about Bulgar, not knowing anything. I asked my mentor. I said, look, Jean, [00:16:00] I know nothing about this. Isn't there, anybody in the CIA I can talk to AB about Bulgarian. He said, I said, doesn't someone know a lot. And he said, oh yeah. He said, there's a woman over in operations.

Her name is Mary Tasha. Her family fled. When the communist took over, she still has family members who are, are fairly high level officials in the Bulgarian communist party. She knows that country from a to Z mm-hmm . I said, fantastic. Where is she? I, I need to meet her. And he said, you can't, you can't talk with her

And I said, I said, what? You know, cuz she's in the, we're in the same building. And he said, well, you don't understand Dave, the operations people really. Want us to know their people and, and they, they don't want us coming over. And, and the control and our interaction with the operations people is very tightly controlled.

Well, I was out of college about a year, and I hadn't been beaten about the head by the bureaucracy. So I wasn't [00:17:00] gonna take this. So what I did was

we used to have to hand carry memos and things from the front office over to our counterparts and operations. And I knew the secretaries hated to do that. So one day when I do knew a major memo was going over, I managed to find myself in our front office.

And I said, by the way, I'm going over to operations. You have anything you want me to carry? The secret has said, oh, if you would take this memo over, I would appreciate it. Okay. And in the building, it's CIA. You're gonna, I dunno whether you've heard this story or not, but it is true. We actually separating us from operations.

We had turn styles. With a, with a security officer in them. And for me to go over to operations, I had to show my badge that I had the proper credentials and go through the turn styles to get in mm-hmm those are the sort of things we had to do. Yeah. But at any rate, I so I walked into to the operations east Europe, and I said, here's the memo such and such.

And I said, by the way, where does Mary Tasha [00:18:00] sit? And I said, oh, she's down right down this row of offices. She's the last one on the left. So I went down. Stuck my head. And I said, Hey, Mary, my name's Dave Cariens. Wonder if I could have a few minutes of your time? I'm the new analyst training to work on Bulgarian.

She said, oh, come in and sit down. So I spent one of the most rewarding hours that I have ever spent in intelligence. And I said, Mary, this is fantastic. I said, you are resource. I need, can we talk? And she said, no, we can't we didn't have this conversation. Yeah, exactly. She said, if your boss finds out and my boss finds out, we're gonna be in trouble.

So Mary, I would still wouldn't take no. So Mary and I set up a deal where once a month, at a certain time, in the morning in the cafeteria, we would bump into each. And have a coffee and at that time I'd have a list of questions for, and she answered, I was running operations against the op I was just gonna say you infiltrated the CIA.

Yeah. [00:19:00] I, well, I figure it CIA. They ought understand, right? Yes. So did they ever catch you doing this? No. No, they never did. No, they never did. Which, which, which gave me pause.

so then it sounds like

you become the subject matter expert then in for Bulgaria of, for the, the CIA and did so that you were supposed to essentially consume all information reports. If it had to do with Bulgaria, you were to consume it and study it and report back

on it. That's exactly right.

That that's exactly right. And what they have in, in CIA and sometimes have asked those question, particularly with other intelligence organizations about The selection of analysts. And and I, what I tell them, cuz I was, was very much as, as I, I told you earlier involved in the training of new analysts, mm-hmm we give our intelligence analyst two years to become what is known [00:20:00] as an a standalone analyst.

Now what does that mean? You have two years to become the

subject

matter expert on your country. You do not have to wait to be told, to write something. You're following the traffic. You go to your management and you say, this has come in about Bulgaria or whatever it is. And I think it needs to be reported.

And we had, we have various levels of publications. Of course, the president's daily brief down all the way to publications for fellow analysts. So you even say this, I believe we should propose a, a PDB note. A note is four para as is four sentences. It's a one paragraph on this and you need to do that.

And then the second thing is you need to be able to write it

against

the intelligence style of writing. And so if, if at the end of two years, you are really not on top of your, of the programs of, of whatever it is that you're following substantively, or you cannot [00:21:00] produce a draft that it may need editing, but it's still a decent draft that adheres to the intelligence.

Style of writing the CIA will try and find you another position within the organization. Hmm. Okay. So they're, they're very strict on that. They also do something else and I really, they they're not paying me for this but, but, but, but I think is really good and that is they take training extremely seriously and to teach in the new intelligence analysts at CIA university, you must be a proven

intelligence analyst and they will give you the, the training skills to teach you how to, to organize a class and teach a class in those things.

But you must be a successful intelligence. Before they will put you in front of the incoming analyst. Okay. Hmm. That's that is important. And it's important for this reason, I was asked my career if I would be an operations [00:22:00] officer case officer, would I like to do that to, to I'm. I mean, not be the officer, but train them.

Mm-hmm and

I

said, I would love to train them, but I said, this is the problem. Well, it's not a, I can read the textbook and the course material and I under I can understand it and I can present it. But the first time one of these operations officers asks me, this is my problem. When I was in the field and I was running an agent in Moscow and I, this was my problem.

How do you handle that? My answer is, I don't know, because I have never been an operations officer mm-hmm and that's the same thing with, with, with the analyst. If you have an analyst standing in front of the class and you get one of these hardball questions, you are prepared to answer, this is how you handle it.

Hmm. So.

With the CIA what do you feel that are some key attributes that they look for when they're hiring their

analyst? You know, well, first of all, because of the number of applicants, mm-hmm I had a friend who worked up on a, in. I mean, right up under [00:23:00] the, the deputy director for a while, and one of his, duties was reviewing the applications that come in, the CIA gets 10,000 applications a month to work for him.

So they have to start somewhere. And I do not agree with this. And, and I, if you want, I can tell you why, but, but I do not agree with this, that you, that, for example, to be an analyst, you have to have a master's degree. Okay. So, and they just automat, if you don't have a master's degree, it's my understanding that your application is put aside if you want to be an analyst.

Okay. So they have some, some sort of artificial rules that, that they follow in terms of selecting. They're all they're looking for people who are, who have demonstrated an ability to do would be my impression and, and. Demonstrated ability to do research and, and to pull fragmentary bits of evidence into some cohesive logical argument.

And they, they do give the applicants a, a pretty strict writing test. Okay. [00:24:00] They wanna see how they, how, how well they're able to formulate an argument. And there are a lot of very bright people who simply have a, a difficult time not forming a logical argument in speech, but they have a, a difficult time in putting it down on paper.

I don't know why that is. But, but it is true. Yeah. Seems like two different skill. Yeah. It's two different skill sets. If you have a foreign language that is great. If you have traveled overseas, that is great. And I found out after I wa after I was hired that one of the questions I was asked was absolutely vital.

And I didn't know it mm-hmm . And that even though I would not serve overseas as an operations officer, I was asked, are you willing to travel overseas or even live overseas? And I said, absolutely. That's one of my goals, which, and I achieved it. I lived overseas twice. And I traveled extensively. I didn't know it, but they will, they will turn [00:25:00] people down based on everything else may be perfect in terms of, but, but if you're, if you're not flexible in terms of going overseas, when they need you overseas, they can't use you.

And that makes sense. Mm-hmm it makes sense. Yeah. So

you've worked several decades with the CIA, when you started, you're going through the seventies, the data that you were had access to within the eighties, nineties, and even into the two thousands that it seems like there's.

Way more data by the time you're ending your career in the two thousands as opposed to what you were dealing with

in the seventies. Yes. Oh yes, absolutely. And, and, and if you wanna know the truth, I look now at, at what intelligence analysts, the flood of information and, and I'm so glad that I'm not having to do it.

I thought it was terrible when I joined the agency. And again, if you'll allow me to just do, do a bit of a sidebar, but it's related to it, do you know how information in the 1960s. [00:26:00] And 1970s was delivered to the analysts at

CIA and probably in, in all of the intelligence organization, this is the way it was done.

Once an hour, a person up in the operations center, the operations center is the 24 hour sort of I don't know what you call it. All. All, everything comes in there. All the Cland reporting, they monitor radios, televisions, worldwide, everything comes in all it's, it's the all source center for all intelligence coming into the CIA.

And what they would do is they have some officers who are in charge of regions and their job is simply to print off or tear off those reports and stack them all. All the Bulgarian goes in one stack, all the Yugo swab goes in another. Then all the Polish goes in another and they get a shopping cart, just like the ones at Safeway.

Yeah. And they stack those in there. And once an hour, they would wheel the cart down to us and they would come to our desk and [00:27:00] drop the stack of paper. Oh my on our desks. And, and that's what we went through. That's how it was done. Oh, it might me of like the return items at the

store. Right. When someone returns an item and

they gotta go put it back on the shelf, they'll have several shopping carts

there and then they'll call, they call whoever's in charge with the department to come put this back on the.

Yeah, well, I, you know, and interestingly enough, again, I'm gonna give you another short war story. Sure. One of the things I was, as I told you, I was concerned about not knowing that much about the part of Eastern Europe I was dealing with. And I joined in November of 60, 66. I went into their nine month training program in February of 67.

I came out in and went back on, on, on duty as a current intelligence officer in September of 67. And I was expressing my concern and one, and, and my mentor said to me, look, Dave, don't worry about it because in the summer in Eastern Europe, everybody goes on vacation. You're gonna [00:28:00] have three months where you can really catch up on everything and do do all of that.

That's great. Well, that was the summer of 1968. What happened in the summer of 1968? That's that's nine years before me. So I don't know. Let me, lemme tell you, ask your grandfather. It was the Soviet led occupation of CCHO Slovakia.

Okay. And it began building in, in in April. And so what happened as the summer progressed, the CIA set up a task force to follow on 24 hours a day, follow the developments in SHEO Slovakia.

Well, what did that mean? That meant that there were only two people left in all of the European division to read the daytime traffic. one of the senior branch chiefs and the new guy on the block. Me. Oh man. I'm sitting there with all those stacks. I don't just have Bulgaria. I've got everybody, but Poland, Poland all went to the Polish task force.[00:29:00]

Yeah, I had everybody else hung Romania Bulgaria, you know, Alban. I, I had the, I had the Yugoslavia that works. So I'm, you're going through, you're making snap decisions. Well, I get this paper I lift up on there's a paper in it. It was a brown sheet of

paper

that looked like something that the butcher would wrap fish in.

Okay. But it had all these, these hash marks and, and Xs and dots and slices and words on it. And, and it said GD. German democratic Republic. And I looked at it and it said, then it said communications, and then it just had the words stand down. And I had no idea what that meant. I knew I had never seen anything like it before, but keep in mind, this is like one or two in the afternoon.

And my boss is on the phone. You can imagine he's fielding phone calls from Congress, from all over the place. And I don't wanna interrupt him with stuff. So I set this sheet of paper aside and it kept staring at me. [00:30:00] And I, I said, you know, what is, what is Frank gonna do to me? Is he gonna kick me out? Is he gonna throw something at me?

I'm gonna go in. I wanna show him this. Mm-hmm . So I took it in, I handed it to him. He stood up and said, holy shit, they're going in. It was, it was. Military stand down and communications, the precursor to the occupation. The CIA went into immediate emergency mode and I'm sitting at.

So, I mean, I'm the new guy and I just did not know what I was doing. Yeah. So the only thing that I had, it was so odd and so unusual that I've given the crisis situation. I felt I had to draw it to his attention. And boy, am I glad I did and now I'm sure that as, as a result, I think the CIA was the first to notify the [00:31:00] white house that it looked like the Soviet and, and, and east German.

And I forget who else went. I think, I don't know whether Hungary went in or not, but any, anyway, it was, it was that they were going in. But now today, of course, the, you, you've got, you've got tons of things coming in you know, via the systems that they have set up. And, and I really don't know how people manage it.

I'm right there with you, cuz I, I feel that you could spend your whole day just on social media. Yes. Facebook, Twitter, you could spend your whole day right there. Let alone all the other reports and stuff that you're supposed to consume. You could spend your whole entire time on two platform. And to me it's just like a fire hydrant to the face that you're trying to consume all this stuff and make

intelligence out of it.

Well, I, I think, but I'm not sure. When I was there. They, the CIA, when I was there had open source intelligence analysts, mm-hmm now keep in mind.

[00:32:00] That's long before social media and things like, like that. Yeah. But never the nevertheless given the, the quantity, even when I was an.

And the amount of open source intelligence they had, they had analysts doing just that, just following the press and the TV and the radio on that. Yeah. And I was in communications with, with those people frequently.

Hello, this is Brian Gray. And my advice for analyst is don't settle for mediocrity. If you want to be happy in this career, long term, you can't be a minimalist. Just don't do what you're asked for, do what you know is right. And don't ever, ever substitute quantity for quality. And if you haven't found a way to put design to work for you, you're not doing your best.

Hey, this is Don Rey. I'm here with adjacent elder on analyst talk. And I wanna share with you that there is a new book coming up for supervisors called [00:33:00] building a crime analysis legacy. This a law enforcement supervisor's roadmap to building long lasting high quality analytical capacity. August 10th is the day that it comes out.

Don't miss out tools, strategies, everything you need to build. Quality analytics is in this book. So be sure to get your copy on August 10th.

I do wanna fast forward a little bit here, cuz I wanna get to your time with Eylea starting to teach, getting to the law enforcement side of things you had

mentioned it before that you started to get into just different issues that you never thought that you would get into.

Right? You talked about, you know, drugs and child pornography and different ways, different issues you'd never thought you'd get into. When you, when you first get into this. Maybe a little bit compare and [00:34:00] contrast what you experience in the CIA with what you've experienced in

law enforcement.

Well, let me, let me just say a couple of things that goes back to what I said earlier. The standards for going to print are very different. When I first started going to, to the FBI, I would be asking them the FBI analyst to make a judgment on one or two sources. And they said, no, we can't do that.

We can't do that. And my answers to them was, but, but the one, what is, what is important here is the time sensitivity. If you wait to get more sources, it may be too late by then. So you, and that, that was one thing that was a real eye opener to me, with the FBI. They, they were very much tied to, to the legal form of very detailed argumentation.

Okay. Which is. Not what the CIA does. The CIA is much more like a very quick journalist approach. [00:35:00] Okay. Paragraphs tell 'em what the argument is. The feeling being that if a consumer wants all of that detail, they were asked and they do. And that's when we come in with, with, with, with the more detailed argument.

So that was the first thing that I saw in, in terms of, of the. Of law enforcement intelligence, what I'm also seeing. And, and I had this at, and I alluded to it when I talked about the turn styles and not being able to talk to the ops officers. When I joined the CIA, the analysts were sort of second class citizens and that has been the case.

And it is to some extent still in police intelligence intelligence, and also in some of the work that's done at the FBI. And the problem is, is, is a lack of understanding on the part of what intelligence can do and should do. Okay. And so That, that is a problem. And that is something that I've worked with, some of the analysts, how do we at the, at the FBI and in some of the police forces, you know, how do we get [00:36:00] around this?

How, how do we get people to listen to us? And, and cuz you do get pushback. I mean there, the people who've been in their career, 20, 25 years, what we've,

we've always done it this way. Why do we need to change now? Mm-hmm but, but the argument that I give them and I, I did this at CIA is look, if you're a case officer or you're a police officer.

You're out there on the street and, and you may be an undercover individual. You, you may be in infiltrated, a gang or a drug organization, something like you're putting your life on the line to get information aren't you mm-hmm are you happy? If that information goes to someone who you considers nothing more than a file clerk don't you really want it to go to a first rate analyst who processes it and, and makes sure that the information gets to the decision maker that it needs to get to.

So those are some of the, some of the things that, that I've seen and, and some of the problems that I see.

So then you start teaching then, [00:37:00] and you're teaching different students that I, I, when we were doing the prep call yesterday, you had an interesting story to tell about I think you were teaching in Canada and you had somebody ask you about some intern.

Yes coming in.

Will you share that story? I sure will. Well, it's, it's my feeling. And I that, that the young people coming into the profession are exactly what you need. They're bright, they're enthusiastic. They've not been beaten down by the bureaucracy. So when I teach and when I was teaching at CIA, wherever I go, I tell them to value these young people, because they're looking at, at the problems that you've been looking at for a long time, but they're looking at them with a fresh eye.

They may see something that you don't see. And I think I told you about at CIA, something that, that I think that, that impressed me right from the outset that I was told to call everybody by first name. And that includes the director of central intelligence agency. Bob gates is a former analyst. I, I worked with him and I [00:38:00] knew him and he did this with all.

If we had to take a report to him, he was Bob and I was Dave. Yes. Yeah. Okay. That and the, I, the idea is that the, the what's behind that is that ideas are the lifeblood of intelligence. You do not want any artificial barrier to break it. So I was in Canada teaching for the Royal Canadian mounted police and the opening day, the sponsor, the course.

We have a couple of interns. Do you mind if we put them in the course? And I said, fine with me. I don't care. Who's in it. Mm-hmm . And I made the point that, that young people it's important as intelligence officers, that you listen to the young people that that are brought in, listen to their ideas because they may be right and you may be wrong.

Well, I think about on the second exercise, these two interns, without a doubt turned in the best papers, the best analytic paragraphs that I got. So I couldn't help myself. When I, when I gave the feedback to the exercise, [00:39:00] I said, this class just proved my point. I said, the two interns that, that you have in this class gave, turned in the best paragraphs.

They don't really have the experience, but they had the analytic ability after they understood what the writing and analytic principles were. They applied them to the problem and, and they turned in something. Absolutely excellent. And they were just interns and they'd be, they beat the analysts out at it.

So I think that's the wisdom of, of listening to anyone, no matter what, at what stage or what point they are in their career. And making sure that everybody that comes to the table has a voice and is comfortable saying what's on their mind. All right. Let's

get into some of the principles then, cuz I, I think it's a good exercise to explain why those two interns had better

paragraphs.

Okay. the, the really the hallmark of intelligence writing revolves around [00:40:00] conceptualization. I don't care if you have one page, bit of intelligence source or whether you. 20 different intelligence sources after you have read it. And after you've thought about it and analyzed it, what is the one point?

The one overriding significant intelligence point that the customer or, or, or reader needs to know. And in teaching intelligence, writing some, some of your listeners may have had intelligence writing courses. I refer to it as the, what, what has happened. And the, so what, what does it mean? And it's the, so what that you're being paid for anybody can say there was an assassination attempt on the prime minister of X country this morning.

The intelligence officer is the one that says, what does it mean? And that is extremely significant. And it is, is very, very difficult to. Because it runs against

all of the training that most of us have had in academic writing, where you start out your paragraphs with the smallest bit of evidence and you take the reader [00:41:00] almost by the hand and walk them through until the last line of the last paragraph.

You tell them what it means. Mm-hmm intelligence writing, flips it. And for any of your, of you, of your listeners who are thinking about go the profession of being an intelligence. And, and, and writing frightens you off, don't be afraid because intelligence writing really relies on the very basics of the English language and good intelligence writing relies on sentences with the little or no internal punctuation.

So if you are always befuddled by where you put commas and semicolons, forget it, you've found the right profession, intelligence, writing likes strong, active voice sentences, not passive voice intelligence writing. And in fact, one of the things, when I teach classes, I ask for people's hobbies and I'm looking for people who write and I've had people who've, I've had a, a romance novelist who published eight or 10 novels to be an intelligence writer.

[00:42:00] It's going to be very difficult for her for this reason. She, once she's had a lot of success in one form of writing, but that form of writing relies heavily on adjectives on mood nuance, innuendo, none of which we are allowed. okay. Yes, that's we don't do it. So she has to eliminate adjectives. She has to almost eliminate completely eliminate adverts.

So it's, it's based on a very strict, basic use of the English language. And as I said, straightforward, declarative active voice sentences should make up the bulk of your intelligence writing. There are, there are some idiosyncrasies to it. We, we do use bullets and frankly I've been brainwashed. I love bullets.

Me too. Yeah. Well, what it tells me is that the, the author has taken time. To break down something that's very complicated and put it in a form that is visually digestible. That's what bullets are. Yeah. Whereas if you put that those [00:43:00] bullets in a long drawn. Run on sentence. No one would read it. Yeah. Yeah.

So, yeah, I'd

rather read something that has bullets in it than like five or six paragraphs.

Well, the problem with bullets and where they're abused in intelligence writing, you must have that topic sentence with the what and so what to give the bullets

context. Because the bullets are then probably going to be the evidence supporting the assertion that you, that you've made.

So you know, there, there, economy of words cut down down words we all have a tendency to, to write way too much. And I think it's in part because of our academic training. I don't know how you were in college, but when I got an assignment, I, I thought, Hmm, how can I make this paper weigh 20 pounds?

yeah. Cause there was always, there was always a minimum, right? You had to either do a five pager or it had to be so many words

or, right, which, if you stopped to think of it, it's absolutely ridiculous because why would [00:44:00] you. If you are the professor, the teacher, the instructor, or, or a supervisor, why do you wanna have to read 20 pages when a student writer can present it in one?

Yes. Okay. It does not make sense. Yeah. Okay. But nevertheless, the damage has been inflicted on all of us. Mm-hmm because that's the way we were trained. So I will tell you, I spent my whole career and even to this day I, I catch myself falling back on, on the old academic way of writing. And I, I will proof myself to make sure in all the writing that I do in all of my books mm-hmm and where possible that I have the main point of what I wanna say.

Right. That I, I grabbed the reader with that. And that's in, in intelligence writing titles are always something that, that I found to be difficult. But titles are extremely important because titles are what capture the reader's attention. So therefore it is important to have a, I believe a short title, no more [00:45:00] than four or five words.

And then that is your hook that pulls the reader in the title is the contract with the reader you deliver on the contract in the topic sentence. For example, I do an exercise based on a phony middle Eastern country. And the, the name is, is Wago, w a N G O.

And so I put the word WGO colon assassination attempt on president. That's the title. That's gonna, that's gonna hook him. Mm-hmm that's gonna catch him. Okay. So your topic sentence is president Wadi was wounded today. In a assassination attempt, but a coup does not appear to be in progress. That's your point?

The government doesn't appear to be being overthrown. Mm-hmm . And so those two things, your contract, which is the title and your topic sentence, that's the hook that, that gets the reader to read what you've written.

What I thought about when you were saying that is, there's a saying don't bury the lead, right?

Exactly. So you have the title. The [00:46:00] first thing you need to say is what the lead story is. Don't, don't leave it three or four paragraphs or sentences down the road. Talk about it now.

Well, I, you know, I thought I was going to ruin us Canadian relations because of that I was at an IALEIA conference and someone from Canadian intelligence who grew from, sat in, in my presentation afterwards and they said came up and really nice.

And they said, can, can we buy you a cup of coffee? And I said, great, I'd love to. And I said, we brought a paper to the conference and we wonder if you would look at it and give us your opinion. So I took it to the hotel room that night. This was when it was in Mexico city and, and my wife was with. And I read the paper and it was beautiful.

It was glossy. I mean, finest paper, color, photos, color. I mean, it was also this thing cost a small fortune, but they buried the main point on the fourth or fifth page in the middle of the page. And so I, after I read it, I [00:47:00] said to my wife, I said, what do I do? This is not intelligence. This is an academic paper.

No, one's gonna, if this is going to the prime minister of Canada, he's not gonna read it. Mm-hmm . So I said, you know, I was debating, what do I say? Mm-hmm . So I went down the next morning, they wanted to meet me and I, and I took the paper with me and they said, well, tell us what you want, what, what you thought.

And I looked at him and I said, You want me to be honest? Right? He said, yeah. And I said this is a beautiful paper, but it's not intelligent. I said, verify this for me. This the third paragraph on page four, second line in the third paragraph, that's your main point of the whole paper. Isn't it? And they said, yes, it is.

I said, why have you put it there? You're a prime. Minister's not gonna read it. This is never gonna be read. Nobody's gonna look at it. I said, it needs to be completely restructured. Okay. Mm-hmm and I thought, well, there we go.

Setting back . Well, what I was, what I didn't know was they were on a panel at IALEIA.

In fact, [00:48:00] the, one of the men from Canada was I think he was the chairman of that panel for discussion. So I thought, well, you know, I'm gonna return the favor. I'm just gonna go listen to what they have to say. he stood up to hint to talk about it. And he said, well welcome, ladies and gentlemen, he said, you know, one of the great things about coming to these IEA conferences is.

The people that you meet and what you learn. And what we learned is that the paper that we brought is not intelligence and then he, he went into it and I'm, I'm sort of sinking down in the audience saying, please don't say my name, please. Don't say your name. Yeah, he did. Oh man. And so I thought, I thought, well, I'm gonna get blackballed from this, but actually within two weeks after I got back from Mexico city, I had an invitation to come to Otta.

To teach Canadian intelligence. Oh man. So look at that. It didn't close the door. It opened up the door page, I guess. I'm I'm not sure. All right. [00:49:00]

That's that's interesting.

You had mentioned the idea of getting beaten down by the bureaucracy. Yeah. And I do wanna ask you about advice to the experienced analyst, but I wanna start there, what would your advice be to experienced analysts to ensure that they don't quote unquote get beaten down by

bureaucracy?

Ah, okay. There's, there's several things I would tell experienced analysts and, and pertaining to what you're saying about not getting beaten down and that is have the courage of your analytic convictions. Okay. You don't wanna be stubborn but intelligence analysts sometimes have a reputation outside of their immediate circle for, for being kind of arrogant and pushy and, and to be quite truthful, that's not bad.

You don't want 'em to be arrogant. You don't want 'em to be obnoxious. You don't wanna be stubborn, but you don't want goody two shoes as your intelligence analyst. There is just too much at stake. Mm-hmm [00:50:00] okay. So have the courage of your analytic convictions. Secondly, have the courage to admit that you are wrong and that goes not only for.

That goes for managers and at all levels, everyone in intelligence and intelligence organization, because intelligence by definition risk is not part of our business risk is our business intelligence is written on fragmentary evidence. It is humanly impossible to be right all the time in intelligence.

You are going to be wrong periodically. And I was told this right up front when I came to CIA, and this is what I was told. If you are wrong on a judgment call that you make and, and we get the evidence to show how you're wrong and why we will change, we will correct the record. And if you can show how you came to that judgment, you don't have anything to worry about.

Yeah. Because we are paying you to make the judgment. If an analyst at any level is looking over his or her [00:51:00] shoulder with regard to his or her career, if I'm wrong was just gonna kill my career. Am I gonna do the, the, that should not be the case. The analyst at analyst at all levels, beginning midlevel and senior need to know that management is standing behind them because once the product is produced, it is the organization's product.

Okay. And, and therefore the organization has to be willing to admit the call was not correct. We got new information. We turned out this report on Friday, on Monday. We got the three pieces of intelligence that we really needed, but we had a deadline to meet and that's something else I want to emphasize when I teach analysts at, at experience what, whatever level it is, many times they talk only in terms of strategic and long term intelligence.

And they missed the whole point that you can either call it a third form of intelligence or something that cuts across those two. And that is current intelligence. Current intelligence is extremely [00:52:00] important and meeting deadlines, deadlines. Are critical. You can write the best piece of intelligence, but if it arrives 10 minutes after the decision was made it's of absolutely no use mm-hmm , so it's important.

There's a horror story from CIA. I have another quick one for you. Sure. And I forget, I, I forget what area of the world, the analyst, I think it was, was Latin America had written a paper a, a major, well, it, it was an important paper. It wasn't quite major because they didn't think it was imminent, but it was right before the Christmas holidays.

They wanted to put out the analyst wanted to put this paper. About the, the pending collapse of government X, whatever, whatever it was. And it was decided at the CIA that no, they weren't gonna put it out because nobody would

read it around the Christmas holidays. So they put it out the first week in January, the government collapsed between December and the 1st of January.

Oh man. In you imagine that analyst [00:53:00] beating his head against the wall or her head against the wall. Oh, having it right. A deadline is a deadline. If a government is in, in danger of collapsing or falling or being overthrown, you don't wait because it's not the right time of the year.

Yeah. You also don't let others do your thinking for you. I one of the the horror stories you know, the June war 1967 was it 67 or six? When was it? When, when, when the Egyptian forces crosses the cross, the red sea and established a beach. The Sinai peninsula, the CIA analyst had been trying to get into the president's daily brief for days, if not weeks, that war was imminent and for a variety of reasons it kept getting shot down at CIA headquarters, but he kept going after every single day he submitted it.

And finally he wore management down and this, the president's daily brief is reviewed at about oh two or three in the morning at the highest levels in the agency. [00:54:00] And here's this thing on war is imminent in the middle east. So someone in the director's office picked up the phone and called the Israeli embassy and said, our intelligence officers are telling us, war is imminent.

What is your reading of the situation? So they talked to the Israeli, I believe the military at attache. And he said, no, no, There's not gonna be any war. So in effect the, the, the article that was published on the middle east on that part, but on Egypt and the Sinai peninsula, the, the next morning said there would be no war just as the Egyptian forces were crossing the red sea and establishing a beachhead.

So, you know, there's the, the United States, we think we have the very best intelligence organization. And frankly, I think we do all, all of us, the work that's done, wherever it is, it's, it's outstanding. And yet we pick up the phone and call a foreign country and ask their opinion. Okay. Yeah. I mean, it's, it's so, so don't let others do it.

Don't if [00:55:00] you can try and prevent others from doing your thinking for you also make sure if you are a, a, a mid-level to senior analyst that you take time to help bring the junior analyst along. And, and don't just say, rewrite this, do it over. Or my favorite comment, do this again. I don't know what I want.

I'll know it when I see it. okay. What you, you owe it to the junior analyst and to the profession to sit down with, with the junior analysts, if you're reviewing

their papers and tell them why you are changing and the reasons behind it. So that is an extremely important role for, for mid-level senior.

And senior analysts, as well as, as, as management itself to, to work with the younger people coming up. You mentioned

outside influences and it leads me to a question I want to ask you, which is that I know you, you talk a little bit about during your presentations at I Eylea that's [00:56:00] the ethics yes.

Of the profession. Yeah. So I just wanted to get your take and give you a moment to talk about the ethics and the influence of outside influences on intelligence

work. Okay. Well, first of all, I start from the premise that every single consumer of intelligence has an agenda. Everyone is coming to intelligence to looking for.

And if it's politicians and I don't care what people's politics are, mm-hmm whether you're Republican Democrat tea party, I don't care. You're, they're all coming to look at intelligence to support whatever issue or policy they're promoting. And if it does, we are the best thing that's ever come down the pike

Now, if the intelligence shows that this policy is not worth the paper that it's written on, then they will go out and actually try to sabotage us, even, even to I've known of cases where ambassadors were so upset with papers that they [00:57:00] called the director of CIA to complain about an intelligence report.

Okay. They will, they will bend over backwards to do this or another. Another one of my favorite comments is your report shows that our beloved president's policies are not worth anything. Yes, it does. okay. Y you're right. And our beloved president needs to know it. Now what he does or she does with it is, is, is up to that person.

Yeah. Okay. But one of the, best thing that, that an an intelligence analyst can do an intelligence organization is to tell the consumer what the consumer does not want to hear now worse. However, is when the pressure comes from inside the intelligence organization, and that exists to one St extent or another in, I believe in every intelligence organization, as you know, you've heard me, I, I won't bore you with it again, but I was actually told to lie.

Yeah. Something [00:58:00] mm-hmm . And I was told to lie about something that really didn't make that much difference. There were no lives at stake, but the argument that I was told was this, by that time I was the Yugoslav analyst, and I wrote a paper. Saying that the post Tito government in Yugoslavia would survive as long as the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact existed.

This was in 1983. And of course I'm very proud of that paper because when the Soviet Union imploded and the Warsaw Pact went away, Yugoslavia broke into a constituent Republic. So the paper was no one remembers it, but me, not that it was right, but this is what he told me. If you say that this country, that Yugoslav lobby is going to hold together and it doesn't, and there's civil war in the next few weeks or months, that's bad for your career and it's bad for mine, but if you will.

Papers saying there's a danger of civil war and bloodshed and it doesn't happen. No one [00:59:00] will remember that. And that's good for your career and it's good for mine. And that's when I got up and walked out of the office, all analysts at some point or another. Are going to be told to cook the books, if not out and out why?

And then, when I headed the training program at CIA, I made sure that we spent a whole day on the ethics of the profession because every analyst has to make up his, or her mind what they're going to do. And what I would tell the junior analyst, I say, look, there's really not a whole heck of a lot. You can do, because you do not.

As a young officer, you do not have the credibility yet to fight the bureaucracy. But once you become a mid to senior level analyst, you have a reputation you're successful and you can stop a lot of that, but I would caution you. And this is only you can make up your mind. No good deed goes unpunished.

So you will probably pay a price for it. But, and, and only you can, can make up your mind. And I do this practically every [01:00:00] place I talk or teach. And when I'm giving talks in front of a, a large audience, invariably and it, and it happened at this last IEA conference. After my presentation, some come, someone comes up and says, let me tell you what happened to me.

okay. Yes. So, the ethics are extremely important and, and. Ethics need to be part of the basic training of all intelligence analysts. And I don't mean ethics in terms of theory. I mean, ethics in terms of what happens actually on the job with real experiences, rather than, than some of the, the more academic theoretical approaches.

I'm I'm not trying to knock it. It's just that, that if you can bring it home to them, this is what people have done before. And this is what, where they've stood up. It resonates, whereas theory often does not resonate. Okay,

Good. I wanna move on a little bit. Certainly could talk to you hours, if not days

on this warn, you have an extrovert in front of you,[01:01:00]

I'll take it.

It's this is all good stuff. So I do wanna move on to you analyzing and studying. Mass shootings. Okay. And as I said in your intro, you have a very personal connection, right. To, to one mass shooting in particular, in that you have a family member that was one of the victims of a mass shooting. So, right.

I wanna start there with just, you know, that particular shooting and then work or way with some of the work that you've done since

then. Okay. Well, In on January 16th, 2002 the mother of my oldest grandchild was gunned down at the first school shooting here in Virginia at the Appalachian school of law.

And I know it may sound awkward to call her the mother of my oldest grandchild, but the lawyers said your son was not married to her. So therefore she is the mother of, and if, if there is a lawsuit, you [01:02:00] please refer to her that one that way. So, so I know it sounds awkward. And from now on, I'm gonna call her my daughter-in-law because that we we're a family and that's, that's the way it functioned.

Yes. Okay. Let me back up just a little bit, because I remember when the Columbine shooting took place. Mm-hmm I was on assignment overseas in Savo and I was off work and watching television, I think it was armed forces, television, and they had live coverage of Columbine.

And I can remember being absolutely devastated. That was so such an impact on me. I remember the pattern of the carpet. I remember the view out the window. I remember I remember the faces on the P I remember this, I thought I felt the depth of the tragedy because I I'm a parent. And now grandparent I did not, when it hits your family, it is, it is beyond description.

And the only reason that I can do this is because Angie was not my [01:03:00] child. There's just the slightest degree of separation. She was part of my family, but I never raised her. I was not there when she was born. I was not there, you know, to help her learn, to walk through school, to, to help her get off to college, to, you know, to all of those things.

So there is a degree of separation. That has allowed me to do this, although it's very painful. Mm-hmm but where my work as an analyst came came to bear was I knew immediately from school officials from medical officials and from local law enforcement officials that we were not being told the truth.

There were, I mean, there were holes in their story that you could drive a Mac truck through. Okay. Mm-hmm . And so I set out and to analyze and, and I wrote the first book on, on that. It's, it's a matter of fact, it's coming out either late this month or next month in its third edition. My publisher has a new editor.

She read the book and she said she thinks this book needs to be updated. [01:04:00] Which I've done new, new epilogue new chapter, and it's coming out in late July, early August, and it's called the murder of Angela Dales. And by the way, all proceeds go to charity. Mm-hmm I don't take any money for any of my writing or any of my work on behalf of, of the victims of N shootings.

So from there, when, when Virginia tech occurred I read a, a large article on the Washington post and they cited a family the Samaha family who lost their daughter. I called the reporter and introduced myself and I said, look, I have a file cabinet worth of research on, on the first mass shooting here at a school.

And the Virginia tech families are welcome to it, but I. I don't wanna try and call them directly. I would appreciate it. If you would call the Samaha family, tell them who I am, that I've written the book. I've done research on all of this and they're welcome to anything I have. And within 24 hours, I had a phone call from the Samaha family and met with them.

And the thing being progressed from there, I turned over [01:05:00] all the information and I, as much as I could, I helped them. They asked me to, to review and analyze the governor's report, which I did. I reviewed it and found 44 errors in it. All sorts of things of that nature. And then another family. In New Jersey, the Polley family.

I got a call from, from Michael Polley, senior. His son was killed in a German class and he said, would you do the same thing for us? Would you write a book that exposes the cover up and the deceit that has taken place in the Virginia tech

shooting? And I said, yes, I will. And over my wife's objections because she was concerned about my health.

When I was writing the book on Angie, I was throwing. Two and three times a week, I was so tied knots and she said, you're gonna, you're gonna kill yourself. And I said, well, , that may be, I don't know. It's a great loss, except to me,

that's not the case at all.

But what I said was this, I said, I cannot, when a father calls [01:06:00] me in this situation, it asks for help.

I, I just can't say. I'm sorry. So at any rate I wrote that book and I'm pleased to say that I think we had 12 of the families are interviewed and their stories are in the book. I also, the book has something of it first. I'm very proud of, as you probably know police are very reluctant to be interviewed, particularly those involved in a homicide.

Well, one of the families called me and said, how would you like to speak with one of the state police officers that was on the campus at Virginia tech? And I said, I would love to, but he's not gonna talk to me. Cause that's just sort of a general rule. And she said, well, let me talk with him. Well, it turns out I interviewed him.

He agreed. And, and before I started the interview, I told him, I said, look, you need, before you agree to this interview, you need to know this. My book is very critical of the Virginia tech, chief of police. You are a member of the state police. That could be very awkward for you. Mm-hmm . I [01:07:00] said my, my, my criticism centers around his actions at the double homicide before the mass shooting.

Which occurred later. And the officer said, look, I was not on the campus. Then I did not arrive until the mass shooting started. And he said, what you have to say about that is your business. Let's proceed with the interview. So I, I think the book has something, something a little bit unusual in that a police officer talks to me.

Is he currently with, still with the state police or

is he no, he has retired now. Mm-hmm, , it's my understanding. He has retired now. Yeah. But, but he was, he established a very close bond with this one family and, and, and that's what, what brought the whole thing about, and, and

he had, what, what we sometimes forget that the police officers who go in are victims as well for what they see.

And, and he told me some stuff that, that I just can't repeat. I, I, I just can't do it. Can't talk about, yeah. Hmm. So, and

, did you say that book is about to [01:08:00] be published

as well? No. That, no, that one, that one is, is out. It's called Virginia tech. Make sure it doesn't get out. That book is out. Okay.

Okay. I thought so. I don't, I don't know. At some point I have a feeling the publisher is gonna say, let's update it. And what, what more we can do. But all of that led when the Virginia Beach mass shooting occurred on May 31st, 2019. And I got a call I'm a member of, as you mentioned, I I've written a number of books and I'm a member of Hampton Rhodes writers, which is based in the Norfolk Virginia Beach area.

And I got a call from the head. That organization and said, we, we have a writer who was a city employee in the building where the mass shooting took place. He's suffering from severe PTSD. He wants to know if there's any writer in the organization who has dealt with mass shootings that would talk with him.

Would you be willing to talk with him? And of course the answer is yes. So I, I talked with him. It turns out we have very [01:09:00] different views on, on how you prevent this. His, his answer is to arm everybody. That is not my answer at all. Mm-hmm, very different answer as a matter of fact, but, but we get along beautifully.

He wants to write a book and I looked at some of his chapters and some things of that nature. And then we drifted apart and I, all of a sudden I got a, a, an email from someone else, and this was a man by the name of Jason Nixon. Who's. Wife was gunned down that day. And he has three daughters and one, the youngest one was a year and a half when his wife was killed and he has three little girls and he wanted to wanted my help.

And so I says, Jason, I'm happy to help you anyway, I can let me send you my books. I've written three books on mass shootings. Let me send them to you and let me send you my resume. Well, he got my resume, which is the same one I sent you with one addition. And that addition is unbeknownst to me. He went to a delegate Fowler in the state, the [01:10:00] state legislature here in Virginia, which was forming a commission to investigate the shooting.

And he went to delegate Fowler and said, I want this man on the commission. And so she nominated. Yeah. And, and governor Northam appointed me. So I am currently serving on the commission to investigate the Virginia Beach mass shooting. Yeah. And you have you met yet for the first time as the commission?

Oh yeah. Yeah. Jason, this is another podcast coming here. Okay. Okay. But, but let me just briefly say the, the commission was actually formed two years ago. Oh, okay. It's made up of 21 members. Our we, the commission mandate expired on June 31 of this year. It has been extended for two years now. We didn't hold our first meeting until a year ago in June because the, they had problems getting people to join the commission.

Well, one of the problems is the size of the commission, the commissions. Virginia tech and for Columbine [01:11:00] were 10 and eight people, respectively under Robert's rules of orders. You have to have 50% to have a quorum to hold a meeting. We have 21, we had to have 11 people from all over the state of Virginia.

We would go for prolonged periods of time and not hold any meeting plus, well, I don't wanna ascribe motives to some people, but, but, but let me just say that, I think there may be an apologies to the people if I'm wrong. there may be people who are very interested in having it on their resume that they're on the commission.

Okay. Yeah. And, and, and that's, that is a problem. Now, now the new governor has renewed us, but he's up the membership to 22. Why? So? I don't know where we're going and I haven't heard a word. I don't know when we're gonna meet seven people who were on the commission have, have said they do not want to be on, on it any longer.

So they're having to fill seven positions plus add one, which is going to take time. They did not give this [01:12:00] the commission's subpoena power mm-hmm . So there is nothing in any way, shape or form to how can I say to, to, to get people to come to talk to us? Mm-hmm so we, we have, we have all sorts of problems, which I have have documented at great length in my frustrations that.

The commission was, ill conceived from the outset. It had the misfortune of being formed just as COVID 19 hit, which was part of the reason why we went for a year without any meetings. Mm-hmm but I, I, I think for lack of a better word, there are some people on the commission who are not enthusiastic about our task.

Hmm. Okay. I'm not gonna, at this point in time, I will not go any further than that. Okay. okay. Yeah.

So, I mean, is there, do you have a stated

goal for this commission? Yes, we have. We have about eight objectives. Of course. One of them is to, to try and find the motive [01:13:00] behind the killer. He, he died in, in the shooting.

We are to look at the at the problems if there were any in the city of, of Virginia Beach that may have contributed to an atmosphere were to come up with recommendations. About how to what, what can we advise the legislature to adopt that, that might help prevent future mass shootings? There, there are there are eight and frankly, I don't recall all eight of, of them off the top of my sure.

No, that gives,

that gives the listeners an I an idea of what the, the goal is. So that

works. So. My follow

up question is more towards the idea of a coverup and yeah. That aspect of the mass shootings, cuz that resonates with, I think a lot of us, cause they, we just went through the, is it Uvalde?

Is it, am I pronouncing that right? The, the school shooting in Texas. In which there was widespread speculation that a number of procedures were not followed and [01:14:00] that questioning just how the police behaved in that situation. And certainly a lot of questions of cover up. Well,

so in case of, in the case of Virginia Beach, I'm gonna stop just short of saying cover.

Okay. Okay. There are, there are three areas of major concern in the, in the city of Virginia Beach. The first has to do with security as security was for all practical purposes. Non-existent the, the city of Virginia Beach has a campus of, government buildings. And they're all built in sort of the colonial Williamsburg.

You know, it's a beautiful setting, four stories tall. Imagine this, Jason. Each floor of the building had its own rules and regulations for security, different locks, different procedures for getting in. So when the police arrived, it was 20

to 25 minutes before they could actually get the key or the key card to get into where the killer was carrying out his [01:15:00] rampage.

So, you know, it was not a case in the case of Virginia Beach, that the police did anything wrong. Mm-hmm, if there is a culprit and I'm ready to drop the, if it's the city of Virginia Beach, we found out from some of the interviews that, that, that the city government would allocate money for security and then decide after the budget had been passed to take that money and use it elsewhere.

Okay. Some of the people in the building said we never had any security drills. We never had any active, active shooter drills. We didn't know where to go. We didn't know what to do. We didn't. Now my argument is in, in 2019, when that occurred, Virginia had already had two mass shooting. Mass shootings, unfortunately are almost a common way of life in this country and for the state's largest city, which is what Virginia Beach is to have a woefully adequate security program is inexcusable.

I call it, and this is my opinion, gross negligence. Okay. [01:16:00] Absolutely gross. Gross. Neglige the city of Virginia Beach had adopted a security program in I believe it was mayor June of 2000, 2000. Yeah. 2000. I have read that program even by, by the standards of the year 2000. It is terrible. okay. And they, they never updated it.

They never reviewed it. Never turned any, you know, so there you've got one issue and that's not the police mm-hmm and you can imagine those police officer. Who are armed and ready to go in and they can't get into where the shooting is taken. You can imagine what they live with because of that. Okay. The second is, is HR.

And I think this was for budgetary reasons. The city of Virginia Beach adopted a program, they call HR liaisons. Okay. So that meant in all the work in units and where most of the massacre took place was in the public utilities floor of building number two. And most of the people were in engineering.

[01:17:00] They were engineers. Okay. Well that meant that you were an engineer in public works and oh, by the way, in your spare time, you were to take care of all HR matters. Furthermore, we're not gonna give you any training. okay. Yeah. Okay. Mm-hmm so and, and apparently from what we can tell the management in that building, particularly on it's on the second floor, mainly was.

Really really terrible. It was, it was, it was argumentative. They engaged in, in, in humiliation of, of employees, you know, the type of thing that I'm talking about, which if you have an employee who is mentally unstable, you can imagine what that does. Plus he wasn't African American.

And apparently there had there, at least in one instance we know of there had, had someone had used a racial slur against. Okay. So how many of these things have to build up before an individual like that blows [01:18:00] up? And I know now this is where I'm, , I've told you that, that I really like the FBI and which I do, but the FBI's behavioral analysis unit did a an analysis of, of the shooting from the, from the perspective of the shooter.

Okay. And they came up and they came up and gave a beautiful presentation. Slides shows all the bells and whistles and their final, final position on this was that the shooter suffered from mental illness. He withdrew within himself. And therefore if, if he was sending signals he was so withdrawn that, that none of his fellow employers, employees, or his employer, would've seen it.

Well, I asked the FBI behavior and analysis units twice. This question, if you say that, that the killer was not sending signals, that would've alerted people. To the shooting then how do you explain the fact that Kate Nixon, the night before the, the massacre had a talk with her husband about her safety and that she feared for her [01:19:00] safety because of this individual and the husband wanted her to take a gun to work because he was so afraid for her.

How do you factor that in to, to he was not sending any signals? How do you factor in the fact that just to withdraw within yourself and get progressively withdrawn is a signal. How do you factor in that? That some of his employees said they, they went to lunch with him in the months before the shooting.

And in the restaurant, he started hallucinating about people in the restaurant talking about him and taking pictures of people. They're talking about me. There's fine on me. You know? So isn't that a signal? How do you factor in the fact that on the day of the shooting, while I was in progress, one of the employees who was barricaded in a room with others, Said to a second employee.

I knew who that ki I know who the killer is. It's it's Dwayne Craddick. Well, she had to be seen signals. Didn't she? So FBI, please tell me how you factor that [01:20:00] to your contention. That, that there was the dis that even if you was sending signals, there was no one to receive them. The evidence seems to be quite the contrary, the little that we have so far, what was the response?

The response both times was this sentence. We analyzed everything. The city gave us, period. That's not an answer. Yeah. Okay. So that's that's number two. Number three, in the case of Virginia Beach is training. Okay. And the training cuts across really the first two the training would, would be active shooter training.

The training would be. If, if you are going to decentralized your, your HR program, you need to make sure that the people taking over the responsibility have the necessary training so that, that they will know and pick up on signals that a distressed individual may be sending now. And the reason I say this, I was a manager at, at CIA and when I all managers and I hated it, I had to go through it's either a two [01:21:00] or three day course in managing people.

And, you know, by then I was just old and crusty enough that I didn't want to hear it. Yeah. But one of the things that we, we were trained on talked about is employees that are. In distress and the signals that they sent and, and how do you handle it? Well, as it turns out, I had at least two, if not three employees, one of whom was suicidal and I knew what to do.

And I immediately got called in the appropriate people and, and, and the health officers to get this person help. And another one was a woman who was being beaten up by her husband. She was coming in all black and blue that affected her, her work and affected her, her, her, her mental health. I knew what to do in that case.

So I'm sorry, Virginia Beach and, and FBI behavior and analysis unit. Something is not ringing true. Something is not true. And as a matter of fact, I wrote, I was so [01:22:00] concerned about the commission that we were going to end on June 31st at June 30th, there ISNT 30 June 30th. That math is not my strongest.

Yeah, there go. Okay. I was so concerned that I wrote my own report. Mm-hmm and I distributed to the commission. And in fact, in effect what I was doing was I was putting them on notice. If you do not address these issues, I'm releasing this to the public, because what they wanted to talk about was an academic report that talked about, well, what are the probabilities of these shooting take, taking place?

What about, you know, we have to be careful because hindsight analysis is always 20, 20. Yeah. Everybody, everybody who's done research knows that. That's no great shape. You're using it as an excuse to cover something up is

what you're doing. And then the most galling of all was to talk about the civil rights of the shooter.

The shooter had civil rights. The city couldn't move against him because it might have violated his civil rights. And of course, [01:23:00] I went ballistic and said, what about the civil rights of the 12 people that were killed? The four people who were injured and all of the people who are suffering from PTSD that are relatives of the victims or worked in that building.

What about their civil rights? If you're, and I, I actually put this in writing. If you're going to talk about the, the killers civil rights, I will insist. On space and a report to talk about the civil rights of those who were killed and all of those who have been damaged by this shooting. I mean, this is the sort of thing that you face.

Did you get any

feedback from that? Distributing that to the

commission? I did I got mixed reaction. It was one of our last meetings and, one person said my recommendations were, were excellent. Really liked them, thought the commission should, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah.

But that I think was just, just warming me up for the, for their, their strike. Because then one of the lawyers, I [01:24:00] made a, a comment a about the legal profession. And I made a comment about the Virginia Supreme court and the fact that the Supreme, in the case of Virginia tech, the Virginia Supreme court once the school was held liable for charges, the, the, the state appealed it to the, the Virginia Supreme court and they threw the jury verdict out.

And the two families got nothing. They got no compensation for the death of their daughters. Well, when the Supreme court wrote the decision, they introduced false evidence. That changed some of the basic facts of what took place. And I referred to that as a re as a corruption of the Virginia political system.

And one of the lawyers. Got hot, hot under the collar on that. And my feeling was, well, that show biz. I mean, I I didn't say this to him, but, but if he ever hits me again with, I'm gonna say, well, it's my understanding that it is against the law in any court proceeding to introduce false evidence.

And I have proven that it has, that [01:25:00] is I, I consulted five lawyers before I wrote this book and they said, yes, you're right. But don't quote me by name because if you do my, my legal career in Virginia is over. So that's the way it appears in my book. And that's the way I put it in here. Now I'll tell you what I'm thinking of doing Jason.

I've modified it. I now call it a miscarriage of justice. Okay. Soften it just a little bit. Sure. And I've made some other changes in it and I'm, I'm thinking of talking with my publisher. It's about 40 or 50 pages long. And it includes one, one of the things that includes, as you know, from crime analysis is a timeline.

The commission never established a firm timeline. That's crime analysis, 1 0 1. And so I took all of the timelines, the one the police did, the FBI did the one the city did, and I combined them. And then just recently I got the video. Of the police officers that came out in [01:26:00] June. And I used theirs to fill in some of the timeline and that's where, excuse me, I was able to pinpoint that it was 20 to 25 minutes.

Once the police got on site before they could get into where the killer was carrying on his. Right. But anyway, part of that is a very lengthy timeline that I have produced, which factors in all of these times, the commission should have done that, right. From the outs. That's where you start, you start with a timeline in crime analysis.

Don't you? I mean, isn't that basic the step

by step facts of the case. Yeah.

Yes. Yeah. That, and, and you see, we never did that. So what I'm thinking of doing is, and I have the most wonderful publisher who stands behind me with all of this. You know, she's, she's just terrific is asking her if we can produce that report as, as as just a, a it's more than a brochure, but it would be just a very short 50 page report on, on the commission to investigate the Virginia Beach mass shooting of may 31 through [01:27:00] the end of June 19.

I'm sorry, 19 through the end of June, 2022. And see if we can't PR can't produce that. And in part I'm not trying to play games with the commission I'm I'm not trying to do anything except Jason, I take this. Very very seriously. I'm not on this commission to, to pad my resume. I'm not on this commission because I have a security consulting firm and I wanna make money.

That's that's I'm I'm on this commission to try and get at the truth as to what happened. And I told the commission, the opening date when we introduced ourselves. And I said, cuz they asked what our goals were and things. And I said, well, my hope is at the end of our work that we can look the legisla. In the face and we can look equally, if not more important, the family, we can look them in the eye and say, we tried our best to get some answers.

And this is what we have. And the report that I wrote says, we cannot say that we have failed. We did not [01:28:00] try our best. Yeah.

Wow. All right. Well, Hey, I hope things turn around for that commission. And I hope that gets the, the answers and achieve the goals that we just talked. Yeah. I do wanna lighten up the interview as we end.

Okay. I'm just a little heavy right now.

Yeah. So I wanna move on to personal interest. I know that you are writing a book, but this time you are writing some nonfiction and it's just obviously it's a different way of writing. And you talked about the woman who would have difficulty going from writing a novel to writing an intelligence.

Yeah. And now you're doing the exact opposite where you spent your career in intelligence, and now you're trying to write nonfiction. For a book. So I just wanted to talk about the project and talk about your struggles with writing this book.

Well, I'll tell you what it's actually, the book I [01:29:00] was referring to is now out and it's, it's creative nonfiction.

Although I do have, I do have the ideas. I have a piece of fiction I really wanna write. And I have a file on my laptop where I, when I have time I'm working on it. Yeah. But I have three or four writing projects I'm working on. Yeah. But let me just, let me just tell you that going.

Breaking away from the fiction fiction, the non-fiction intelligence writing that I have done and breaking ground going into creative non-fiction has been painful. you know, if you, if you spend over 30 years of your life and you can't use an adjective. Yeah. And now all of a sudden, I I've, I've written the first volume of my memoir and I'm, I'm talking.

I wanna create emotion. Mm-hmm I, and, and in, in intelligence writing, one of the, the objectives is the writer should never see the author. Mm-hmm when

you're. Writing a memoir. It's [01:30:00] all about the author. Yeah. You see? So to say that it's painful and I, I read it and read it. It took a long time to do, because I kept reading it and it thought this sounds like mush.

it's terrible. You know? And I probably lost a lot of friends. Mm-hmm by having them look at a chapter. Yeah. And say, please tell me what is wrong with this? Because it just doesn't sound. Yeah. Well, did you? Yeah, so it's very difficult to go from one form of writing the greater, your degree of success in any form of writing.

I think the more difficult it is to go into other forms. Yeah. Because based on completely different principles. Yeah. I

picture that you wrote a mystery and then in the first sentence said who the killer

is. that's probably what I would do. That's exactly right. So much, so much for the mystery. Well, I had one, my, the book that's coming out on, on Angie's.

When, when the first volume of it came out, a, a [01:31:00] number of people read it, including an acquaintance of mine who was a script writer, and actually had some scripts at these a script anyway, reviewed or presented or something at the Sundance film festival. Mm-hmm well, he read it and he said, Dave, you've got to write a script for this.

This would be great. And I said, I have no idea. You know, just, just the thought, because if you're writing a script, you're having to imagine the scene, the setting, the stage, or the background of the movie, and, and that with the words creates the whole picture. And, and, and, and also you have the, the, the way the, the actor delivers the lines, the expressions on the actors, all of these things have to come together.

I don't know how you do it. I said, because mine is a very simplistic pedestrian form of writing it. It's very difficult in that you, you have to take complex ideas and, and put them in a very compressed form and not lose any. Of the complexity of it. But, [01:32:00] but to, but to go into something where, where you're having to create, you know, creativity and mood and all, I mean, yeah, I I'm, I'm gonna try and do it some days.

A matter of fact, my wife bought me a book on script writing. I won't tell you how long ago she bought it. but, but I, I, I'm thinking that I may try and take a course in it and see if I can't write a script. And, and then if then I also have a, a

piece of, of fiction that I true fiction that I wanna write, which is based in, in, in rural Virginia.

Picking up on some of the idiosyncrasies of rural life in Fiji job.

All right.

So with

this interview, what we'll put in the links to David's publications and some additional information, if you're wanting to read up on some of the topics that we covered today. All right, David, our last segment to the show is words to the world.

Okay. And this is where I give the guests the last word you can promote any idea that you [01:33:00] wish, what are your words

to the world? Okay. I, I, oh boy. I think I, I would, would, would give advice to three different categories based on, on intelligence. One is, ISVI the advice that I've already touched on to managers and intelligence organizations, and that is to stand behind your analysts, make sure that you support them and encourage them.

And as much as you may not want to, to say this, tell them. That it's okay. On occasion. Not a lot. but on occasion to be wrong. Yes. Because if you don't, if you do not make it clear to the analyst that that's, that's the environment he or she is working in, you will not get the analysis that you need. You will always get the, an intelligence analysis that's pulling its punches and then advice to the analyst.

I would say don't hesitate to speak out one of the intimidating, one of the, well, let me back up. One of the things that I love about the intelligence profession are the [01:34:00] people that I interact with. It's very humbling. Every day I went to work, I worked with people that were head and shoulders above me in terms of their abilities and intelligence.

And I felt I was growing and learning. That can be intimidating because you can think, well, what do I have to say? Well, you may have a lot to say so, so don't be afraid to, to speak out. And again, the same as, as with the managers know that you will be wrong at some point, and it's not the end of, of the world.

I learned an early lesson as, as a young analyst, my mentor was arguing with a state department intelligence officer over an issue that was going in into our major publication and state department had to clear it. My mentor won. I was on a Friday on by Monday. We had the information in that. My mentor was correct that the intelligence was correct.

And on Monday at nine o'clock, the state department analyst called him to congratulate him and said, you know, Jean, you [01:35:00] were right. And I was wrong. Do not be afraid to admit that you're wrong. You can be wrong anywhere along the line. You have to be willing to admit I misjudged it. I missed something. Mm.

That has to be part of it. And finally, I, I think advice to people who wanna be intelligence analysts or the public in general to, to understand the intelligence community and not believe all of the conspiratorial theories that you hear the definition inte. And the intelligence profession has to have secrecy that runs counter to basic American ideals and principles.

But I would ask you to remember that who's running your intelligence organization, your fellow Americans, who are in there in order to protect the freedoms that you have. And if you know everything and have all the secrets, then they are not going to be successful in protecting this country and as citizens.

So you have to understand, you also have to [01:36:00] understand that when we are criticized by hindsight, you know, the people will say, well, how could you miss this? And miss that you have to put yourself. In the position of when the decision was being made to make the judgment, what was the analyst looking at?

What were the possible alternatives? And so the analyst picked the wrong one. The evidence, the analyst thought was something else and, and discarded a possible alternative. That's just simply human nature and it is going to happen. I run an exercise, particularly when I teach my classes to non intelligence people.

I give them a page and a half on terrorism in Morocco, and then I give them six intelligence sentences of what? And so what each one can be argued. One of them's incorrect. Read it and tell me which one is, which one is the correct? One. If you were in the, an analyst, these are the six possibilities that she might be looking at.

And boy, is that an IOP? very rarely does anyone in, in the audience pick the correct one of what it, [01:37:00] what really happened. Okay. And I say, now, now, do you see why it is, is not totally fair to use? Reverse connect the dots to blame the intelligence community or intelligence analyst for missing it because you don't know what they were looking at at the time they made, they made the choices.

They, so those, those, those are the things I would pass on.

Very good. Well, I leave every guest with you've given me just enough to talk bad about you later.

Great, great. But I do appreciate you being, you're calling the chorus to do that. So Jason , but

I do appreciate you being on the share. David, thank you so much and you be safe.

Okay. Thank you. Thank you for

making it to the end of another episode of analyst. Talk with Jason elder. You can show your support by sharing this in other episodes, found on our website@wwwdotleapodcasts.com. If you have a topic you would like us to cover or have a suggestion for our next guest, please send us an email at Le podcasts, gmail.com.

Till next time analyst keep talking.[01:38:00]