

Peter Earnest:

Founding Executive Director of the International Spy Museum

Veteran CIA Officer Leads First Museum Dedicated to International Espionage



Washington, DC – Peter Earnest, the International Spy Museum’s founding Executive Director, brings to his post a career that spans 36 years of service with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), including over 20 years in the CIA’s Clandestine Service. He also served in the Office of the Director of Central Intelligence as liaison officer to the US Senate and as an inspector/investigator with the Inspector General. He was a member of the CIA’s Senior Intelligence Service and was awarded the Agency’s Intelligence Medal of Merit (IMM) for “superior performance” throughout his career.

Mr. Earnest heads the International Spy Museum, a Museum exploring the craft, practice, history and contemporary role of espionage. Open since July 2002, the Museum features the largest permanent collection of international spy-related artifacts on public display. The Museum is distinguished by the members of its Advisory Board of Directors and Advisory Council, which include some of the most respected professionals in the international intelligence community.

“We were extremely pleased to attract someone of Peter’s professional caliber and experience to lead the Museum,” said Milton Maltz, the International Spy Museum’s founder and Chairman of The Malrite Company. “His broad and distinguished history in the intelligence field led to the unanimous decision to bring him to the Museum. His extensive professional experience enhances the Museum’s team to create an engaging museum experience for all audiences, which is an asset to the people of Washington, the nation and beyond.”

In 1957, Mr. Earnest began his career with the CIA as a field case officer engaged in clandestine operations in support of national security initiatives, chiefly in Europe and the Middle East, and for ten years in the Soviet/East European arena. He continued his role with the CIA as Chief of US Senate Relations (1979-81), where he served as an advisor to senior management on legislative strategy and coordinated individual and committee relationships with the US Senate. He also directed litigation support for the CIA’s Operations Directorate in the mid-1980s.

In his final posting with the CIA, Mr. Earnest served as the Agency’s principal spokesman, developing and implementing a strategy of greater openness with the media and the public to promote better understanding of the CIA’s vital role in protecting national security. He was recognized for his “special talent for conveying to others a sense of the Agency’s role and mission” in the IMM award citation. He served as the Agency’s principal advisor

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to numerous journalists, authors, researchers, academics, and film and documentary producers, until his retirement in 1994.

“I am honored and delighted to have been chosen as the first executive director to lead the International Spy Museum,” said Mr. Earnest. “The Museum contributes greatly to the public’s understanding of the critical role of intelligence in the world throughout history – right up to the present day. It is gifted with a strong professional staff, a highly enthusiastic and dedicated board, and an outstanding collection. The Museum has tremendous potential to contribute to future research, publication and public discussion about the world of intelligence including espionage, counterintelligence, tradecraft, covert action, counterterrorism, and the breakthrough developments in science and technology which have so characterized our times.”

After his retirement from the CIA, Mr. Earnest worked as a principal partner in ClassAct Video Production Services, LTD, a company specializing in training and educational productions for the intelligence community and private sector. He has also consulted on commercial film productions with espionage-related themes. In addition, as president of Earnest Consulting, he provided training to individuals and organizations in media relations, crisis management, and executive presentations. He also conducted training for the American Management Association at its Washington center and around the country. Mr. Earnest is currently associated with the Alexandria, Virginia-based Centre for Counterintelligence and Security Studies as a consultant and lecturer. He was also President of the national Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO), 1997-2000, and served as vice-chairman of its Board of Directors.

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, to an American foreign service officer and his British wife, Mr. Earnest grew up in the Washington area attending local schools and graduating from Georgetown Preparatory School. He received a bachelor’s degree from Georgetown University in 1955, at which time he was commissioned a reserve officer in the United States Marine Corps. He then served a tour of active duty with the First Marine Air Wing, Fleet Marine Force, in Japan. Married to Karen A. Rice, a former CIA personnel officer, he resides in McLean, Virginia. His four daughters and six grandchildren all live in the Washington area.



“Having grown up in and around Washington, I am excited to be a part of a creative endeavor that is a vital addition to the downtown revitalization project,” said Mr. Earnest. The International Spy Museum is part of the Downtown DC Business Improvement District (BID), a 110-block neighborhood working to enhance the downtown experience through physical improvements, safety, maintenance, hospitality, transportation, and other programs.

The International Spy Museum

The International Spy Museum is located at 800 F Street, NW in Washington, DC’s historic Penn Quarter, within 4 blocks of the National Mall, directly across the street from the National Portrait Gallery and American Art Museum, steps away from the Verizon Center, and within one block of FBI headquarters and Ford’s Theatre. The Museum is conveniently located near the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station serviced by the red, yellow and green lines.

The International Spy Museum is open daily except Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. Hours are subject to change; for the most up-to-date information visit spymuseum.org or phone the 24-Hour SPY-Line: 202.393.7798 (202.EYE.SPY.U). Guests should plan to spend two hours visiting the Museum. All visits are self-paced

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