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Team,

I want to thank you all for welcoming me with a warmth and collegiality that made me feel like I had always been part of this team. I was proud to earn the trust of this exceptional group of officers, who I regard as my superiors in intellect and expertise; whose leadership, dynamism, and integrity have always impressed me.

I think your trust in me, and the respect I have for you, entitles you to an explanation for my relatively abrupt departure from this office. Many of you have asked why I took the unusual steps of not only curtailing my career before retirement but leaving this assignment earlier than required and without a job lined up. I hope you accept my apology for not having the courage to answer you honestly before now.

I have great admiration for the work this center does to help policymakers make the best-informed decisions possible. I have looked on in awe as some of you literally spoke truth to power.

But this office does not only inform policy. It facilitates, and, at times, directly executes policy.

And the policy that has never been far from my mind for the past six months is the nearly unqualified support for the government of Israel, which has enabled and empowered the killing and starvation of tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians. As we were recently reminded, this unconditional support also encourages reckless escalation that risks wider war.

My work here—however administrative or marginal it appeared—has unquestionably contributed to that support. The past months have presented us with the most horrific and heartbreaking images imaginable—sometimes playing on the news in our own spaces—and I have been unable to ignore the connection between those images and my duties here. This caused me incredible shame and guilt. Most of you know I already intended to leave the Army at some point, but this moral injury is what led me to finally submit my resignation on November 1.

I understand that these words come as a surprise for many of you. Despite my anxieties, I continued to do my job with seeming enthusiasm and without voicing my concerns.

I had my reasons:

I hoped if I held on a little longer, the war would be over.

I hoped time and again that the latest “outrage” would finally prompt a material shift in support for Israel (you know what they say about the definition of insanity).

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I told myself my individual contribution was minimal, and that if I didn't do my job, someone else would, so why cause a stir for nothing?

I told myself I don't make policy and it's not my place to question it.

Above all I was afraid. Afraid of violating our professional norms. Afraid of disappointing officers I respect. Afraid you would feel betrayed. I'm sure some of you will feel that way reading this.

These are not indefensible reasons. Each of us signed up to serve knowing we might have to support policies we weren't fully convinced of. Our defense institutions couldn't function otherwise. However, at some point it became difficult to defend the outcomes of this particular policy. At some point—whatever the justification—you're either advancing a policy that enables the mass starvation of children, or you're not.

I know that I did, in my small way, wittingly advance that policy. And I want to clarify that as the descendent of European Jews, I was raised in a particularly unforgiving moral environment when it came to the topic of bearing responsibility for ethnic cleansing—my grandfather refused to ever purchase products manufactured in Germany—where the paramount importance of “never again” and the inadequacy of “just following orders” were oft repeated. I am haunted by the knowledge that I have failed those principles. But I also have hope that my grandfather would afford me some grace; that he would still be proud of me for stepping away from this war, however belatedly.

I know that I would also regret waiting any longer to share my story with you. Because the hardest part of the past six months was feeling totally alone—like I was the only one disturbed by the footage from Gaza. The only one who felt like a participant, not just a passive observer, in the destruction there. For six months, I never heard anyone speak about the war in those terms, ever. I felt like I was living in an alternate universe.

I now realize the obvious—if I was afraid to voice my concerns, you were too. I have always known what kind of people you are, and I should have had more faith in this team.

So I am deliberately not sending this to the entire Agency. I am writing to people I know, who might value hearing the reasons I chose to walk away. I understand that's not a choice available to everyone, and it's not what I'm demanding of you—we all have our own lists of reasons to stay.

I just want you to know you're not alone.

I'll be local. I'm happy to talk to anyone in or out of the office.

Best,  
Harrison

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