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27 April 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence
SUBJECT : National Intelligence Survey Program
REFERENCE : DDI Memorandum of 6 April 1973,
same subject

1. This memorandum is submitted as a basis for discussion and decision affecting the National Intelligence Survey program.

BACKGROUND

2. The National Intelligence Survey program is an interagency effort conducted under the auspices of USIB and the general guidance of the NIS Committee. Contributors are DIA and five components of CIA. Editing, coordination, and processing functions are under the Director, OBI, who also serves as Chairman of the NIS Committee. (Tab A provides details.)

3. The NIS program was set up by NSCID No. 3 in 1948 to consolidate a number of overlapping basic research activities and to fulfill a national requirement for coordinated, up-to-date, readily available, basic intelligence. Coverage was to be worldwide and detailed. The original goals were never fully achieved.

4. For years, the NIS program has been under continuing critical scrutiny. At its high-water mark (1959), the program included 60 detailed topical sections published separately on 100 different countries at a cost of approximately [redacted] annually. Since then, the program has changed significantly in scope, area coverage, content, emphasis, and magnitude. At present, all detailed sections but one are eliminated and the program is concentrated on a newly conceived and formatted General Survey published at the rate of 30 per year and the Factbook,

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updated twice each year, at an estimated cost in FY 1973 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The new General Survey emphasizes high-quality production and analysis. (Tab B, USIB-D-51.1/20, 19 May 1972, "Restructuring of the National Intelligence Survey (NIS) Program" and graphic, Attrition of NIS Detailed Sections.)

5. At inception the primary aim of the NIS was to serve high-level readers concerned with the development of foreign policy and military planning and operations. Such high-level readers were not directly reached. However, the General Survey has attracted a wide and varied readership of middle and lower ranking military and civilian officials. They use it in preparing briefings and studies for the top echelons and for background, general reference, planning, area orientation, and training purposes. Private research organizations doing contract work for the U. S. Government -- such as Battelle, Nuclear Utility Services, Westinghouse, and RAND -- also make regular use of the NIS.

6. Some general conclusions concerning the audience may be drawn from a major User Survey conducted in 1969 and from more recent general experience. (Tab C - Summary of User Survey; Tab D - Copy of User Survey Questionnaire; Tab E - Selected List of Users.)

a. The NIS publications are used more extensively in the field than in Washington because of the lack of other comprehensive sources.

b. The DoD makes the most use of the NIS.

c. The users tend to have greatest interest in those parts of the NIS not related directly to their missions; i. e., military use of political, economic, and sociological chapters and Embassy use of General Surveys on countries other than the host country.

d. Users consider the greatest advantages of the NIS to be its accuracy, comprehensiveness, availability, and the fact that it is authoritative, i. e., coordinated basic intelligence. Major criticisms are too little detail, the lack of an index, and the tendency of the political and economic chapters to become outdated.

e. With the detailed sections phased out and the General Survey reoriented, the specialist in search of specific data is being served less well, but usefulness to the generalist has increased. There has been an increase in higher level readers.

COSTS

7. Community resources charged against the NIS program declined from ██████████ in FY 1970 to ██████████ in FY 1973. CIA resources charged against the program declined from ██████████ million in FY 1970 to ██████████ in FY 1973. (Tab F provides a further breakdown of costs.)

BASIC QUESTIONS TO RESOLVE

8. Certain basic questions arise in considering the future of the NIS.

a. Should CIA continue to support as a service of common concern a basic intelligence program that serves a large and important but primarily middle echelon readership? The program is a viable community effort. It is demonstrably useful to a wide range of regular users, but no one of them is directly involved in making major policy decisions at the White House and the NSC Staff level.

b. Are the advantages of a coordinated interagency, or "national", basic intelligence program worth the additional management and production problems and costs to CIA?

The Agency is not the main user of the NIS, yet in FY 1973 it will bear ██████████ or approximately 75%, of the estimated production costs. The review, coordination, and processing problems inherent in a "national" basic intelligence program require extra effort and manpower. The advantages are that interagency review and coordination do improve the final product, and a "national" intelligence publication has greater credibility and acceptability community-wide than single-agency products. If the NIS were not available, a number of USIB agencies and CIA components probably would feel it necessary to produce basic intelligence individually and independently. This would invite duplication and uneven quality

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and coverage. However, a unilateral (CIA) basic intelligence publication given wide dissemination might hold back duplication and meet minimum needs. Any savings in a unilateral program would depend primarily on the coverage and scope of the effort.

c. What should be the size and scope of a basic intelligence program? Intelligence agencies and components must develop and maintain data banks in order to fulfill their missions. The NIS is a structured program for developing, refining, maintaining, publishing and disseminating those parts of their data bases that have wide usefulness. The costs of a basic intelligence program, whether it is a coordinated interagency effort or a unilateral single-agency effort, depend primarily on the extent of coverage, the frequency of updating, the amount of detail included, and the quality of the analysis and of the publication. Good cases, from one point of view or another, can be made for almost any level of activity and amount of detail. Originally the goal was "universal and encyclopedic coverage". The criteria now used is "broad usefulness". NIS coverage and detail, as noted above, have been reduced greatly in recent years, in response to resource reductions. Only recently -- i. e., 1972 -- have reductions in the program been the result of a conscious effort to determine an optimum minimum level of area coverage and detail. The options that follow suggest possible program levels.

d. How much should be done "in-house" and how much by contract? NIS experience with external contractors has been favorable. The Society (Commerce), and Science chapters and parts of the Telecommunications section are being done by contractors. Contracts are useful when participating agencies either lack the desired levels of expertise or data, or when they consider the work useful but of a lower priority than other production requirements claiming the same resources. Production for the NIS by external contract costs approximately 20% more per man-year than in-house production costs charged against the program. It has advantages. The contract analyst is committed to the NIS and works full time on it. His production usually is more dependable and of more

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even quality than that of in-house analysts assigned NIS chapters. The NIS manager has greater control of production resources when dealing with contractors than when dealing with other CIA production offices. The Economy chapter could be done by contractors without major problems, building on to a three-man OBGI economic contract group in Department of Commerce that now helps review economic chapters. Contracting out the Government and Politics chapter does not seem promising. To be of use, the chapter must speak frankly about the political dynamics of a country and, therefore, must use the classified information and itself be classified. That means access to Agency files. In addition, a qualified contract group would have to be assembled -- not an easy task -- oriented, and carefully supervised for some time before it could begin to produce effectively.

OPTIONS

9. A great many options could be devised, and an infinite number of variations are possible. The following are sufficiently different from one another to facilitate consideration of the broader questions concerning the future of the NIS program. A decision to end the program or to reduce significantly its area coverage or scope would require USIB action. (Tab G provides methodology for estimating dollar costs and man-year requirements for the options. Tab H displays comparative dollar and man-year costs for all the following options.)

Option A: Leave the program as it is.

Clearly, the program cannot remain unchanged because of the pinch on DDI resources and the traditionally low priority assigned to it in the Directorate. The coverage (124 countries) and maintenance cycle (30 General Surveys per year) require substantial resources. The estimated FY 1973 cost to the DDI is [REDACTED] including 95 people. External contracts cost an additional [REDACTED]

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Option B: Continue the NIS program on its present organizational and operational basis, but streamline production procedures and reduce the scope and extent of the program.

Arrangements for further streamlining production procedures are under way. The present bound-by-chapter format provides new flexibility which will ease problems in coordination, processing, and updating. The scope and extent of the program could be reduced to various levels, with accompanying reductions in costs. There is a point of reduction at which the remainder is but a token program of little or no practical usefulness.

Option B(1):

Limit General Survey coverage to about 75 countries (rather than the present 124) produced at a rate of 20 per year (rather than the present 30). The Science and the Intelligence and Security chapters could be dropped at the option of the producers. Establish a 2-3 year maintenance cycle for a high-priority group of 20-22 countries and maintain the remainder on 3-4 year cycles. (Present average maintenance overall is 2 1/2 years.) Factbook would remain, updated semiannually. DDI resource requirements would be approximately [REDACTED] 66 DDI and 18 contract man-years. Printing costs would be approximately [REDACTED]

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Option B(2):

Reduce General Survey coverage to 40 countries, produced at a rate of 10 per year, and cover by Country Profile only an additional 35 or 40 countries produced at 10 per year. Costs would be approximately [REDACTED] 42 DDI and 10 contract man-years. Printing costs would be about [REDACTED]

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These options provide significant savings in money and manpower and would free some OCI and OER assets for higher priority missions. The NIS mechanism would remain intact and the program would continue to provide coordinated, basic intelligence on a selection of countries of both high and mid priority interest. The Factbook would continue to provide minimum essential information on a worldwide basis, and the OCI Handbook would be dropped.

On the other hand, the Agency would still be tied to considerable extent to community considerations in production procedures and scheduling. Coordination would still consume time and effort. The general management function, exercised by OBGI, would still face the problem of running a complex and diverse program without control of the production resources.

The program, under Option B(2), would approach the token effort level, but would still be of some use.

Option C: Maintain a "national" program to produce coordinated basic intelligence, reduce the coverage and scope of the program, centralize in OBGI responsibility for all non-DIA production, and make greater use of external contractors.

This option could be exercised at various levels of coverage. It is presented at two levels, corresponding to Options B(1) and (2). The Factbook would continue as at present, and the OCI Handbook would be dropped. Coverage would be a mix of higher and lower priority countries; DCID 1/2 would provide general guidance.

The Science and Military Geography chapters and the Oceanography detailed section would be dropped. The Country Profile and Government and Politics chapters would be produced by OBGI. The Society and The Economy chapters would be done under contract by the Department of Commerce, supervised by OBGI. DIA would produce the Transportation and Telecommunications chapter, reorganizing it to include geographic data affecting strategic mobility. The chapter would have a longer maintenance cycle; production would be 10 per year. DIA would continue to produce Armed Forces chapter. DDO could continue to produce the Intelligence and Security chapter at their option.

Option C(1):

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Coverage would be limited to 75 countries; production rate would be 20 per year. Costs to DDI would be 49 man-years and [REDACTED] for external contracts. Printing costs would be about [REDACTED] 25X1A1a

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Option C(2):

Coverage would be 40 countries, production rate would be 10 per year, and cover by Country Profile only an additional 35-40 countries at rate of 10 per year. 25X1A1a
Costs to DDI would be 40 man-years and [REDACTED] for 25X1A1a
external contracts. Printing costs would be about [REDACTED]

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Option C(1) would be a viable and widely useful program. Several important advantages are inherent in this option. It would give the program greater central management and control; it would free OCI and OER of the burden of NIS production responsibilities; and the publications would have the wide acceptability of "national" basic intelligence. DDI manpower devoted to the NIS would be reduced almost 50%; dollar costs to the Agency for contract and printing would also be reduced from present levels.

On the other hand, this option would result in partial duplication of skills, effort, and files between OBGI and OCI -- to the extent of 10-12 analysts -- and OCI would have the task of substantive review of the OBGI-produced manuscripts.

Option C(2) would provide a further reduction in costs and have the advantages and disadvantages inherent in C(1), except that the reduced coverage and scope would result in a much less useful program.

Option D: Abolish the NIS, and maintain, at some predetermined minimum resource commitment, a unilateral CIA effort to produce basic intelligence at minimum levels on political, economic, sociological, and military topics.

DDI resource commitment of 30 man-years is suggested for this option. The OCI Handbook, now compiled largely as a byproduct of the OCI NIS effort, might become the vehicle. The Handbook program includes 147 countries and territories. Topical coverage would need to be expanded three- to four-fold to meet general consumer needs for basic intelligence. The rate at which the new publication would be produced and maintained would depend upon the degree of thoroughness, accuracy, and analysis, and upon the extent of continuing commitment to

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the effort feasible in current-intelligence oriented production offices. OCI, OER, and OSR contributions would need to be coordinated by a small, central Publication Staff in OBGI or elsewhere. The level of production might fall within the 15-40 per year range.

An activity of this type and scope conducted with an investment of 30 man-years would be the least one could do and still claim to be attempting to fulfill some part of a CIA and a community need for basic intelligence. Dollar costs for printing and contracts (if any) would not be great. This Handbook approach would provide somewhat more useful information than the NIS Factbook but it is doubtful that there would be sufficient difference to justify continuing the Factbook. In addition, community contributions to the Factbook -- particularly from the Department of Defense, Department of State, and the Department of Commerce contractor, which make up 40 to 50% of the Factbook coverage -- might no longer be forthcoming under a unilateral CIA effort.

DIA probably would oppose this option as inadequate to DoD's minimum needs. Savings, community-wide, would depend upon the extent and nature of effort other members of the community would feel required to meet their basic intelligence needs.

Option E: Abolish the program with no provision for producing and disseminating basic intelligence.

This option does not seem desirable because basic intelligence in some available form is essential to all members of the intelligence community. If the existing central community structure for producing, publishing, and disseminating it were dismantled, departmental products of uneven quality and coverage would tend to proliferate. Any savings in total resources (either community or CIA) would depend on the scope of the various individual follow-on programs, the nature of their publications, and the extent of dissemination.)

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Attachments: 8

- TAB A - NIS Participation
- TAB B - USIB-D-51.1/20, Restructuring of the NIS Program
- TAB C - Summary of 1969 User Survey
- TAB D - NIS User Questionnaire
- TAB E - Selected Representative Users
- TAB F - NIS Program Costs - 9 -
- TAB G - Methodology
- TAB H - NIS Resources