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COMMENTS ON DDI PLANNING STAFF TRANSLATION SERVICES, 13 March 1969

1. On reviewing this study, we find it to be a workmanlike job which gives a fairly accurate representation of procedures as they now exist. This evaluation is not intended as comment on the drafter's comprehension of the subject, but rather a recognition of the unusual complexity of the subject under review. Thus, my initial comment is that time would have been saved had the and DDI Planning Staff roles in this exercise been reversed and we provided a study of this subject for DDI review.

2. In any event, since the problem to which the study is addressed now has less pertinency than when the study was undertaken, my comments will be brief and are intended more to record our views than to encourage further dialogue.

3. Our only disagreement is with the main operational change proposed; namely, that the exploitation of foreign language publications should be conducted by non-staff personnel. Although this mode of operation works well at our overseas bureaus, it could not, and indeed should not, be applied on a wide scale to our domestic exploitation program for the following substantive reasons:

a. Diminution of direct control over its operations

The IG report, to which this study is also responding, expressed concern and noted that "much of the press-exploitation effort in the U.S. depends on translations done by independent contractors working for Staff employees in the field offices do not have the time or in many instances the talents to check all translations. Errors have been published. has initiated a program of quality checks, but spot checks at best will be possible." To turn over also to non-staff personnel the task of selecting what will be translated would significantly and substantively compound the loss of control. Further, contractors are generally individuals who have other full-time jobs and who are located throughout the U.S. Thus, the proposal that "close supervision would provide the continuity and flexibility for effective selection" is not a practical concept.

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b. Degradation in relevancy of reporting

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Although the [REDACTED] contractor is always a competent linguist, he is not usually directly involved in the flow of information on a given subject or area. Our experience with selection by non-staff officers indicates that it is impractical to attempt to apply this concept on a wide scale. Responsive press exploitation requires careful interpretation of collection guidelines, frequent contacts with end users, and a thorough knowledge of classified requirements. Lacking this context for their work, contract translators tend either to underselect, which delays the production of essential information, or to overselect, which increases costs and passes on to the end user the problem of locating needed information in masses of translated paper. Further, retrospective monitoring of contract selection requires as much or more staff linguist time as is required to select material for contract translation in advance. Annex E of the study was submitted as an example of the adequacy of sanitized requirements on Communist China. I disagree and am convinced that most production analysts would share my view. What it consists of, in fact, is only the unclassified entires in the CIRL. The percentage of omissions varies by subject category but the fact remains that if it served as guidance to the collector, he would be responding only to part of the production officer's needs. In the case of Indonesia, for example, only 24 of 93 requirements would be listed.

4. Statistics can be interpreted in so many ways that I see no real purpose served by attempting a detailed re-analysis of the percentages and figures cited in the report. Most of them we accept. On at least the following, however, we differ:

a. In-house staff time utilization

Some misunderstanding in definition must have occurred between the drafter and our people in designating the distribution of "productive time" (Annex A) of the in-house staff officer. I assure you that 32% of such time is not used for "training, leave, and other administrative necessities." Our records show that 39% of our overall staff time is spent on classified translation work, 24% on scanning publications for relevant information to be translated by [REDACTED] and 37% in translating unclassified materials for the Daily Report, in selectively reviewing work done by PMSJ and [REDACTED] in handling telephone or other inquiries, in language testing, and in training.

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b. Cost figures

I referred earlier to the unusual complexity of the overall exploitation program. The matter of costs is a good example. For instance, it is unlikely that anyone not directly and deeply involved in the translation effort would realize that in assessing costs in [REDACTED], the total words paid for are foreign words. Accordingly, since, in many languages when these are translated into English there is an expansion rate of at least 25%, the total words produced increases by that percentage while your costs remain constant. Similarly, it is easy to miss the fact that over 80% of the translations produced in [REDACTED] are provided in camera-ready copy and thus need no further processing, whereas, in our London PMU effort, the translations produced must be teletyped to Headquarters, a cost not included in the study, and retyped in Headquarters for publication.

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Lastly, in assessing PMU costs, we believe that the costs of the staff officers and the clerical group must be considered since they are inherent part of the operation. The cost for both staff officers (\$52,000) plus the costs of the other six PMU employees (\$15,000) would almost double the overall PMU cost figures.

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