

OIT 0751-86

29 AUG 1986

Mr. George Harrar  
Features Director, Computerworld  
Framingham, Massachusetts 01701

Dear Mr. Harrar:

Mr. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, asked that I respond to your letter of August 5, 1986, requesting some commentary for your special issue on November 3. As Director of the office that manages computer use in the Central Intelligence Agency, I am pleased to submit the enclosed article. I hope it will be of help to you.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Maloney  
Director  
of  
Information Technology

Enclosure

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STATEMENT OF DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide your readers with a description of the role of computers in the Central Intelligence Agency. It is particularly appropriate on this occasion because we at the CIA are preparing to celebrate our 40th anniversary next year.

As you know, the mission of the Central Intelligence Agency is to collect and analyze information needed to support U.S. foreign policy and protect our national security. In today's complex and dangerous world, the President of the United States and his advisers require a broad understanding of international trends and developments. Such understanding requires first-class intelligence. Our employees are striving to maintain the Agency's position as the best intelligence organization in the world, but without the assistance of computers, that goal would be very difficult to achieve.

Computers have played an important part in the Agency's activities since the early 1960s when the first mainframe units were installed. At first, these computers were used primarily for administrative tasks such as payroll and inventory, but it was obvious from the outset that computer technology could assist the Agency in its principal activity--the collection and processing of intelligence information. Since those early days, CIA computer specialists have worked to position the Agency at the leading edge of information technology and keep

it there. A major part of their efforts have involved the design and maintenance of highly sophisticated technical systems.

As a result, the computer has become an essential tool in our business. The vast amount of information pouring into the Agency must be quickly distributed, stored, and retrieved by numerous individuals. That information must then be analyzed, often with the support of computer-based methodologies. Frequently, this analysis deals with crisis situations and must be completed in a very short time frame. Most importantly, the results of this analysis must be delivered quickly to the responsible policymakers to help them understand the implications of their policy initiatives and the responses to those initiatives.

With the computer support now available, CIA officers have substantial computing power at their fingertips. For example:

- Thousands of cabled messages are automatically screened every hour and routed to the appropriate officers. The recipients read, annotate, route, save, and retrieve these messages in a totally electronic environment.
- A large-scale office automation and electronic mail system permits nearly instantaneous communications among Agency personnel.
- Intelligence officers use special CIA-designed software to manage the Agency's technical and human collection programs and to process the output of these programs.

--Military affairs analysts and scientists use large mainframe computers to conduct sophisticated simulations of modern weapons systems.

--Economists work with advanced econometric models to forecast the economic performance of key nations.

--Political analysts rely on data management systems to analyze patterns in terrorist activities, narcotics trafficking, and the political stability of selected countries.

--Cartographers and publication specialists have access to the latest computer systems for designing and producing maps and charts, as well as specialized graphics.

In the coming years, computers are likely to play an even more important role in the CIA, enabling intelligence officers to improve both the quality and efficiency of their work. Soon, every officer will have a multi-functional high-end workstation at his or her desk. In the near future, CIA scientists will be able to call upon the power of supercomputers to conduct highly complex scientific analyses. The CIA is also exploring the applicability of artificial intelligence, optical disk storage technology, robotics, and other advanced techniques.

We are excited about the future of computer technology and the unique contribution it makes to national security and the intelligence profession. Our thanks go out to the talented and dedicated computer professionals who have made these marvelous advances possible.