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The DCI's Role in National Estimates

By Directive

- The National Security Act of 1947 assigns to CIA the responsibility "to correlate and evaluate intelligence relating to the national security."
- National Security Council Intelligence Directive #1, issued 17 February 1972, states that "the Director of Central Intelligence shall produce national intelligence that will carry a statement of abstention or any substantially differing opinion of a United States Intelligence Board member or of an intelligence chief of a military department." Although Executive Order 11905 called for a revision of this Directive, none was ever issued.
- Executive Order 12036 states that "the Director of Central Intelligence shall have full responsibility for production and dissemination of national foreign intelligence....In doing so, the Director of Central Intelligence shall ensure that diverse points of view are considered fully and that differences of judgment within the Intelligence Community are brought to the attention of national policymakers."

In Practice

- As the national estimates process evolved over the years it came to be understood that the main text of an estimate represented the DCI's view. Dissents by other agencies were reflected in footnotes.
- Mr. Colby modified this practice so that major dissents to the DCI's position were expressed in the text as "alternate views." He also instituted the use of "some believe...others believe..." where the DCI chose not to take a position.
- How the DCI relates to CIA in the estimates process has never been fully resolved. Originally, the CIA position was by definition that of the DCI. Since 1972 as DCIs have placed more emphasis on their Community role, the Agency has occasionally dissented from the DCI's position.
- In NIE 11-3/8-80 Admiral Turner took issue with the entire Community. He did not differ with the substance of the estimate, however. Rather, he believed that the Community's Key Judgments did not highlight the issues that he thought were most important to the policymaker.

Conclusion

The DCI can advise the President and the National Security Council as he chooses. To the extent that he speaks as the representative of the national Intelligence Community, however, he must reflect as well any differing views that are held within the Community. Under 12036, he is obligated to include differing views held by CIA.