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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

24 July 1986

**The National Intelligence Council:  
Responsibilities and Makeup**

1. The National Intelligence Council (NIC) is that function of the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) which produces the Intelligence Community's National Intelligence Estimates and performs numerous other national estimating responsibilities for and on behalf of the DCI.

2. Organizationally the NIC is part of the DCI's office, and reports directly to the DCI--in his capacity as Chairman of the Intelligence Community, not as Director of the CIA.

3. Formed in 1979-1980, the NIC is the direct descendant of the Office of National Estimates (established 1950), and of the later National Intelligence Officers (established 1973). The NIC was formed to combine the best features of these previous organizational arrangements: i.e., close contact with the policymaking community, authoritative judgment, independence of thought, collegial review and responsibility, substantive strength, writing and briefing skills, elite status, and ready access to the DCI and top policymakers.

4. At present the NIC totals  officers: that is, a Chairman (C/NIC); one Vice Chairman (VC/NIC); NIOs; Assistant NIOs (A/NIOs); Analytic Group (AG); and administrative, clerical, and support officers. Two chief purposes of the NIC are to be broadly representative and to be infused regularly with new blood--hence (a) the NIOs, the A/NIOs, the AG officers are drawn from various walks of life: e.g., the uniformed military, DoD, State, NSA, CIA (analysis), CIA (operations), outside think-tanks, academia, and the private sector; and (b) for the most part these officers serve 2-3 year tours of duty, rotating in and out from other assignments.

-- There are 15 NIOs: USSR, East Asia, Near East and South Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, Counter-Terrorism, Nuclear-BW-CW Proliferation, Warning, Science and Technology, Economics, Strategic Programs, General Purpose Forces, Narcotics, and Foreign Denial and Intelligence Activities. They are all of flag/command rank or civilian equivalent.

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- Each of these NIOs has at least one A/NIO; certain NIOs have two: NESA, Proliferation, SP, GPF; and two NIOs have more than two A/NIOs: CT and FDIA. The A/NIOs are for the most part alter egos for the NIOs, sharing in the latter's responsibilities (discussed below). A/NIOs vary in rank from major to brigadier and civilian equivalent.
- The AG's officers are thinker-writers of broad experience and background, who especially (a) draft NIEs and other estimative materials that are broad in compass or span regions/disciplines; (b) do quality control and repair drafting on those ailing texts the NIC occasionally receives from drafters elsewhere in the Intelligence Community; and (c) sit in as acting A/NIOs when such need arises. AG officers vary in rank from major to brigadier and civilian equivalent.
- The remaining NIC officers: Production Officer (PO/NIC), GS-13, who manages and tracks the complex system of working several dozen estimates simultaneously through varying stages of the cumbersome inter-agency coordination system--and who has of late been also serving as a de facto executive; an Administrative Officer, GS-14, and an assistant Admin officer; and 19 secretaries. We also have 12 etc. professionals and one secretary aboard who are on free loan from elsewhere, serving at no cost to the NIC.

5. Quality control of the NIC's products is exercised in various ways and at various levels: by the NIOs and D/AG; by the VC/NIC and C/NIC; and by the DCI's Senior Review Panel (a small group of retired Ambassadors and generals who--as part of their broader service to the DCI--critique the NIC's estimates in draft). In addition, many NIC products are reviewed by outside experts, either individually or in panels. The latter includes the Military Advisory Panel\*, which meets quarterly with the NIC.

B. Responsibilities of the NIOs. Even though each NIO portfolio differs in its particular dimensions and mission, and each successive individual in the same NIO job will define it somewhat differently, each NIO nonetheless has the following general responsibilities:

- (1) Serves as the DCI's principal staff officer for the particular NIO field, for the entire Intelligence Community. This encompasses substantive matters (estimates and analysis). The NIOs are consumers of CIA/DO (clandestine service) products and work closely with DO officers, certain of the NIC NIO portfolios very closely, but the NIOs have no direct clandestine operational responsibilities.



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- (2) Integrate Intelligence Community and CIA action on all issues related to the NIO's particular field, and serve as the primary point of contact on those issues for senior officers of the Policy Community.
- (3) Chair the NIEs, have the principal substantive call on just what judgments these estimates should make, and recommend to the DCI what estimative positions he should take. These particular responsibilities entail insuring that (a) all Intelligence Community and US Government equities are included; (b) differing or dissenting judgments are fully represented and registered; (c) independence of inquiry and judgment are fiercely maintained; and (d) finished products conform fully to DCI authority and responsibility for the production of national estimates.
- (4) Field tasking chores levied by the DCI, the DDCI, and C/NIC -- where necessary calling on, brokering, and exercising quality control over the Intelligence Community's entire resources and personnel.
- (5) Serve as the personal representative of the DCI to top officers of the Policy and Intelligence Communities. For the most part this takes the form of sitting as the DCI (Intelligence Community) representative and spokesman at various levels of inter-agency policy forums, up to and including the NSC.
- (6) Maintain close personal relationships with top policymakers in the NIO's particular field, insuring that the NIC will accordingly address issues that are policy-relevant, timely, and in proper context and format.
- (7) Prepare and direct the preparation of special memos/briefings for the DCI, DDCI, and senior policy officers: e.g., ad hoc memos, think pieces, sensitive items, questioning of conventional wisdom, etc. The NIO does not wait to be so tasked, but himself/herself initiates such items.
- (8) Brief senior policymakers (up to and including the President) and directly assist the DCI and DDCI in their briefings of top US Government officials on questions of key substantive importance for the security of the US.
- (9) Chair regular inter-agency meetings to identify issues that could significantly impact on US national security, develop guidance to intelligence collectors on those issues, and initiate action to warn policy officers and force planners of potential new problems or opportunities.
- (10) Represent the DCI at selected outside events: e.g., at international conferences, before expert academic and private sector consultants, as a public spokesman, and before audiences at professional military schools and seminars conducted by various agencies of the US Government and Intelligence Community.

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- (11) Initiate and maintain active contact within the US with the best available talent external to the USG in the private sector.
- (12) Initiate and maintain contact abroad with the best available foreign talent: US Government, friendly governments, and (as feasible) private sector.
- (13) In effect, recruit the DCI: that is, establish such personal rapport with the DCI as will enhance the impact on him of the NIO's judgments.

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## I. National Intelligence Estimates and Special National Intelligence Estimates

National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) and Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIEs) treat national security issues and foreign policy problems of fundamental importance to the United States. Both are fully coordinated within the Intelligence Community and are issued by the Director of Central Intelligence with the concurrence of members of the National Foreign Intelligence Board (NFIB). SNIEs are produced in less time than NIEs, are shorter and more focused, and generally address time-sensitive policy-related issues. NIEs may be printed in two or more volumes, with Volume I containing the Key Judgments and the succeeding volumes providing discussion and necessary annexes. NIEs and SNIEs conclude with a list of intelligence indicators of potential change and a brief bibliography of relevant Intelligence Community publications.

## II. Interagency Intelligence Memoranda

Interagency Intelligence Memoranda (IIM) are analytical or estimative papers of varying length produced by the NIC with full NFIB participation at the working level. They may be approved for publication by C/NIC or presented at NFIB. IIMs address topics that are more detailed and focused than the subjects of NIEs and SNIEs, and are of less than immediate concern to policymakers.

## III. Interagency Intelligence Assessments

Interagency Intelligence Assessments (IIAs) are short estimates produced quickly when a more formal paper is inappropriate, e.g., sensitive source materials, potentially limited distribution. Assessments may be reviewed by the SRP and/or other agencies. All must be reviewed and approved by the VCs/NIC and the C/NIC prior to publication.

## IV. NIC Memoranda

NIC Memoranda (NIC/Ms) are informal assessments produced by the NIC with little or no external participation or coordination. Topics must be approved by VC/NIC (HM), VC/NIC (CW), and C/NIC. NIC/Ms may be drafted by officers of other Community agencies of NIC Analytic Group -- working alone or in collaboration with DDI colleagues -- under the direction of an Assistant NIO or the Director of the Analytic Group. Papers may be reviewed by the SRP and/or other agencies. All must be reviewed and approved by VCs/NIC, C/NIC, and the DCI prior to publication.

## V. Fast-Track Procedures

SNIEs may be produced within one to two weeks under "Fast-Track" procedures by compressing, or simplifying, several of the steps involved in the production process with the approval of VC/NIC (HM):

- draft TORs/CP may be circulated internally and externally at the same time, and external coordination may be accomplished by secure phone rather than at a formal interagency meeting.
- the draft may be distributed internally to the SRP, DCI, and to the NFIB representatives simultaneously. At this stage, the Project Chairman contacts NIC Production Officer to request a computer-generated dissemination list, secures ORCON release from DDO/PCS, approves the dissemination list, and returns it to the NIC Production Officer.
- the draft may be coordinated within a day or two of external distribution; a brief SNIE may also be distributed to representatives via LDX and coordinated by secure telephone.
- Project Chairman may suggest that the DCI request a telephone vote by NFIB members. If the DCI agrees, the Project Chairman and VC/NIC (HM) arrange for the vote by Executive Secretary, NFIB.