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DDI NEWSLETTER
11 December 1985

Improving the Quality of Intelligence

I realized with some amazement a few days ago that nearly half the analysts in the Directorate of Intelligence joined CIA subsequent to my speech four years ago outlining a program to improve the quality of the finished intelligence product. Accordingly, I would like to use this Newsletter for, among other things, a review of that program for improving quality and to give you a report on its implementation.

The program rests essentially on three pillars: (1) improving the relevance of the product through a coherent research planning process and a dramatic increase in contacts with the users of our analysis; (2) stimulating creative and imaginative analysis by opening to an unprecedented extent a dialogue with experts in business, academe, and think tanks; and (3) improving quality control within the Directorate by intensifying the review of draft papers and increasing accountability up and down the line for the quality of the work. Let me address each of these in turn.

Improving the Dialogue With Policymakers

To improve DI managers' understanding of the policy process and how intelligence is used in that process, I announced four years ago that "a minimum of a one-year rotational tour in a policy agency or nonintelligence consumer of CIA analysis will be required of prospective and present DI division chiefs." Over the past four years, nearly 100 officers of the DI have served rotational tours in policy agencies, as advisers to negotiating teams [REDACTED] and as representatives to military commands. Our firstline managers need to understand how policy is made in Washington as well as how policymakers use and regard intelligence.

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Beyond this, each office director is supposed to meet with his or her Departmental assistant secretary counterpart at least once every two weeks--in addition to their everyday contacts--to discuss the overall quality and relevance of support being provided, as well as to discuss both current and longer range requirements. This dialogue with the policy community should extend from the office director to the analyst, with people at each level getting to know their counterparts and engaging in continuing discussions over quality, relevance, and requirements. I firmly believe that only through such a dialogue can our work be genuinely useful--and used.

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As part of the effort to improve relevance, in 1982 I directed a reevaluation of DI longer range production programs to assess their relevance to the needs of policy officials. Henceforth, we would use the dialogue described above to ensure that our longer term work would be conceived jointly with, or at least reflect the input of, the policy community, while also incorporating our own analysts' insights into future problems. We have now published five of these research programs; we are producing about 80 percent of the number of papers we project each year, indicating that we are doing a good job of protecting resources for research, despite crises and ad hoc demands.

I worry, however, that the planning process is becoming both routine and stale. The research program needs a longer perspective. It also needs to be more flexible; by the last six months of the year, it fails to reflect the numerous substitutions, cancellations, and reallocations of resources to projects that have higher priority or greater relevance. Moreover, perhaps because of the perceived fixed nature of the program, some managers are not sufficiently flexible in considering changes. Then the plan becomes a straitjacket--an obstacle rather than a help. An important objective of the research program, after all, is to force us to allocate substantial resources for research to ensure that we not only do the basic and longer range work that underpins current support but also alert the policy community to future problems.

To achieve these ends better, I am making two changes in the program. First, beginning with the 1987 program, each office will initiate the research planning process by preparing--in close consultation with its policymaker consumers--an essay on the key substantive issues and problems that are likely to dominate the scene in its area of responsibility for the coming five years. Both resources allocation and research planning will then be guided by this substantive, longer range view. While specific projects will be developed for only the coming year, the broader perspective will help managers better plan the longer range allocation of analytical and supporting resources--as SOVA has done in building the defense industries and domestic issues divisions, or ALA in expanding the Central America/Caribbean effort, or OGI in the counterterrorism effort, and so on. This approach should also allow us to consider research planning, at least in general terms, on a multiyear basis.

While we are doing well in overall research production (836 papers in 1984) there are a number of substitutions and additions to the formal program during the year (about 60 new papers a quarter were added in 1984). The preparation of a longer term strategic overview should help us improve our ability to project and complete specific papers. But the reality of a constantly changing world and new requirements suggest the need to reflect changes in the research program itself.

Accordingly, the second change I plan to make is to issue an update of the program at midyear. This will not involve any narrative, but simply would list projects planned for the third and fourth quarters, reflecting substitutions, cancellations, and other changes. I expect this listing of projects to involve minimum effort by the offices. I hope that this update, formally recognizing the need to adjust a program developed eight to 10 months earlier and to reflect new requirements and priorities, will encourage managers to be somewhat more flexible about changes to the program--a flexibility I repeatedly have encouraged.

Finally, some 60 percent of our papers are scheduled as a result of direct requests from consumers or through our dialogue with them. While we must reserve the resources to work on issues we identify as important--and self-initiated research is the source of some of our most creative work--I believe an even greater proportion of our research should respond to the expressed needs of our policy users.

Letting in Fresh Air: Open Minds and Candor

In 1982, I stated "Each office will be required to develop an aggressive program of contacts, conferences, and seminars on important subjects" with the purpose of allowing analysts to learn the views of experts outside CIA and the Intelligence Community on the issues they cover and with a view to enhancing the research program. In fiscal years 1982-1985, the Directorate sponsored over 300 substantive conferences. Analysts attended some 1500 externally sponsored conferences. A growing percentage of our papers are reviewed by outside experts--as high as 30 percent in some offices. Various panels have been formed at Directorate initiative to review our substantive work in draft and offer ideas or different approaches. We have cooperated with a variety of outside-sponsored evaluations, including both our Congressional oversight committees and PFIAB, in the hope of identifying areas for possible improvement.

Beyond sponsorship of and participation in conferences, DI analysts were required, beginning in 1982, "to refresh their substantive knowledge and broaden their perspective through regular outside training" at least every two years. This could include university-sponsored training courses, participation in outside-sponsored seminars and conferences, or special training opportunities offered by institutes, think tanks, corporate contractors, or the military. Nearly all analysts have participated in this program and have met the minimum requirement. (Analysts in their probationary period were exempted from the requirement on the grounds that, having just come to the Agency, they needed to use available training time for settling into their new jobs.)

Another area receiving new emphasis in order to let the diversity of views emerge more clearly was the encouragement of

analysts to be more aggressive in considering alternative scenarios for given situations. That is, while we would always try to give a best estimate, when our uncertainties were significant or when an alternative outcome could have extremely serious consequences, we would lay out for the policymaker other ways in which a situation could unfold and how we might detect that. In addition, analysts were encouraged to be more direct in expressing the level of confidence in their conclusions and of the quality of the evidence or data available. Disagreements among analysts were not to be submerged but were to be surfaced and presented openly.

Finally, high priority was placed on integrating economic, political, military, and S&T analysis--the dire need for which prompted the far-reaching reorganization of the Directorate in 1981. Concomitantly, I stressed the need for papers prepared jointly by several analysts and across office lines. We have come a long way in this area (Product Evaluation Staff--see below--found in 1984 that nearly 50 percent of our research papers were multidisciplinary), but there is much more room for improvement, especially in the area of joint work.

These measures, collectively, were intended not only to make the analytical climate far more lively but to create an atmosphere in which differences of view and unorthodox approaches were encouraged and welcomed. I consider this "opening to the outside," greater candor about uncertainty and differences, and truly integrated assessments to be the heart of our effort to improve the quality of analysis.

Quality Control and Accountability

It was clear in 1982 that, in addition to the measures described above, a more intensive effort to improve the quality of our written analysis as well as our thinking was required. I announced three steps to improve quality control and accountability.

First, it was necessary to make clear that the accuracy, relevance, and timeliness of each DI product would henceforth be the primary responsibility of all managers as well as analysts. I directed that all draft intelligence assessments, research papers, and typescript memorandums be reviewed not only by the division and office chiefs but also by the DDI. The result of this intensified review process, onerous as it has been for many analysts, has been a significant improvement in the quality of papers produced. The ADDI and I have now reviewed more than 2,500 IAs, RPs, and typescripts. I continue to be amazed by the diversity and the quality of the work, but also by the occasional turkey that slips through. Despite the extra burden on everyone involved, I remain as convinced today as I was four years ago that this process is essential to ensuring consistently high-quality production by the Directorate.

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Second, I announced in 1982 that analysts and supervisors would be evaluated and promoted on the basis of the quality of their work and that each office should develop and maintain a production file on each analyst. I believed then, as I do now, that such a file offers managers the opportunity to gauge the overall quality of an analyst's work over time--whether it is improving, staying the same, or deteriorating--and to judge not only accuracy but drafting skill and ability to conceptualize problems and identify issues. It should be an invaluable aid for evaluating analysts and making promotion decisions.

From the analyst's standpoint, given the rapid turnover of managers particularly at the branch and division level, the production file, if properly used, should allow the manager quickly to assess the quality of people he or she supervises. It should diminish the need for the analyst to have to prove himself or herself to every new supervisor. I believe that managers still do not make adequate use of these files in evaluating, ranking, and promoting analysts. And, worse yet, I suspect that there is still too much emphasis given to the thickness of the file rather than to the quality of what is in it.

Third, the Senior Review Panel was transferred to the DCI and given a purely Intelligence Community role, and in its place a DI Product Evaluation Staff was established. This Staff was charged with reviewing Directorate production on important substantive problems from the standpoint of relevance, timeliness, quality of writing and presentation, innovativeness, imagination, and accuracy. The Staff was charged with paying attention to successes as well as problems so that we could learn from both. The Staff has turned out over the past three and a half years evaluations of the Directorate's work on the Falklands crisis, Third World military conflicts, Central America, current intelligence, crisis management, East-West trade, interdisciplinary analysis in the DI, Soviet arms deliveries to the Third World, Libya-Morocco, South Africa's domestic crisis, and other subjects.

This, then, constitutes the core of our four-year-old program to improve the quality of intelligence reaching the policymaker. In some cases, such as the use of alternative scenarios and more candor about the quality of our sources and our confidence in our judgments, more remains to be done. In others, such as the research program, we need to continue making adjustments and improvements. But it is important for all analysts, experienced and new, to remember that quality genuinely is the name of the game, that it drives the policies of the Directorate, and that the approaches described above--both intellectual and bureaucratic--are not transitory but form the foundation of our entire effort. Our success--and, as the last section of this newsletter points out, there has been a good deal of it--will continue as long everyone in the Directorate understands the program and participates in it.

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Paperwork Reduction

In last spring's newsletter, I noted that many had complained during the "Excellence" exercise about the proliferation of forms that had to be filled out and the degree to which this paper bureaucracy was detracting from getting our work done. We undertook at that time a major effort to identify all the forms and reports we had to deal with and to eliminate as many as possible. The first stage of that effort is now complete and, while I can report progress, it is less dramatic than I would have hoped.

We identified a total of 273 forms (138 DI and 135 non-DI). Most of the paperwork, as you might expect, relates to administrative requirements; after that come CPAS production requirements, OCR document and publication procurement, and other individual DI component requirements.

As part of this campaign, DI offices eliminated 56 forms and reports through automation, consolidation, or elimination of the requirement. We have automated the DI Production Management Information System, the contract project approval process, applicant tracking, and travel projections. CPAS, CRES, and OCR eliminated a number of forms that imposed burdens on the DI as a whole, and I or MPS eliminated several production tracking reports. In several instances, I have directed the offices to go back to the drawing board and come up with more ways to consolidate and automate. Directorate-wide automation efforts that will significantly reduce the number of hours devoted to paperwork requirements in the personnel and travel areas include a travel data base, applicant data, career board actions, and validation of the DI Human Resources Management Information Service. We also have asked the Offices of Personnel, Finance, and Security to combine, automate, or eliminate a variety of forms. We have received positive responses on some of these.

All in all, the effort was probably worthwhile even though not dramatically successful. We did succeed in eliminating some 40 percent of the forms generated in this Directorate, including some very time-consuming ones. We certainly drew the attention of people in this Directorate and in the DA to the need to be more aggressive in eliminating forms or thinking twice before creating new ones. And we will keep pressing.

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Mentors in the DI

Bringing a new analyst on board effectively requires a major commitment on the part of the branch and division managers. Numerous tasks must be attended to -- finding available workspace, getting the analyst on SAFE, tutoring in basic computer skills, introducing the person around, setting up the sequence of training, suggesting ways to read into the account, answering the endless questions of "How do I . . .?" The branch chief and analyst peers usually share the responsibility for assisting the new analyst in the logistics of the work.

While new analysts have diverse backgrounds, have a range of prior employment experience, and range in age from 24 to 50, they do have many similar feelings and concerns. They are excited by the challenges that lie ahead and daunted by the multitude of new things to be learned. The most effective way to assist a new employee to make the transition to DI analyst is to assign a mentor.

Interviews of some 50 new analysts one year after EOD show that we could do a much better job of orienting the new analyst to the job and that few offices have a formal mentoring

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program. I realize that the current mix of new and experienced analysts in some branches precludes within-branch mentoring arrangements. Yet, effective matches can easily be made within, or even across, divisions. I stand by my recommendation in the June 1984 Newsletter, "Each office should appoint a 'mentor' for each new employee to ease adjustment to and integration into the DI." This is as true for secretaries and analytical support people as it is for analysts.

Projects of Note

We continue to produce papers that are meeting policymakers' needs for cogent, timely, well-integrated, and objective analysis regardless of the subject. Listing good work is always a problem because so much that deserves commendation is left out. With that disclaimer, the following offers only a small sample of the first rate analysis being published throughout the Directorate.

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Papers are our premier products, but I want also to note the increasingly broad range of activities in which the Directorate is involved. We are producing new kinds of finished products, such as the videotapes that were created for the Reagan-Gorbachev summit. We are extending our intelligence analysis support into operational areas such as narcotics interdiction and technology transfer, and increasing our capability to do near real-time assessments of terrorism and arms shipments.

Another aspect of our intelligence production has been especially noteworthy in the past several months and deserves thanks from all of us. In a period of severe secretarial understaffing, DI secretaries have shown exceptional professionalism, competence, and dedication while putting in a lot of extra work to keep the Directorate from grinding to a halt. Every week should be "Secretaries Week" in this place.

I also want to point out the increasing contribution that ADP is making to our research and analysis, largely through efforts at the office level. NESAs, for example, is well into its commitment to equip a large share of the office with personal computers, and ALA has developed its Support Staff as a model for officewide ADP support that ranges from sophisticated data base development to the publication of such eye-catching training aids as its "ADP Primer."

ASG, similarly, has made ADP applications handier for analysts. Some 500 people attended an ASG fair in October at which new hardware, software, and services were displayed. The issuance of a new foldout brochure with services and phone numbers has given everyone a clearer idea of where to go in ASG to find help. A new piece of software called EZGUIDE, which can be called up at any DI terminal hooked to the mainframe, provides a directory to existing data bases and people who can help analysts use them. The World Factbook is now available online and can be queried for a wide variety of cross-national comparisons. Support for economists continues to grow, with more trade tapes and services from commercial firms available. Use of EZFILE, a popular "shoebox" for political and other analysts, is increasing; 215 analysts used it more than 2,400 times in October. ASG hopes to have the Third World Information System, a gateway to many different social science data bases, accessible to analysts around the first of the year.

Kudos

I want to single out for special commendation the work done by SOVA, ACIS, and OSWR in preparation of and support for the President's meeting in Geneva with General Secretary Gorbachev. This is the seventh US-Soviet summit that I have had a hand in

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helping to prepare, and CIA has never before played such a key-- and acknowledged--role. From the production of three different videotapes (for which CPAS deserves great credit as well) to basic briefing papers, a variety of both long-range and last-minute requests, and direct briefing of the President, the Directorate's role was unparalleled and outstanding. One non-CIA participant in the briefing of the President by a SOVA analyst observed in retrospect that "it was the best thing he got."

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The Senior Director for International Economic Affairs at the National Security Council praised the entire Directorate's work on the International Economic and Energy Weekly, noting that it is regularly crisp, insightful, and forward looking, and that "no finer publication is available in the US Government."

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I want to bring to your attention two expressions of kudos from the DCI. As you may have already read, the Director has written to Senator Durenberger that:

Your alleged comments that we do not consider in longer range evaluations brewing crises such as the Philippines, the rise of Shiite Muslim fundamentalism or the energy problem are tragically wrong. These are all areas where the Intelligence Community has produced an enormous number of long range studies over the last six years or more and where we have been far out in front.

Your views on the quality of our work in all of these areas are directly contradicted by statements you and a number of other members of the Committee have made privately about the high quality of our work generally and on these problems in particular.

Also, responding to a series of questions from Senator Helms about our work on the Soviet Union, the Director wrote:

I believe that improvements in intelligence collection combined with dramatic and sometimes drastic measures to improve analysis have in fact significantly improved the quality of intelligence now available to the Administration compared to when the President assumed office. The President and the National Security Council members have been briefed regularly on Soviet strategic force developments by Intelligence Community officers and have found the assessments tough-minded, realistic and very professional. Similarly, the Intelligence Community's contribution to the Administration's deliberations on Soviet non-compliance with arms control and analysis of the Soviet approach to arms control have been impressive. In short, the President has more direct knowledge than many of his predecessors of CIA's and the Intelligence Community's work on the Soviet Union and has been deeply impressed by the improvement in the last several years. He is proud of the role the Administration and the Congress have played in this improvement.

I also want to share with you examples of the "search for excellence" which the directorate submitted recently to the DCI:

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A final kudo. At the end of this month Dick Kerr will leave the DI to become Deputy Director for Administration. Dick has been my deputy--partner, actually--for three and a half years. He has been a determined and very successful advocate of the Directorate's interests in the Agency and the Community. Our large increase in resources, advances in ADP, success in recruitment, and improved product bear his stamp. For me, his advice, common sense, knowledge of and insight into the Directorate, and his sense of humor have been invaluable. While the Agency will benefit immensely from his new appointment, he will be deeply missed in the Directorate, and especially in this office.

Awards

Since the last Newsletter in June, the Directorate has approved 27 awards worth \$36,300, and the offices have distributed to individuals and components 232 awards worth almost \$90,000.

Bits and Pieces

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-- I will give a speech after the first of the year at Harvard on CIA's (and especially the DI's) relations with the academic world--mainly on our need for their help and why they should not be apprehensive. I believe it is necessary to address directly concerns about this relationship which have been surfaced in academic circles recently.



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Robert M. Gates
Deputy Director for Intelligence



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