



Acting DIA Director David Shedd (left) is honored at the Assumption of Command ceremony for LtGen Vincent Stewart (far right). Also on stage, left to right, are DNI James Clapper, USD(I) Michael Vickers, and STRATCOM Commander Adm. Cecil Haney. (Photo: Robert Kanizar)

Intelligence Reform: A Glass Half Full

David Shedd

David Shedd served as chief of staff and deputy director of national intelligence for policy, plans, and requirements in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. He later served as acting director and deputy director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

In February 2005, only a couple of months after the passage of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, I received a call from John Negroponte, the newly designated (and first) director of national intelligence. As the senior director and special assistant to the president for intelligence programs and reform on the National Security Council, I was honored to receive the call and to be asked whether I would consider being a part of standing up a new intelligence office created by IRTPA: the Office of

the Director of National Intelligence. I provided an unequivocal yes.

Negroponte's initial call was quickly followed by engaging Michael Hayden, tapped by President George W. Bush to be the principal deputy for the new intelligence organization. On April 22, 2005, the ODNI doors opened in temporary spaces at the New Executive Office Building in Washington, DC.

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The establishment of ODNI came after months of arduous debate within the Bush administration and on Capitol Hill over what needed to change so that the attacks of September 11, 2001, would never happen again. That debate was informed by the 9/11 Commission report. At the same time, as the intelligence failures of 9/11 were being evaluated, the administration was coming to terms with the reality that intelligence had also failed policymakers on Iraq. The extent of that failure was highlighted in the WMD Commission report.^a

I never doubted either the need for intelligence reform and or that the nation, if reform was undertaken properly, would be better for it. The prospect of establishing the ODNI excited me because I saw it as a historic opportunity to improve the coherence and effectiveness of the IC in its vital national security mission, while also enhancing the oversight and checks and balances on its constituent elements.

What I underestimated was the resistance to change among the IC elements and how much those bureaucracies would fight for what they considered matters related to their own preservation.

My thought then, as it is to this day, is that President Bush picked

a dream team to stand up ODNI. Negroponte was a seasoned consumer of intelligence, and Hayden was a highly respected intelligence professional whose credentials could not be questioned. I personally held them in high regard. Saying yes to becoming the prospective DNI's chief of staff was easy as I had known Negroponte well from his days as US ambassador to Mexico in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Getting Started

The white board exercise got under way in the runup to establishing ODNI in April 2005, four months after IRTPA became law. With Hayden in the lead, we brainstormed the ODNI structure. We started by looking at what IRTPA required the DNI to focus on in overseeing a sprawling IC. We were not naïve about the law: It was imperfect but when combined with support from the president, IRTPA provided the DNI with some significant authorities to lead and integrate the IC by building the enterprise's budgets and establishing policies for information sharing and beyond.

As chief of staff, I saw my role as chief facilitator. The Negroponte-Hayden dream team was supplemented by three outstanding professionals as deputy

directors: Tom Fingar for analysis, Mary Margaret Graham for collection, and Patrick Kennedy for management. Alongside a spectacular deputy chief of staff, Michael Leiter, we set out to build a more integrated and efficiently administered Intelligence Community, with enhanced information sharing as a bedrock principle.^b

Negroponte was embraced by President Bush into the Oval Office as the chief intelligence integrator over the IC. While Negroponte provided the contours of leadership over the IC, Hayden delivered detailed attention to building a stronger intelligence enterprise. In my inaugural role at the ODNI, I ensured that the office remained focused on delivering integrated analytic products to IC customers, enhanced collection plans, and improvements to management oversight of the IC.

Continuity Lost

Unfortunately, the dream team leadership would not last long. Hayden became the CIA director just one year after becoming the PDDNI. A little more than six months later, Negroponte would depart for the State Department to be the deputy secretary under Condoleezza Rice. The leadership continuity was disrupted and ODNI suffered its first major

a. Formally, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States and the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction.

b. See contributions by Tom Fingar and Mike Leiter elsewhere in this edition.

setback because the ODNI, at least in its early days, required long-term leadership to instantiate the IRTPA reforms.

J. Michael “Mike” McConnell was sworn in as DNI on February 20, 2007. His military service and intimate familiarity with military intelligence made him a good fit for the position. Shortly after arriving, McConnell asked if I would consider taking the position of ODNI’s deputy director for policy, plans, and requirements. The job was particularly attractive as I had long come to appreciate that having established policies and procedures are required to shape and govern the behavior of the IC agencies and offices. Previous Director of Central Intelligence Directives would be replaced by Intelligence Community Directives. Easier said than done. The process for making the revisions would be difficult, as the bureaucracies often resisted changes to anything that IC elements believed eroded their authorities.

The pinnacle policy change came with the roughly 16-month interagency process updating Executive Order 12333, a document which had been in place since December 4, 1981, and which is, effectively, the operating charter for the IC. It was a Herculean effort that required all hands on deck at the department and agency levels. The revision of EO

12333 could not have been accomplished without the support of the White House and specifically by Steve Slick, my successor on the NSC staff. President Bush signed the revised order on July 30, 2008.^a

Addressing Authorities

Returning to my theme of unexpected resistance to change, I am reminded of an adage that McConnell introduced me to upon his arrival as DNI: “Bureaucracies will choose failure over change.” What I came to realize is that bureaucracies prefer to go with what they know and what has historically worked for them rather than to take the risk of changing direction toward something unknown and where the outcome is uncertain.

IRTPA introduced a new paradigm by establishing a new oversight entity—the DNI—but the legislation provided little specificity on the exercise of the DNI’s authorities. Breaking down the silos within the IC to intelligence sharing was a core mandate emanating from the legislation and in the aftermath of the 9/11 report. Yet turning that mandate into practical policies proved more difficult than necessary because of IRTPA’s ambiguities. While the ODNI absorbed the Community Management Staff, which had for

years operated under the Director of Central Intelligence, two important new roles fell to the DNI: leading the IC as the chief integrator and serving as the principal intelligence adviser to the president. Both of these roles presented challenges as there was bureaucratic inertia and outright resistance to each area that required painstaking negotiations in establishing the rules of engagement in crafting new ICDs.

Amid the ambiguity of DNI authorities parsed throughout IRTPA in 2004, we were a nation at war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Intelligence support to the warfighter was a “no fail” mission for the IC and the Department of Defense. The battle at times was fierce and unrelenting over authorities concerning the combat support agencies (DIA, NGA, and NSA) resident within DOD. Authority, direction, and control was the core issue in what was often where the greatest friction points took place between the ODNI and DOD. Those friction points during my tenure at ODNI were resolved within the IC policies but compromises did not erase inefficiencies.

The conflicts were a manifestation of distrust among the battling bureaucracies among the large IC agencies. Simultaneously, CIA as an institution, responded to the creation of a DNI as a zero-sum

a. See Stephen B. Slick, “On a Path Toward Intelligence Integration” in *Studies in Intelligence* 65, No. 3 (September 2021).

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proposition wherein any authority resting with the DNI was viewed by CIA as coming at the expense of the DCIA and CIA writ large. That view has not changed. Again, through painstaking negotiations, progress was made during my tenure at ODNI by reaching compromises on policies, culminating with the rewriting of EO 12333 during 2007–08.

In the summer of 2010, I left ODNI to serve as DIA's deputy director. I ended my service at DIA, and to the US government, in February 2015 after serving approximately six months as DIA's acting director. During those five years at DIA, I was able to take the experiences of the standup of the ODNI and apply them to one of the IC's agencies. I would describe my tenure at DIA as one in which

DIA, while never abandoning its combat mission support to the warfighter, became more committed to serving the greater good of the IC. Information sharing, joint duty opportunities for DIA officers, and integrated analysis became top priorities during those years. In the process, the agency became a strong example of what was intended by promoting intelligence reform, and both DIA and the IC were better for it.

Tasks Ahead

While progress has been made over the past two decades since IRTPA became law, much work remains to be done to fully leverage the law. Significant challenges remain for the IC leadership in building a more integrated

enterprise. Promoting joint duty opportunities is still a big challenge as is the need to develop talent across the IC. Reciprocity for security clearances remains an unresolved challenge.

New legislation is not required but an update to EO 12333 is urgently needed to take into account new mission areas such as cyber security, open-source information, and artificial intelligence. Strong and committed leadership is needed atop the ODNI and IC agencies to advance reforms. In addition, the president and the national security Cabinet members also need to provide their support to a Community that is ultimately there to serve them. Time will tell if that commitment becomes evident. ■