

Great Frusina Revisited

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The evolution of intelligence as knowledge demands a redesigning of intelligence as organization.

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In 1949 Sherman Kent referred to strategic intelligence as "the intelligence of national survival" ¹ and elsewhere, more lexicographically, as "high-level foreign positive intelligence."² This paper is focused in its particulars on one aspect of the highest-priority positive intelligence problem of today, that of the Soviet long-range ballistic missile, especially the ICBM. In a larger sense, however, its subject is the change that has taken place during the past decade in the kinds of knowledge that constitute strategic intelligence and the meaning of this change in terms of what kind of organization and activity is needed to produce the intelligence of national survival.

The New Knowledge

When we first visited Great Frusina with Mr. Kent, the evaluation of her strategic stature was presented as requiring knowledge of "the situation, the non-military instrumentalities, the force in being, and the war potential" of the state.³ Now, little more than ten years later, the development of thermonuclear weapons and missiles able to carry them half way across the earth in a matter of minutes has put a different face on the last two of these concepts: the Soviet force in being has taken on overriding significance as a constant threat to our national survival; and

the mobilization of war potential, on the other hand, is now largely bereft of meaning in the context of the general war. The enemy's military research and development programs and his plans for making new weapons operational have replaced his mobilization potential as a factor in his strategic stature.

The effect of these changes on the nature of strategic intelligence activity is to elevate the strategic importance of getting what used to be considered military departmental information-order of battle-on the force in being, and to reduce radically the time factor in all our intelligence-policy equations, both for force in being and for weapons under development. In "the long-range intelligence of ... grand strategy" ⁴ the time range has been greatly compressed, both for those who decide the policy and to an equal or even greater degree for the collectors and producers of the intelligence. The U.S. decision makers are currently faced with the prospect of nuclear missile forces which can effect virtually immediate delivery of an almost annihilative blow and for which there is as yet no active defense.

Mr. Kent could state a decade ago that "as a general proposition every country knows a great deal about all other countries' forces in being and a great deal about most of their weapons." ⁵ As every intelligence officer concerned with the problem today knows, the verity of this generalization with respect to Soviet guided missile systems leaves much to be desired. The critical thing is that the decline in the quality and quantity of our information on the enemy's weapon systems, in being and under development, is occurring at just this time, when U.S. policy makers require a more immediate and greater fund of information than ever before. This was the point of President Eisenhower's statement of 25 May 1960, following the loss of the U-2 and the collapse at the Summit:

Our safety ... [demands] effective systems for gathering information about the military capability of other powerful nations, especially those that make a fetish of secrecy. This involves many techniques and methods. In these times of vast military machines and nuclear-tipped missiles, the ferreting out of this information is indispensable to free world security.⁶

Another time compression in the new strategic intelligence, besides the prospective suddenness of attack and potential brevity of war, is the continuing acceleration of change in military technology. To the policy maker this brings a twofold problem-higher rates of obsolescence and increased costs for weapon systems. The U.S. Senate Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery has pointed out:

The statesman of a century ago was given more than a generation to adjust national policies to the change from coal to oil in the world's navies. But today such adjustment must occur, in historical terms, overnight. An example: National security planners had scarcely begun to adapt policy to the fact of fission weapons in the world's arsenals, when the vastly more destructive fusion weapon entered upon the scene.... While the pace of technological change has quickened, the cost of failure to make appropriate policy adaptations has risen-exponentially.⁷

These "appropriate policy adaptations" are dependent upon information which only the intelligence community can provide. An intelligence problem of such magnitude and complexity cannot be solved with the order-of-battle apparatus of a decade ago.

A third point at which time is a factor is in the process of translating a weapons system idea into the reality of a field capability. Here management control techniques and planning have succeeded, despite greatly increased complexity and an esoteric technology, in compressing the development-production-operation cycle in varying degrees, according to the state of the art and the urgency of the requirements. The USSR, as well as the United States, has employed such organizational techniques in its missile programs and thus further shortened our lead time in the strategic intelligence problem.

Although we have been thinking here primarily about immediate prospects in the ICBM field, it must be recognized that our new strategic intelligence problems are neither unique thereto nor likely to diminish. The ever accelerating rate of technological change has already thrust similar problems before us in such areas as anti-submarine warfare, antimissile weapons, and space systems for war and peace.

A recognition of the fundamental change in the character, increase in

the importance, and decrease in the availability of the positive intelligence necessary for the strategic equation leads us to revisit the analysis of intelligence as organization. In doing so we may profit by using Mr. Kent's criteria to ask ourselves some pertinent questions. Have we been "willing to undertake heartbreaking reorganization when the balance sheet so indicates"? Have we permitted units or organizational forms to achieve "a vested interest" in what is no longer pertinent to our priority problems? Have we achieved the "fluidity of structure" and "the ability to shift power ... as unforeseen [or even foreseen] peak loads develop"? ⁸

The organizational history of intelligence research components under the impact of the Soviet missile problem does reveal an effort to adjust to the new situation. In CIA, for example, the question of Soviet technical developments in the missiles field was attacked ten years ago by organizing a Guided Missile Branch within one of the divisions of the Office of Scientific Intelligence, and before the decade was half over that branch had itself become a division. Outside the field of technical development, in order to meet the more pressing need for knowledge of the Soviet missile force in being or in immediate prospect, there was meanwhile organized a small Guided Missile Staff in one of the economic research divisions of the Office of Research and Reports to study Soviet production of the weapons for issue to the armed forces, and by the end of the decade this staff had become one of the largest branches in that Office. It managed to harness enough experience to supply some of the information of broad scope required for national estimates on the Soviet missile program. And most recently there has been an effort to pool both scientific and economic intelligence resources in a Task Force devoted to the Soviet LRBM program, particularly the ICBM threat.

Helpful as these adjustments are, I submit that they represent half-way measures, an ad hoc response of vested interests rather than the heartbreaking reorganization for a unified weapons system approach to the whole strategic problem that would demonstrate fluidity of structure. Even the "Task Force," really only a coordinating mechanism, is not a device that can weave together the scientific and technical research done by one component and the study of weapons system programming, costing, production, and operational deployment done by another. The continued division of line control and supervision still prevents any integrated approach to the research problem.

To conceive the kind of organizational measures that could, and in my view should, be taken, we might draw by analogy from outside of intelligence, from the typical development program for the missile system itself. This, like the missile intelligence problem, has all the attributes of complexity, specialized knowledge, high priority, and unmatched urgency. Here specialists organized according to their component of the problem work on assigned tasks with no certainty whether and how soon they will be accomplished. Nevertheless the requirements for each task are so organized and the specifications for each component product so calculated that all will be compatible in the final assembly, the finished system. It is therefore necessary, as the program proceeds, continuously to modify the design of the overall system as the original requirements for individual components cannot be met or on the other hand are modified by favorable findings that had not been foreseen. *To carry out such a program requires centralized planning and line control of contributing components working as an integrated team, so supervised as to assure that all elements being developed at any given time will be compatible in the system as then conceived.*

The missile intelligence problem, indeed the entire Soviet strategic intelligence problem, requires a similar set of organizational controls. The endless adjustment of its interwoven elements can be achieved only by *central definition of the objectives of individual intelligence components engaged in research, support, and collection* and a constant evaluation of their progress toward these objectives. The integration of the complex and specialized tasks involved cannot be relegated to a committee, a special assistant, or a "gadfly" with any hope of carrying out an effective program. It can be accomplished only by a working organization composed of specialists from the several components and *a management center with the power of direct control.*

We have seen that the nature of strategic intelligence knowledge has changed considerably, particularly in its time component, and that the compression of time has been accompanied by an increase in substantive complexity and specialization which our research organizations have failed to counter with a planned and integrated program. We have also noted a decline in the quality and quantity of information on the enemy's strategic capabilities in the weapons field, a decline for which there has been a tendency for those engaged in intelligence research to blame those engaged in collection activities, and vice versa. The fault lies rather in an imperfect understanding of the nature of the problem.

At the heart of this problem, as far as the CIA effort is concerned, lies the fact that the Agency is a house divided between intelligence collection and intelligence research. Mr. Kent noted a decade ago that the segregation of covert collection activities was dictated by the need for secrecy, and he pointed out that "unless this clandestine force watches sharply it can become its own worst enemy. For if it allows the mechanisms of security to cut it off from some of the most significant lines of guidance, it destroys its own reason for existence."⁹ In today's highest-priority intelligence problems, I suggest, the segregation of intelligence collection from research is a luxury we can no longer afford.

The difficulties of integration are undoubtedly manifold and great, but they cannot be more cogent than those of continuing to stumble along our separate ways. First among these is that of compensating for the time compression we have noted, of meeting the urgency of the key problems. Segregation requires the interposition of a duplicative liaison structure, with an inevitable loss of precious time and in many instances an attenuation of the specialized substantive data required for the intelligence product. Second, collection resources cannot be brought into full play on the esoteric, complex, and changing requirements for data without interaction between the progress of the research effort and the peculiarities of collection tradecraft. Finally, the insulation of research specialist from collection specialist prevents the comparative analysis of collection resources essential to an integrated, centralized, problem-oriented effort and to coordinated planning research for such an effort.

In a word, the segregation of the collection activity can but prevent a truly integrated approach to the priority strategic intelligence problem. Its need for secrecy must be weighed against the urgency of this problem. In the integrated research and collection effort with the best-known accomplishments of the recent past, the U-2 program, the risk to our national security was considerably greater than in any ordinary covert collection operation one might conceive. Yet secrecy was forced to yield to need, and relatively large numbers of both research and collection personnel worked together on the centrally directed task.

Agency and Community

The change in the character of strategic intelligence has had a marked effect on departmental intelligence organizations, activities, and policies, and these would be fruitful subjects for separate discussion in detail. After more than a decade of central intelligence, however, CIA is legally and by established precedent the only organization whose primary business is intelligence coordination and integration. It is therefore the proper one to take the lead in solving the strategic intelligence problems of today, which, however analogous to the order of battle of a bygone era, transcend in their implications and complexity the responsibilities of any single departmental intelligence organization. If the Director of Central Intelligence is to advise the National Security Council on these topmost questions of national security, he must have an organization capable of providing him with the results of integrated collection and research. The matter has become too large and complex for post facto integration through the intuitive applications of staff officers and the ad hoc considerations of joint committees. As the Director of Naval Intelligence wrote recently, "This is a critical level of intelligence production . . . where intelligence usually triggers the broad changes in defense policy that can set off a whole series of national programs."¹⁰

In our quite proper concern in recent years with the threat of Soviet economic and political offensives, we should not lose sight of the ultimate fulcrum of strategic power, as pointed out by a recent study prepared for the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate:

As long as the cold war continues, American foreign policy must be based on a defense policy designed to ward off Soviet threats against the free countries of the world. While military defense needs to be supplemented by economic, psychological, and other policies, the provision of adequate appropriate military strength is the precondition of free world security.¹¹

The provision of adequate military strength is in large part dependent upon adequate intelligence about Soviet weapons systems, present and prospective; and the provision of this intelligence, we have suggested, requires a problem-oriented program bringing together existing research and collection resources into a centrally controlled unit.

There is still one further requirement. This unified organization must contain, as an integral part, a working-level group concerned with problem analysis and planning. This type of unit, analogous to the R & D and "Advanced Projects" units in the creation of weapon systems, has been conspicuous in the intelligence community by its absence. There has been a tendency to put the planning function on the policy management level, in isolation from the detailed substantive realities. The planning group here contemplated is one of experts, conversant in detail with the problems of today and of tomorrow. It must be not only substantively qualified but at the same time cognizant of the comparative capabilities of the resources it can call upon to accomplish its objectives. Its work must be at a tempo corresponding to the urgency of the problems it has to deal with, and its solutions must be given force by representation in policy management.

Such an integration of intelligence planning, production, and collection should provide for the definition of objectives, a rapid response to requirements, the constant evaluation of progress, and adequate control over a dynamic process. It should make possible a more economical and thorough exploitation of our finite resources. It would not, of course, guarantee success; but with current organizational forms clearly an impediment to success, a refusal to reorganize would augment the possibility of failure, along with the prospect of higher expenditures and greater risks.

It is time for us to give new meaning to the production of "high-level foreign positive intelligence" and bring all our resources to bear on the first-priority national intelligence objective through positive action. Soviet security is only half our enemy; the other half is the flight of time, our most precious commodity. Whether we shall waste it or use it wisely seems in large part to depend upon our ability to recognize the deficiencies in our current efforts and overcome our parochialisms. Upon our success or failure could ultimately hinge the survival of the nation.

1 *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, p. 212.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 212.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

6 *New York Times*, May 26, 1960, p. 16.

7 U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, Report No. 1026, 88th Congress, 2d Session, "Organizing for National Security," (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1960), p. 13.

8 Kent, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-77.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

10 Laurence H. Frost, "Intelligence as a Support to and a Responsibility of Command," *ONI Review*, Vol. 15, No. 9 (September 1960), p. 388.

11 U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 86th Congress, 1st Session, *United States Foreign Policy*, "Developments in Military Technology and Their Impact on United States Strategy and Foreign Policy," A Study Prepared at the Request of the Committee on Foreign Relations by The Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research, The Johns Hopkins University, No. 8 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1959), p. 1.

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