Some Views on the Theory and Practice of Intelligence Collection

~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

Collection practices are critically reviewed from the standpoint of the middleman by a State Department expert.

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Intelligence collection as here discussed is a broad service and support activity. Its principal service, of course, is procurement of material for the intelligence analyst-producer's mill. To meet this responsibility, intelligence collection seeks out information on countless facets of subjects political, economic, scientific, cultural and military. In form this information may be press clippings, books, reports, maps, photos, samples of grain or oil, radios or machine tools, identity documents, or reproductions of industrial markings.

This article will deal principally with that part of the intelligence collection activity which is done by the headquarters organization. Obviously, one key responsibility of the headquarters unit is the organization, maintenance, coordination and direction of the actual collection and reporting operation in the field. Other important service and support activities are performed and these will be pointed out. Because the precise responsibilities and activities of the various headquarters units vary, we shall discuss instead the more important functions of a typical headquarters collection specialist. The emphasis

is placed very largely on overt activities; little will be said of clandestine collection.

The Job of the Headquarters Collection Specialist

Let's look first at the comparatively well known and obvious services and practices that may be expected of the good collection specialist. He is, of course, expert on the sources which might be used in filling a given requirement. His experience in handling many requirements also enables him to use the most suitable collection form. On occasion, for example, an official-informal letter to the first secretary of the political section of a mission may be more productive than a routine instruction which is technically directed to the ambassador. The language and tone of an instruction, important for comprehension and sympathetic reception in the field, can usually be improved by a competent collection specialist. By checking with other analyst-producers (or agencies) in Washington who have an interest in the country or subject, he can often make significant additions to the original request, to the advantage of all concerned. Other generally accepted activities of the collection specialist include securing the necessary clearances for an outgoing instruction (providing justification where necessary), expediting transmission to the field, keeping records of requests and replies, etc.

There are other services and practices of the collection specialist which are less well known and are not obvious. For example, he does not send to the field for collection every requirement he receives.[1] The requirement must be appropriate for his collection agents. A foreign service officer is not ordinarily asked to do covert collection, nor is he asked to handle military subjects when military attaches are part of the mission. The collection specialist doesn't, moreover, transmit a request for assessment of reported flood damage in an outlying province when the political pot in the capital is boiling and all hell may break loose at any moment. The request for flood damage reports may come from an *economic* analystproducer interested in what harm has been done to food crops or to important transportation links. The request, valid though it may be, must await its time. The political scene demands priority. Transmission of the economic request when received would very likely irritate or frustrate the field unit.

But not all requirements framed by analyst-producers are valid. Occasionally a collection request will ask for information that has already been reported by the field and is resting within easy reach of the requestor. If such a request slips through the collection specialist's screening mechanism the field reaction is always prompt and generally acidic. And the taste lingers on for a long while. The requestor, of course, feels like a worm resting under a flat rock which has suddenly been removed. First blush reaction is that if the post never reports again, it is only the just dessert earned by the requestor. But what of the dozens of others who are also interested in information from this post? Their interests cannot be ignored, should be promoted, and, where necessary, must be protected.

A good collection specialist, although the servant of Washington consumers, must be alert to circumstances in the field. In the overall picture, he does his Washington consumers a disservice if he is not. When a post is substantially reduced in strength by illness or loss of personnel, normally valid requirements become marginal or submarginal. A change from a friendly to a hostile government makes the task of a foreign service post immeasurably more difficult. The most commonplace answers may be found only after much digging and perseverance. Requirements must, therefore, be screened carefully. Other possible collection avenues must be scouted. Solid "justifications" must stand behind all outgoing requirements. Collectors and analysts alike should be on the alert to provide such a post with information that appears outside of the country concerned but is not readily available inside. This practice is not only a courtesy but by keeping the field unit informed maximizes its collection potential.

A difficult and not uncommon problem for collection specialists can be illustrated by a hypothetical case. The foreign service post in Lower Routinia cables Washington:

> *Rumors are rife that members of the armed forces, incensed that pay-increases and other concessions have not been granted, are threatening to overthrow the central government. Air Marshal Schwarzbart is reported leading this group. The Minister of Defense has broadcast a statement denouncing rumors that are being spread by "traitorous, self-seeking elements" and assuring the population that any attempt against the government is unthinkable, but that if it comes it will be "smashed*

by the ever-vigilant, loyal armed forces." The police guard around the Capitol buildings has been materially strengthened.

Within hours after receipt of this cable the collection specialist receives a requirement, for "immediate" transmission to the field, as follows: 1) What important military figures are supporting Marshal Schwarzbart? 2) What is the position of the Navy? The Army? Are they supporting the Air Force? To what extent? 3) Is the incipient revolt primarily one by the young officers group? 4) Are there any influential civilians or civilian groups supporting the Air Force group? 5) Any other pertinent information on scope, timing, probabilities and personalities is desired.

Basically there is nothing wrong with this requirement. It represents information in which the requestor has legitimate interest. But the timing is all wrong. The requestor's interest-even excitement-has been aroused by a report from the field. That the field is reporting on the subject and that they reported by cable indicates their awareness of Washington interests and their recognition of the importance of the subject. Had the field possessed any additional significant information this would undoubtedly have been included in the cable. The only reasonable assumption is that the field is concentrating every effort to secure and report additional information. Everything on the subject will be reported. To single out certain elements and cable them to the field may a) attach unjustified priority or importance to these elements which in retrospect may be found unjustified, or b) may, as here, stress the obvious and thus not only be superfluous but may be considered by the field unit an unjust reflection on its intelligence.

In the circumstances of our example, overwhelming experience counsels patience and waiting; the boys in the field know what they're doing. If after a reasonable period no further reports are received, the transmission of the requirement would be justified. An *immediate* instruction to the field would, however, be justified if the field report indicated a) ignorance of significant information available to Washington from other sources or b) significant misunderstanding or erroneous assessment.

The foregoing covers the work of the collection specialist on what are commonly termed "spot" or *ad hoc* requirements. A less dramatic but important collection function is the compilation, and constant revision, of the standing or basic intelligence instructions. These are the manuals,

the collection instructions, the intelligence plans, the periodic guides, etc.[2] They tend to be lengthy and encyclopedic in contrast to the generally brief character of the spot instruction. The general inclination in the intelligence community is to turn up one's nose at these pieces. In point of fact, if they did not exist and were not periodically revised there would be a gap which would frequently be keenly felt, for basic or standing instructions play much the same role in the intelligence collection picture that the National Intelligence Survey (NIS) plays in the production scheme. The periodic revision of these basic pieces provides an occasion for the introduction of new concepts as well as the dusting off and refurbishing of the old. More general, less urgent than the ad hoc requirement, there is still room in their construction for hard thinking, imagination and the application of perspective on the part of the collector.

Before we proceed to the non-collection duties of the collection specialist, a word of clarification is in order with respect to "requirements officers" and their role. As their name implies, these officers busy themselves primarily with requirements, which are the expressed informational needs of intelligence analyst-producers. By example and exposition, however, we have shown that the collection specialist performs a fullscale requirements function. Requirements officers, therefore, may be collection specialists under another name. More often, however, the functions of a requirements officer do not reach the full scope of those of a collection specialist but are limited to consolidating the requirements of the analyst-producer. The establishment of requirements officers is thus a fractionalization, and frequently a decentralization, of the collection activity.

If the requirements officer is too close organizationally to the analyst-producer, especially in a dependent relationship, there is danger of his becoming a sort of bat-boy for the analystproducer. This kind of requirements officer frequently has too little concern for the merit, timing, or priority of the requirement he shepherds. Getting a collection request sent to the field may on occasion be even more important than the reply.

The above collection or requirements activities of the collection specialist occupy somewhat less than half his time. His other duties include two broad categories, liaison and staff work, and a host of other jobs such as: processing clearances and declassifications; arranging briefings and debriefings; conducting intelligence exchanges with

representatives of foreign countries; administering evaluation programs of individual reports and overall performances; supervising distribution and reproduction; arranging trips to the field; assisting in assignments to the field; handling funds and fiscal records; procuring special equipment for the field; assisting in orientation and training.

Collection is inseparable from liaison. That is, while not all liaison officers are collection specialists, every collection specialist engages in liaison, some more than others.[3] Not infrequently the liaison activity is a formal one recognized and delineated by official regulations. Certain collection responsibilities are invariably included. On other occasions, liaison is carried out not as an official duty but as a logical means to gain the collection objective or further other activities.

The staff work that collection specialists perform (or can perform) includes studies on such topics as:

- The Intelligence Potential of Foreign Service Consular Sections;
- Relationships and Coordination among Collection Components in the Field;
- The Use and Value of Intelligence Reports to (Selected) End Users;
- Annual Evaluation of Foreign Service Reporting from an Intelligence Standpoint;
- Emergency Instructions and Procedures Necessary to Put (Department of State, Army, etc.) Intelligence Activities on a War Footing upon Outbreak of Hostilities;
- The Intelligence Potential of (Army, Navy, Air) Reserve Officers Residing Abroad; etc.

Some of the implementation of such studies rests logically in the lap of the collection specialist. And as he takes on these broad, responsible support activities, he finds himself doing a general secretariat activity for the intelligence chief and his associates.

The picture we have drawn of the collection specialist's operation is one of an extensive support, staff, and backstopping activity. This is properly so. Although a seeming contradiction, the collection specialist is a generalist, a jack-of-manytrades. This role is a logically derived one. He exists in the first instance because most analyst-producers if left to their own devices would fumble the mechanism of collection. Some would fail to think out their needs, thus falling short on the substantive aspect. Other analyst-producers need to be prodded, else any collection

effort for them or from them is apt to be too little, too late. The very resourceful, highly talented analyst-producer can approach the collection specialist in efficiency and results, but it would be poor use of resources to occupy his time in collection except where no substitute were possible.[4]

By handling many different requirements from many analyst-producers, the collection specialist acquires a fund of general information. Because of his many contacts, he can make the imagination and sensitivity of one analyst benefit other analysts. His many contacts, his knowledge of the interests of others, his administrative ties and his essential spirit of service make him a focal point for people asking questions, seeking information or advice. So from the roots of collection and liaison, the activity builds into a broader staff and support function.

The Differences in Collection Organizations

The organizational command structure and the responsibilities of headquarters collection units in the intelligence community vary greatly. The differences are both significant and interesting. At one end of the scale are the military services. All the intelligence collection activities are under the pertinent intelligence chief. A collection instruction to the attaches in the field is drafted in the intelligence collection component, signed by the intelligence chief or a deputy, and proceeds directly to the attache. The attache in turn is directly responsible to his intelligence unit in Washington.

This pattern contrasts sharply with the command and structural relationship in the Department of State. In the Department, the principal collection arm, the Foreign Service, lies outside the intelligence organization. Instructions to the Foreign Service are drafted by the Intelligence Bureau, but, with small exception, these instructions must receive the approval and clearance of other bureaus before transmission. On the other hand, the approval of the Intelligence Bureau, again with small exception, is not required on instructions to the Foreign Service drafted by other bureaus. In contrast to the clear-cut responsibility the service attache has to his headquarters intelligence unit, the foreign service officer has responsibility to the Department as a

whole and has indirect responsibility at best to the Intelligence Bureau.

The mission of every military attache and his staff is flatly intelligence, and very clear-cut. For example, the Department of the Air Force Instructions (Intelligence Collection Instructions (ICI) of June 1954, currently being revised) state that the primary function of the air attache is to collect and report intelligence information. Speaking of this function, the instructions, moreover, admonish that "it is of such overriding importance that it must never be subordinated to representative or administrative duties." The U.S. Naval Intelligence Manual of 4 November 1957, speaking also on the collection and reporting function, instructs naval attaches as follows: "This task is so important that it should never be relegated to secondary consideration in favor of other duties." It would be difficult to issue instructions more precise and more categorical.

The Foreign Service, on the other hand, has no such instructions, for it is a mufti-purpose operation. There are many Foreign Service posts (e.g., consulates) where 95% of the effort is devoted to passport and visa work, protection of American interests, seeing to the welfare of American seamen and the like. Intelligence is secondary at best and the small intelligence potential which does exist is largely unexploited. Reporting from these posts covers administrative, fiscal, and consular matters. Even in the political sections of American embassies abroad intelligence reporting must on occasion vie with representation for primary importance.

The military services keep a closer control of their attaches' collection activity than the Department of State does of its collection activities in missions and posts abroad. Military attaches are required to prepare intelligence collection plans and keep them current. Copies and revisions must be sent to Washington. These plans include information on the categories of sources and contacts, their value and extent of use, deterrents to collection, a travel plan, emergency plans, etc. The Foreign Service has no comparable collection instruction and obligation. A good portion of this kind of information, however, is reported piece-meal.

The undiluted intelligence nature of military attaches and the directness of the command structure permit an unequivocal statement of the highest interest and objective of the intelligence program, viz.: "*The primary mission of Army intelligence is, and for the foreseeable future will continue to be, the collection of information and the production of intelligence*

on the Sino-Soviet Bloc Nations." [5] (Italics are in the original.)

The emphasis in Foreign Service instructions is not so pointed. Because of the multi-purpose nature of Foreign Service missions, the responsibility and orientation of each must be principally to the host country. In practice, however, it can be shown that for many posts this difference in orientation is more an appearance than a reality.

In the structure of military intelligence, counterintelligence and security are under the direction of the intelligence chief.[6] In the Department of State, the Intelligence Bureau concerns itself only with foreign positive intelligence. Security and counterintelligence activities are assigned elsewhere. The most amicable of relations exist between the two components, so that many of the positive intelligence fruits of counterintelligence and security are secured for the use of the Intelligence Bureau. From a theoretical standpoint, however, the military pattern is preferable in order that a) all, not some, of the positive intelligence data collected by counterintelligence become available, and b) one need not rely on a favorable informal relationship that can quickly change.

The CIA command structure and organization lies between the two poles represented by the military services and the Department of State. Covert and overt operations although separated are responsible to the same chief.

To sum up, some of the differences in organization and command structure of intelligence units reflect the different missions and responsibilities that exist. In the case of the Foreign Service, consular work, protection of and service to American citizens, reporting of economic and allied information for U.S. export-import and producer interests, and the like are important assigned functions, even if non-intelligence, which cannot be put aside. From a manpower and funds standpoint these are major activities of the Foreign Service. It is truly surprising, therefore, and greatly to its credit, that the Foreign Service continues to play the very important role it does in furnishing intelligence information to the U.S. intelligence community.

The Status of Intelligence Collection

It seems appropriate to conclude this article with some observations on how well intelligence collection has performed in recent years and some personal views and recommendations. Let's look first at the record.

The positive accomplishments of intelligence collection in the postwar years are numerous. Coordination in the field, in good part because of headquarters initiative and action, has improved markedly over that existing immediately after World War II. The Joint Weeka, for example, despite trials and tribulations, has become a very effective reporting instrument which is used and is highly regarded by end-users throughout the intelligence community. A number of programs, such as publications procurement, travel folder, exploitation of international trade fair opportunities, peripheral reporting, and the like, have been established and have proved successful-some more so than others. Periodic Requirements Guides and Periodic Requirements Lists have been useful stimulants and guides for field collectors. The worth and use of CIA covert reports has increased tremendously. From the days when the useful covert report was an exception, the point has been reached where they are truly a valuable portion of the material in the analyst-producer's in-box. Intelligence exchanges with certain allies have been established and operate smoothly. Procedures and methods have been established for effective day- to-day operations. A formal structure (committees, etc.) exists to consider and deal with community problems.

Intelligence collection has thus many accomplishments to which it can point. We are inclined to feel, however, that there should be more. In terms of results, collection has not developed apace with production since World War II. Intelligence collection has suffered from a lack of imagination and from too much formalism. The real gains that have been made must be weighed against the failures to initiate, to exploit, to innovate. Collection has been afflicted with a reluctance to assert itself or to try something new. There is too little seeking out of the end-user, analyst-producers and others, acquainting them with collection's service potential, making suggestions, stimulating. Too often collection waits for the analystproducer to knock down the door. There is not enough informal interchange between collection personnel on solutions to common problems, procedures, methods, projects contemplated, etc. To be sure, committees exist with responsibilities in the collection field. But these have formally assigned tasks, assigned participants, and do not take up the workaday, practical operating problems of collection itself.

Needless to say, the above observations will have imperfect and uneven application. Where they exist, the faults are not, of course, ineradicable. We would suggest that the following would go far to righting the situation:

1. Collection should insist on better access to the analystproducer's thoughts. Capable collection specialists should sit, for example, as observers on lower and intermediate level substantive meetings on estimates and other studies. This would be a practical way of securing detailed, priority requirements. Post-mortems tend now to be broad-brush statements of informational inadequacies, and lack the detail which was available weeks earlier. The analyst-producer, having shot his bolt, is in no mood generally to recover this detail for the collector. We would venture to suggest also that the presence of a capable collector as observer could lead to other benefits.

2. Collection should recruit and select its personnel more carefully. Most of us, as average American motorists, have had the experience of driving an automobile into a garage because the engine, or something, was out of sorts. In seconds the garage mechanic had the motor running smoothly. Collection needs such mechanics. On the other hand, it would hardly be wise to ask that same mechanic to design an engine. An engineer is needed for that. Collection needs engineers, too. In the past, mechanics have been asked to do the job of engineers. This must be corrected. Both good mechanics and good engineers must be secured and be properly utilized.

   Admittedly selection of personnel has been hampered by such factors as budget ceilings, salary ceilings on individual jobs, etc. In the long run, with a good case and persistence, these can be overcome.

3. Collection must insist on better support from the top so that it can carry out its programs and implement its ideas. Collection can earn some of this support by doing its job well and being constantly on the alert to assist its chiefs with staff and support work.

4. An effective exchange of collection personnel should be initiated within the intelligence community. It could be established as an adjunct to or within present exchange programs, whichever is more feasible. Consideration should be given not only to the training of the individual but also to the long-run improvement of the different collection organizations. The Intelligence Bureau of the Department of State, which does not take part in existing exchanges, should participate.

5. An intra-community training and orientation course exclusively for collection personnel should be organized. It would throw collection people together and establish ties which could be exploited long

afterward. Lectures and course-work could serve to educate, to identify common problems and possible solutions, etc. Subjects which could be covered include evaluation and appraisal of reports, effective briefing and de-briefing procedures, requirements work, and headquarters collection organization. This training, and assignments within it, might provide the basis for community-wide manuals on various phases of collection-evaluations, liaison, briefing and debriefing, etc.

This recommendation and the one immediately preceding are obviously complementary. They are aimed at increasing the exchange of ideas and experience and at creating informal working relationships.

We have addressed this article to collection and production people alike. Collection is after all created for production. Without good collection, production soon tends to fall qualitatively or become sterile. Production has a distinct right-and responsibility-therefore, to point out inadequacies in collection and demand improvement. On the other hand, production is obliged to give reasonable cooperation in effecting this improvement.

As the intelligence product, the *raison d'etre* of the community, becomes more mature, the point is reached where the additional qualitative improvement and refinement of the product depend principally upon the development of improved collection techniques and organization. There are doubtless some in the community who would maintain that we are at that point now.

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1 A Bureau of the Budget survey (circa 1950) disclosed that 1 in 6 requests processed through the Department's Intelligence Bureau was either rejected or altered in major fashion to suit circumstances or capabilities in the field. It gave warm approval to this activity.

2 See for example: U.S. Naval Intelligence Manual (ONI 70-1) Nov. 4, 1957; Department of the Army Intelligence Plan (DAIP) Dec. 1957; Army Intelligence Collection Instructions (AR 381-25) March 1956; Foreign Service Manual, Vol. IV, Chapter 900 (Intelligence).

3 The nature and scope of liaison are indicated by the following quotation taken from a Department of State draft memorandum (Unclassified) : "Liaison officers ... shall deal . . . on matters of interests to their respective agencies, such as the collection and exchange of information (or intelligence), the operating and administrative matters appertaining thereto, and the securing of such reciprocal assistance and

services as are customary in general liaison activity. . . . In the performance of their duties, they shall procure for and provide to the Agency with which they maintain liaison appropriate information and assistance when not inconsistent with the obligations and interests of the Department; these services shall be extended as a general practice and in response to specific requests ... Whenever practicable, business . . . will be conducted through designated liaison offices. Specialized subjects, however, may be handled by those familiar with them or directly concerned in cooperation with officially designated representatives. Moreover, interagency discussions and collaboration on policy and directly related matters by policy and executive officers . . . shall be carried out in such manner and channels as the participants deem advisable. This does not, however, relieve liaison officers of the responsibility of providing all possible assistance and service if called upon in such matters."

4 As indicated, we do not imply that the collection specialist should do all collection or that the analyst-producer should do none. The analyst-producer who visits a library or the industrial register or discusses an interest with some specialist in another organization is doing a necessary, almost unavoidable, collection job. Assignment of all collection to a collection specialist is no more sound or possible than the assignment of all security responsibilities to a security officer or all administration to an administrative officer.

5 Department of the Army Intelligence Collection Instruction (AR 381-25), March 1, 1956.

6 In the Department of the Air Force, some security and counterintelligence functions he under the Inspector General.

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