



Who we are and what we do



In the following pages, you'll be briefed on the central themes of our Agency and its mission; how CIA employees gather and prepare information; and how our nation's leaders make decisions based on these intelligence reports. You'll also see why we're a unique organization and learn about the Intelligence Cycle.

Our Mission: The employees of CIA provide intelligence (or information) to the President, the National Security Council and other government officials who make and carry out US national security policy. The people who work at CIA—do not make policy or policy recommendations. That's the job of the people who work at US federal executive agencies, such as the Department of State and the Department of Defense. The people at CIA provide these leaders with the best information possible to help them make policy toward other countries.

We fulfill our mission in several ways:

- We give timely and accurate intelligence on foreign threats to US national security.
- We conduct counterintelligence and other special activities relating to foreign intelligence and US national security at the request of the President. (Counterintelligence helps us prevent our opponents from obtaining secret information about the United States).
- Sometimes we also spread disinformation to confuse our opponents.

Though we have a lot of missions, we're not a law enforcement organization. That's the job of the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) or local police. But the CIA and the FBI do cooperate on many issues, such as counterintelligence.

This completes your top-level overview of our mission. Continue your briefing now to learn more about intelligence and to see how we are "tasked"—that is to say, given a specific job to do. We'll also introduce the concept of intelligence and the "intelligence cycle."



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What is Intelligence? Intelligence is the information our nation's leaders need to keep our country safe. Our leaders, including the President, make policy decisions based on this intelligence. Since they don't have time to read other countries' newspapers or watch foreign TV newscasts, we do that for them. We use that information to create intelligence products. We also gather information other countries may not wish to share openly. The people who work at CIA collect this intelligence secretly. Our policymakers need the information we provide so they are informed when they make important decisions. That's why the President, members of the President's Cabinet and members of the National Security Council come to us with questions they need answered.

We provide various types of intelligence:

- *Current* – looks at day-to-day events.
- *Estimative* – looks at what might be or what might happen.
- *Warning* – gives notice to our policymakers on urgent matters that may require immediate attention.
- *Research* – provides an in-depth study of an issue.
- *Scientific and Technical* – provides information on foreign technologies.

Now, take a look at the "Intelligence Cycle" to learn how our employees complete tasks.

The Intelligence Cycle: When we're tasked to complete a project, we follow a five-step process called the Intelligence Cycle. This process helps us do our job correctly as we work through a system of checks and balances. Let's take a closer look at each of these five steps:

- Planning and Direction
- Collection
- Processing
- Analysis and Production
- Dissemination



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Planning and Direction: When we are tasked with a job, we start planning what we'll do and how we'll do it. In short, we create a plan for completing the job. Team members list what we know about the issue and what we need to find out it. We then discuss ways to gather this intelligence.

Collection: We collect information overtly (openly) and covertly (secretly). Examples of overt (open) sources we use include foreign newspapers, magazine articles, foreign radio and overseas television broadcasts. We also use covert information sources. Example of covert (secret) sources are listening devices and hidden cameras. Likewise, we use space-age technology like satellite photography. For instance, analysts review images that enable them to count how many airplanes are located at a foreign military base by looking at a picture taken from a satellite in space.

Processing: We take all the information that we have collected and use it to write an intelligence report. The information we use could include anything from a translated document to a description of a satellite photo.

Analysis and Production: We take a closer look at all the information and determine how it fits together, while concentrating on answering the question posed in the tasking. We assess what is happening, why it is happening, what might occur next and how it affects US interests.

Dissemination: We give our written analysis to the policymaker who tasked us to do the job. After reading the analysis and learning the answer to the question that led to the tasking, that policymaker may come back to us with more questions. When that happens, the Intelligence Cycle starts again.

So, who in CIA is assigned to each process of the Intelligence Cycle? To find out, continue to Our Organization.

Our Organization: The CIA is divided into five teams, commonly referred to as directorates. When we're assigned a major task, we break it down into small pieces. Each team works on a certain piece according to their areas of expertise. After the teams complete their work, they put the information they have together to create a big picture for analysis. This multi-team effort works well because it takes advantage of the diverse skills of our people.



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Our five teams are:

- Directorate of Operations (DO)
- Directorate of Science and Technology (DS&T)
- Directorate of Analysis (DA)
- Directorate of Support (DS)
- Directorate of Digital Innovation (DDI)

The DO and DS&T collect intelligence. The DA analyzes the intelligence and writes finished papers about it. The DS and DDI provides support and innovation to ensure the process operates smoothly.

The Directorate of Operations: The DO is probably the best known of these teams. Some people like to call DO employees spies, but a more accurate title is “case officer.” DO case officers often go “undercover” abroad to collect foreign intelligence. They recruit “agents,” who help gather human intelligence (or, as we say, HUMINT).

These case officers work to discover secrets that could hurt the United States’ security. They operate clandestinely (secretly)—often by themselves—to complete their missions. The work these brave case officers do every day is not really like what you see in the movies, but they can face some challenging situations.

Directorate of Science and Technology: The DS&T is responsible for gathering intelligence covertly (secretly) through electronic and satellite photography. This directorate also collects intelligence overtly (openly) from radio and TV broadcasts, magazines and newspapers – what we call open sources.

They are also our chief inventors – the scientists, engineers and creators who make all the cool spy gadgets, gizmos and even disguises that our officers use to accomplish their missions.

Directorate of Analysis: Once information (intelligence) is gathered by our teammates, it is sent to



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the DA, where our analysts figure out what it means. These analysts are excellent puzzle-solvers who take information, that often has missing pieces, and they make sense of it. DA analysts write their conclusions. Those written reports are given to the President and other US policymakers to help them make informed decisions regarding US national security.

Directorate of Support: DS officers support their teammates in the other directorates by providing a diverse range of services that aid them in doing their jobs. Support officers provide safety; supply tools and training; hire new employees; help ensure employees are healthy; and sustain and operate complicated communications equipment, among other jobs.

DS officers are often among the first CIA officers in and out of difficult operational areas. This “first in, last out” support must often be performed clandestinely (secretly), with their hands unseen. While the support they provide may be invisible, the results certainly are not.

Directorate of Digital Innovation: A digital world challenges the way we work in the secret world of intelligence. The DDI—our newest directorate—helps all of our teams with the tools and techniques they need to operate in a modern, connected world and still be clandestine.

DDI serves as the engine of creativity, integration, and rigor that CIA needs in the digital age. DDI officers ensure that their teammates, our computer systems, and our cyber capabilities are up to the challenges and opportunities of the rapidly changing world in which we live.