Intelligence evaluation for warning.

A WATCHMAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Euan G. Davis

To begin with, the knowledge which strategic intelligence must produce deserves a more forbidding adjective than 'useful.' You should call it the knowledge vital for national survival and as such it takes on somberness and stature.

Sherman Kent in *Strategic Intelligence*

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Allen W. Dulles in "The Craft of Intelligence" comments: "The cloud in the sky may be no bigger than a man's hand, but it may portend the storm; and it is the duty of intelligence to sound an alarm before a situation reaches crisis proportions."

No intelligence officer is apt to dispute Mr. Dulles' nutshell presentation of problem number one. There are, however, differences in the kinds of interest individual analysts may take in the cloud, depending on their fields of specialization—tactical analysis, current intelligence, strategic warning, and so on through a long list.

There is a degree of overlap among the three fields named both because boundaries are nebulous and because the individual analyst is often expected to don more than one hat. Tactical warning might be described as that which can be obtained by such sensors as the DEW line radars indicating that an attack had actually been initiated. The best-publicized tactical warning in US history occurred in April 1775 when the intelligence apparatus of the patriots sent Paul Revere galloping across the Middlesex countryside.

Strategic warning has been defined to be that which the intelligence community might provide prior to an actual attack, and hopefully while preparations for the attack are still in progress. This is the uneasy realm of the warning, or indications analyst. In the nature of the case, therefore, the warning analyst deals in extreme situations. The hypotheses he tests against the evidence tend to stress the outside possibilities. He is interested in what might be. The problem

of warning essentially involves the steady contemplation, and sometimes the courageous advocacy of ominous cases. In the trade, these are known as "worst case" situations.

Some other distinctions can be made. Current intelligence seeks to discern the enemy's actual intentions in the short run. The interests of current intelligence are world-wide while those of warning intelligence—as defined in the intelligence community—are rather limited geographically. The latter is engrossed in "indications of preparations for offensive military action in the immediate future against the United States, its overseas forces or its allies." This is the primary mission of the Watch Committee, the Washington focal point under USIB of strategic intelligence. It has historically been largely limited to the USSR, Communist China, and their allies. In the last decade the Watch Committee has followed developments from time to time in a number of diverse areas peripheral to the Communist blocs such as Laos, South Vietnam, Thailand, the Sino-Indian border, Korea, Cuba and the Middle East. The rationale for following these developments has been that a potential for Communist exploitation existed in the situation which might develop into a threat to the US or its allies.

Indications, or warning intelligence thus may be said to be distinguished from other forms of current intelligence in that its primary interest in enemy behavior is in terms of its threat potential. While indications intelligence is usually co-located with current intelligence, is always dependent on the same information, and is frequently dependent on the current intelligence analyst himself, it does nevertheless view matters from a different perspective. The warning analyst takes incoming scraps, matches them in his mind against an indicator list, and frequently refers back to small nuggets that have long since lost their current intelligence value. The warning analyst may find threat overtones in a pattern of events which might otherwise be considered innocuous if viewed piecemeal.

This is not to suggest that there is some peculiar mystique about the indications process. The indications analyst is, in the writer's view, a current intelligence analyst under instruction to review the same intelligence as others, but, as we have said, from a different perspective. The indications analyst looks at the information for any strategic threat, perhaps only potential, to the US, its forces abroad, or its allies. Other current intelligence analysts are also expected, as one of their duties, to think in terms of indications, but it is the warning analyst's sole obligation to do so.

A hypothetical situation might—in oversimplified terms—illustrate the differing viewpoints. Let us assume that in the 1970s the leadership of Great Frusina (GF)—a mythical nation invented by Sherman Kent—chooses to levy demands in most threatening form on the neighboring small country of Outer Riding (OR) to stop the alleged gross discrimination against OR's Frusinian minority. OR has a defense pact with the US.

Current intelligence evaluation of the situation will proceed along several lines. Thus, the political analyst sees the threat as part of the Frusinian leadership's effort to distract and obtain support from dissatisfied groups. The political analyst will question the degrees of support to be expected from allies of the two countries. The economic analyst calculates the length of time it will take for GF to gird its logistic loins for intervention. The military analyst follows closely the number of GF units involved in exercises near OR's border.

The indications analyst, however, might ask himself whether GF was just possibly using the threat of intervention to disquise efforts at a surprise attack on the US. How many of its submarines are operating out of their normal area? What is the state of GF's heavy bombers? Are there any unusual steps being taken in the civil defense field, such as art treasures being crated and moved out of town in case of a retaliatory attack, keeping in mind that OR has no heavy bombers or missiles that could reach the Great Frusinian capital city?

Hypothetically and ideally the warning analyst should be able to rack up all his indicators, both positive and negative, and produce a rough assessment as to how ready GF may be to launch an attack.

In reality, reading the warning tea leaves is not all that clear or easy. Except in the unlikely event of our having direct access to policy-making circles in Moscow or Peking, and guaranteed channels of prompt communications, the available intelligence may provide no signals, some signals, or ambiguous signals. Should the Kremlin decide on a pre-emptive attack on the US limited to missiles, the preparations would be minimal and indicators might be virtually nonexistent. The other extreme would be a full-scale mobilization of the enemy's conventional forces to be utilized in conjunction with his missiles. In the latter case there may very well be sufficient indicators available to give warning that the enemy had developed his capabilities to the point where he could launch an attack at almost any time should he elect to do so.

In developing the tools of his trade, the warning analyst has sought to create yardsticks for measuring norms of behavior. Thus, when only a single gauge begins to register abnormally, there may be no particularly serious threat developing. As an increasing number of abnormalities begin to show up simultaneously, however, the warning analyst inches closer to the edge of his chair and seeks to determine the intent behind the enemy action.

The total picture presented by developing enemy action is rarely defined in sharp colors. It tends to be less than clear-cut, in part because of the constantly changing base lines which make last year's abnormalities this year's norms. By way of example, the Soviets' surface Mediterranean Squadron is now always present in the backyard of the 6th Fleet, and the Squadron's size has gradually expanded. There was no surface Mediterranean Squadron consistently on station the year-round prior to the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. Soviet heavy bombers get "out-of-area" and touch off radar reactions in Iceland and the North American east coast periodically, both in numbers and at distances that would have been rated as "abnormal" several years ago, but tend to be considered more or less normal, if not completely friendly at present.

There is a strong tendency in the ranks of professional bureaucrats to safeguard one's nether parts. For the warning analyst, however, continually to utter only shrill cries of "Wolf!" would obviously be no service to the policy-maker. For this reason the warning analyst, keeping in mind the possibility of the worst possible situation, must make a strenuous effort to give a realistic judgment on the significance of any collection of abnormalities. And since the enemy's activity may have been initiated for any one of a variety of reasons, he obviously must try to come up with the best possible assessment of enemy motivation. The enemy may be creating abnormalities as he prepares for a pre-emptive attack on the US or one of its allies; or he may be attempting to defend against a fancied attack from the US, or he may be staging a magnificent bluff in support of a major political move; or as in the recent past he may be planning—right next door to NATO—to force one of his satellites back on to the straight and narrow path that leads to Socialist perfection, Moscow style.

It can be hazardous to measure present and future situations against past lessons. Nevertheless, past experience does suggest a

number of observations that should help shape the warning analyst's general background and judgment.

Two Major Don'ts

Don't expect the enemy to apply the same logic to his estimates of the situation in question as the US analyst would. *To wit,* in the summer of 1968, there was a strongly-argued line current around the intelligence community that the Soviets probably would not invade Czechoslovakia since they would surely be deterred by the opprobrium with which the world would judge such an action.

Don't be a victim of the Easy or Logical Explanation Syndrome. It is frequently tempting to accept such an explanation even if it may not be the correct one. Thus, during the Korean War there was considerable warning that the Chinese might intervene in the conflict, but there was also a tendency to downgrade the seriousness of the Chinese threat. Instead it was interpreted as a diplomatic ploy designed to restrain the US and its allies by means short of direct military involvement.

Three Great "Remembers"

Remember that US intelligence has been trapped before by misjudging the intended target(s) which an enemy is preparing to attack. Before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the warning signals received by US intelligence were analyzed, in part at least, as pointing to a Japanese campaign against Southeast Asia, which turned out to be only a part of the whole truth.

Remember that repeated warnings can dull the reactions and wariness of both the policy-maker and the intelligence analyst. Warnings on North Korean intentions and capabilities were given repeatedly during the year prior to June 1950. How was one to distinguish the North Korean Army activities north of the DMZ in June 1950 as preparation for a jump-off when similar past activities prior to that time had proven invariably to be preparations for maneuvers?

Remember that history does not necessarily repeat itself. An excellent example of this was the Dutch hope prior to World War II that they would again be allowed to remain neutral as they were in World War I. The hope apparently grew into expectation. Thus, repeated warnings from a German military source located in the horse's mouth, including notices of postponements and changes in schedule,

served largely as an irritant and caused disbelief in The Hague. Following receipt of the final warning, the deputy chief of Dutch intelligence is reported to have sought reassurance about German intentions by phoning the German military attaché. In the latter's absence, his "charming wife" is reported to have given the Dutch bureaucrat the assurance he craved. The Dutch official thereupon went home, only a few hours before German ground forces rumbled over the Dutch frontier.

The Two Important Questions

Do the enemy's actions signify an effort at deception and is he deliberately, or perhaps unintentionally, creating a mix of signals that point in virtually opposite directions? The missile crisis in Cuba is a well-remembered example of deception. Another possible example is the Hungarian revolution in 1956 when, in the face of the rapid and large build-up of Soviet troops, Soviet officials in Hungary appear to have carried out a charade by fulfilling an agreement to withdraw Soviet forces from Budapest and apparently indicating agreement to discuss withdrawal from Hungary.

Does everyone have the warning? History records that some nine hours after the opening of the attack on Pearl Harbor, US planes were caught wing-tip to wing-tip at Clark Field in the Philippines.

The points cited are not an all-inclusive presentation of essential background for a warning analyst, but they are typical of points he might ideally check off in reaching a judgment. The points admittedly also overlap to a degree and have been placed under arbitrary designators.

In conclusion, the warning analyst's analysis should tend to sound more ominous than that of the current intelligence analyst. By definition, as the advocate of the worst possible situation, the indications analyst is expected to espouse that attitude in considering each new set of circumstances.

Given the state of modern Soviet weaponry, it is theoretically possible for the USSR to launch a bolt-from-the-blue without a single indication warning that the appropriate Kremlin finger is poised over the ICBM button. If the Soviet preparation, however, called for considerably more activity and of longer duration involving such diverse fields as political warnings, extraordinary civil defense measures, unusual Long Range Air Force deployments and/or an unusually

large number of submarines out-of-area, the chances of sounding a tocsin would be considerably improved.

Several weeks prior to the 20 August 1968 Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, the warning machinery expressed the belief that the Soviets were militarily prepared to intervene if the Kremlin considered it necessary. If the reader will accept this warning as a satisfactory example of what might be expected from strategic intelligence, then the number of hours devoted to the indications type of sentry duty represent a reasonably inexpensive US insurance policy—possibly straight life.