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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SECRET

19 February 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Critique of Helms Planning Guidance

GENERAL COMMENTS

I have decided not to forward the document to Kissinger except possibly for information purposes. A review of the paper, either by the NSCIC or through a Kissinger response, would be unfair to you as the new DCI. Helms issued the Planning Guidance only a few days before his departure.

In contrast to the NIPM, my view of the Planning Guidance is somewhat more favorable. I believe that something like the Planning Guidance would be quite useful, especially if it focused on providing a context within which intelligence community planners could address their longer-term programming problems. Thus, it should be focused on a time period beginning about three years in the future and cover a period of about five years. DCI guidance for the next two years ought to be more specific, directive, and program-oriented. Probably it should be issued in a separate document as suggested in an earlier piece given to the DCI.

Future documents should contain three discrete sections:

-- An environmental analysis which encompasses both (a) the trends that influence top-level policy problems and demands for intelligence, and, (b) the trends which affect the functioning and performance of the intelligence community.

-- A section summing up major policy issues and problems that intelligence will have to deal with in the future.

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-- The presentation of general guidance to the community as a whole and more specific guidance to individual agencies as necessary. Guidance could be confined to only those areas where clear trends were discernible, or to specific, important areas that managers should pay special attention to, even if trends are uncertain.

Common to all sections must be the clear identification of key assumptions employed, the evidence of careful analytical thought, and the investigation of alternative ways in which the environment may develop. Too much of the present document reflects a "single view" of the future. It repeats current standard clichés about major trends, and tends to reflect the attitude that present actions are foreclosing the possibility of any real major problems. Subsequent paragraphs of this memorandum give a critique of the present guidance document based upon this three-part view.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS (Part II of the Planning Guidance: "The World Intelligence Environment of the 1970's)

Paragraph 5 suggests that for some obscure reason an environmental analysis is unnecessary. Subsequent paragraphs suggest that the community has no better sense of what may happen in the future than most laymen. Paragraph 5 also contends that U.S. policy interests change slowly. I would suggest that the intelligence community has not shown a high level of understanding of what U.S. policy interests are now, thus intelligence should not summarily dismiss examining future U.S. policy by assuming a slow rate of change. Future U.S. policies are more uncertain than that. Furthermore, simply to predict major policy trends does not provide guidance to intelligence managers.

Issues and trends which are discussed are primarily extrapolations of present issues or problems and reflect the influence of the President's November 5, 1971 memorandum, obvious present day problems and the frequent critical comments which have been made about the community's work. No rigorous search was apparently made to determine if such extrapolations were legitimate, to speculate on other issues which have not yet surfaced, or to examine issues beyond the superficial level at which they are generally discussed today.

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In analyzing the direct influence of environmental trends on the functioning of the community, the Planning Guidance contributes very little. The level funding concept is again surfaced, which I feel is very unrealistic (as the sole DCI instrument) considering the absence of evidence that managers are productivity oriented and their problem of relating costs to output. Also, one does not sense that there has been a careful systematic assessment of the impact of changing technology on the community itself. When the matter is brought up, as in the case of

25X1 [redacted] it is cast as a question of preventing an influx of new information from overloading the established framework for handling the information. The notion of exploiting available technology to allow timely processing of all the new information does not come up. The attitude seems to be that changing technology may put a strain on business as usual and thus should be kept under careful wraps.

PROBLEMS FACING INTELLIGENCE (Part III of the Planning Guidance: "Primary Intelligence Problems")

Following an environmental analysis, the Planning Guidance should call attention to key demands placed on intelligence, both in old and new areas. However, as with the memorandum's approach to the environment, it addresses the major trends as an extrapolation of the present ones. The future is far too uncertain to perform such a straightforward analysis. Some of the problems which are presented also require more examination, asking some searching questions about why the problems are important and what reasonable expectations intelligence has in dealing with them.

Paragraph 12's discussion of the Middle East illustrates the lack of depth in analysis or in diagnosis of future problems. The energy crisis implications neglect the likely impact on the incentives and behavior of major international actors. The energy crisis may provoke military conflicts, coups and other unrest in the Middle East. Japan may be driven closer to the USSR or China.

The treatment of warning in paragraphs 27, 28 and 29 is unsatisfactory. One cannot talk usefully in so general a way about warning, or even about warning of strategic attack. With regard to strategic attack it makes a difference as to how early the warning is and what kinds of warning you are going to provide. The fact is that we have been trying to design our

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strategic forces so that they will survive even in the case of surprise. We have done relatively little, although we should undoubtedly do more, to allow us to take advantage of warning of an attack on the U.S. In terms of protecting our population, we have foregone providing civil defense. If one is considering warning of sufficient timeliness and accuracy to support a U.S. first strike, we need to assess both the feasibility and resources required to do so. The importance of the warning problem is one of the clichés of the intelligence community. We need to ask more searching questions of what the leaders want to be warned about and what in fact would be the use of warning. What sorts of and how much warning are possible? Moreover, it would seem to me as far as warning is concerned that it is important to focus on other types of alert than strategic, e.g., warning of a Sino-Soviet war, warning of major crisis, etc.

The drive to prevent "technological surprise" (paragraphs 30-32) concerns me. There is a reasonable limit to our ability to detect innovations, but intelligence has not attempted to assess this. We have also done little to determine what technological surprise is really critical to detect. For example, we have categorized the importance of different types of information about weapons systems, but in a field like ICBMs, our philosophy seems to be to collect everything possible. Considering the cost of collection, I think intelligence has to ask some hard questions like: How accurate must our CEP predictions be? It is difficult to state what is important unless there is some better picture of what U.S. strategy in U.S.-Soviet technological competition is.

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC GUIDANCE (Part IV of the Planning Guidance: "Implications for Intelligence Functions")

The guidance portion of the document lacks the depth of analysis and level of specificity necessary to alert managers to the need to take action. While I realize that the DCI cannot be very specific in giving guidance to program managers for a period so far in the future, the present document communicates such broad generalities that it can be dismissed as advocating what is already being done. Guidance should include a general commentary about intelligence tasks community wide and a set of specific instructions to subordinate organizations. In addition to the changes in mission necessitated by changes in the environment and consumer demand, attention should be given to changes required by organizational pressures such as personnel and budgeting problems, collection system costs and mission conflicts among agencies.

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