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OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

INTELLIGENCE

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MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (ISA)

SUBJECT: Suggested Items for Discussion at the 20 November NSCIC Working Group Meeting - Consumer Satisfaction

The 20 November meeting of the NSCIC Working Group has only one substantive item on the agenda, a continuation of the discussion started at the last meeting on a critique of intelligence responsiveness to consumer needs. The following are matters suggested for discussion.

The principal difficulties which the consumer has in satisfying his intelligence needs generally fall into six areas: management, tasking, uncertainty, evaluation, methodology, and availability. There is an additional problem in the handling of information support for crisis management which has all of these difficulties compounded by the time urgency of the information requirements.

a. Management of Consumer Needs. The formal USIB et al intelligence requirements system provides such broad tasking that it has essentially no impact on specific intelligence activities or resource decisions. There are a vast number of consumer needs and these are communicated to the intelligence community in a wide variety of formal and informal ways, at all levels of the intelligence organization, or are inferred by the community from current issues. The intelligence community has difficulty in prioritizing these needs on a rational basis in order to use its resources to best satisfy the most important needs and to support the priority, threat sensitive national security decisions.

b. Tasking. When the consumer wants an answer to a specific question or wants to learn about a specific subject areas, he has great difficulty in finding out how to go about it. This includes both finding out what the intelligence community already knows (in both published and unpublished form), and in tasking the community to provide those needed elements of information which it does not know. This is particularly true

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of the planner or analyst who is new to the job and has not yet made personal contacts in the intelligence community. Recognizing this need DIA/DC is developing a tutorial briefing on the capabilities and limitations of the community to provide rapid response to intelligence questions. This effort is directed toward intelligence support of crisis, and should be expanded to cover longer term requirements. A short handbook from which the consumer could obtain guidance on how to work with the intelligence community would be useful. (see Tab B)

c. Uncertainty or Alternatives. The consumer of most intelligence products dealing with complex subjects generally has an uneasy feeling about many of the unqualified conclusions or estimates that are often presented. He knows that we can't have high confidence in the answers to some of his questions. He would like a synopsis of the intelligence background and evidence or, if possible, a full scale development of them, so that he can draw his own conclusions. Where this is not possible, either because of the classification of the backup information involved, or because of the effort required to produce the document setting forth the detailed background information, a well defined statement of the uncertainty is needed to permit the consumer to understand the uncertainty perceived by the intelligence analyst who made the estimate.

d. Product Evaluation. There is a lack of responsiveness of the intelligence community due to a failure of the community, in particular the individual intelligence analyst, to receive sufficient critical feedback from the consumer to properly guide his future efforts. The analyst often never learns that some consumers believe his product to be unsatisfactory and why. This lack of feedback is due to failures on both sides, failure of the consumer to make any real effort to produce and formally forward this feedback, and failure of the intelligence community to provide the channels or procedures to facilitate the flow of and response to feedback. In many cases, what appear to be established feedback channels turn out, upon closer examination, to be merely ways in which the intelligence community judges itself. A handbook would help here, also. In addition, there are many cases where the community has not responded to repeated consumer suggestions.

e. Intelligence Analysis Methodology. In many cases, the intelligence community is tasked to provide an assessment which requires not only intelligence data but also sophisticated analysis in its production. An

example is a request for an estimate of the mobilization and reinforcement capabilities of the Warsaw Pact ground forces, which requires complex operations analysis. In many cases like this, some consumers are as skilled as, or more skilled than, the intelligence community in the analysis, and believe that the intelligence community has used an inferior methodology or has otherwise improperly carried out the analysis. In any event, disagreement over the analysis leaves the consumer unsatisfied, and further tends to influence the willingness of the intelligence community to provide the consumer with basic data (basic in the sense that it has not had operational analysis applied, yet finished in the sense that it has had intelligence analysis applied) out of a fear that the consumer will improperly (in the perception of the intelligence community) use the data supplied. A similar situation occurs when policy analysis (derivation of the enemy's intentions from the basic data) is required.

f. Access. For many consumers, the largest problem area is simply being able to get that information which already exists. All too often the consumer is unable to obtain information that could be valuable to him (either what is known or the fact that little is known). Some of the contributing factors are:

(1) The intelligence community's refusal to release information which is not yet in final coordinated form. The community fails to appreciate that the consumer must make decisions, and that rough draft estimates are useful.

(2) The intelligence community's attitude that only those with SI/TK clearances have a need to know. The community fails to appreciate that most consumer staff people, who write most of the material that decision makers use to make decisions, do not have those clearances. A "good intention" to publish a sanitized report is of no help if it is not published in timely fashion.

(3) A begrudging attitude on the part of many in the intelligence community - particularly widespread at the working level - that the consumer is an irritant (this is the normal reaction of any support organization that refuses to recognize that it is a support organization).

g. Warning and Crisis Management: Post facto analysis of past crises show remarkable consistency in the serious shortcomings of intelligence support. In retrospect, there always seems to have been

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information which, if it had been analyzed, correlated, and presented to high level decision makers in a timely manner, would have greatly improved their understanding of the developing crisis, and possibly their ability to control it. This resulted partially from the fact that past indications and warning and current intelligence mechanisms and procedures emphasized consideration and consensus which usually subordinated minority opinions. Some of the problems have been recognized within the intelligence community and several efforts are under way to provide greater technical capability for information exchange and to develop procedures for highlighting dissenting and minority analysis and opinions.

It is uncertain how well the intelligence community will perform in future crises.

Additional discussion of some of these topics is contained in the attachments.

Very respectfully,

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Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
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Attachments
A. Tasking
B. Uncertainty
C. Product Evaluation
D. Intelligence Analysis Methodology

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