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4 May 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Board of National Estimates

SUBJECT : Production of Military Estimates

1. This is a somewhat delayed response to your memorandum of 16 April. As I indicated to you the other day, part of this delay has been caused by the heavy press of activity related to current crises in Cambodia and Egypt. A greater portion, however, has been devoted to a careful consideration of your proposal and to discussions inside and outside the Agency regarding the improvements it would bring about. On the basis of these deliberations, I would like herewith to outline the procedures and formats I want adopted for the production of Soviet and Chinese military estimates.

2. First, as to the allocation of subjects among the several military estimates, I believe that the proposal in paragraph 4 of your memorandum will be a considerable improvement. There will, of course, be occasions when additional estimates, possibly more narrow in scope, will be required to deal with specific issues of current importance.

3. As to the format of these estimates, I believe that fundamental changes are required to meet the criticisms expressed directly to me by Secretaries Rogers and Laird and by Dr. Kissinger. As your memorandum already recognizes, the heart of these estimates must consist of a detailed statement of evidence and analysis, with supporting annexes as required. The basic foundation must consist of a precise description of the present status and should address in detail such questions as: (a) force levels, (b) strategy objectives, (c) political and economic factors, and (d) R & D developments and test programs. On this foundation should rest an analysis of potential developments, providing a five-year outlook on alternative trends and developments. And finally, from these considerations there should develop a five-year projection of the most likely course of events. In order to make this estimate most useful for the President and the members of the National

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Security Council, two additional sections should be prepared after the basic statement has been completed. These would consist of (a) major judgments and conclusions and (b) a statement of the evidence and analyses in brief.

4. The paper I envisage represents a sharp break from the format of the past. The basic section would be more specific in detail, more technical in its discussion, and more involved in sorting and evaluating the evidence. I feel it essential, therefore, to assign the preparation and staffing of this part of the estimate to those offices in the Agency which have the daily responsibility for analyzing developments in these fields: namely, OSR in the DDI and OSI and FMSAC in the DDS&T. I would expect the Board and Staff of ONE to retain its present responsibility for the two most estimative parts of the NIE: the drawing together of major judments and conclusions and the brief statement of evidence and analyses. Responsibility would also remain with the Board, and specifically with the Board member you designate to chair the estimate, for producing a final Agency draft and seeing it through USIB coordination.

5. I recognize that the procedure I have described will require some adjustments between ONE and the two Directorates. We are all engaged, however, in a common task: namely, to produce an estimate most responsive to the needs of policy people as they have been explicitly expressed to me. I am confident that these adjustments can be made satisfactorily and that estimates expressive of the considerable expertise this Agency possesses can be produced. I will leave to you and the two Deputy Directors the task of working out a satisfactory modus operandi..

Richard Helms
Director

Attachments - 2