

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

OCA 96-1489/7
26 June 1996

(b) (3)

The Honorable James Inhofe
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe:

Recently your office was provided with a copy of a letter addressed to Niles Riddel, Director of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), from Professor Alvin Z. Rubinstein, University of Pennsylvania. The professor expressed his dissatisfaction over the cessation of FBIS hardcopy products. FBIS has responded to Professor Rubinstein's concern. A copy of the letter is enclosed for your information.

Sincerely,

David P. Holmes
for John H. Moseman
Director of Congressional Affairs

Enclosures

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: MAY 2006

J
3.
Inhofe

SUBJECT: FBIS Transition From Hardcopy to Softcopy

DCI/OCA/[redacted] (19 Jun 96)

OCA 96-1489/1-12 [redacted]

Distribution:

- Original - Senator Jesse Helms (w/encls)
- Original - Senator John McCain (w/encls)
- Original - Senator John Warner (w/encls)
- Original - Senator Arlen Specter (w/encls)
- Original - Senator Robert J. Kerrey (w/encls)
- Original - Senator Richard G. Lugar (w/encls)
- Original - Senator Richard C. Shelby (w/encls)
- Original - Senator James Inhofe (w/encls)
- Original - Senator John Glenn (w/encls)
- Original - Senator John F. Kerry (w/encls)
- Original - Senator Charles S. Robb (w/encls)
- Original - Rep. Floyd Spence (w/encls)
- 1 - OCA Records (w/encls) (A/96-05295)
- 1 - D/OCA (w/o encls)
- 1 - D/FBIS (w/o encls)
- 1 - ER (w/encls) (ACTION ITEM: ER 96-2332)
- 1 - [redacted] Chrono
(ACTION ITEM: ER 96-2332 & A/96-05295)



FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

FBIS 1423-96
11 June 1996

Professor Alvin Z. Rubinstein
University of Pennsylvania
School of Arts and Sciences
Political Science Department
217 Stiteler Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-6215

Dear Professor Rubinstein:

Thank you for your letter of April 24, 1996. We certainly appreciate your views on the importance of what FBIS is doing and can empathize with your preference for hardcopy.

Nonetheless, I am sure you can understand the challenges FBIS is facing with the rapid advances in technology on the one hand, and reductions in resources on the other. Our customers in the policy and analytical communities of the government have been urging us to make our products available more quickly and in a more usable form. Regrettably, resource constraints do not allow us both to develop a softcopy environment to meet these needs and maintain our traditional hardcopy production infrastructure.

As you may know, the Department of Commerce's National Technical Information Service (NTIS) serves as the government's broker with the public for FBIS products. For example, NTIS currently makes FBIS information available to the public on Internet via

Professor Alvin Z. Rubinstein

its World News Connection service (<http://wnc.fedworld.gov>). If you wish to contact NTIS directly, please do so at (703) 487-4630. Although NTIS currently has no plans for hardcopy production after FBIS ceases its hardcopy in December, we will forward your letter to NTIS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Niles Riddel".

J. Niles Riddel
Director

cc: Director of Central Intelligence
Senator Jesse Helms
Senator John McCain
Senator John Warner
Senator Arlen Specter
Senator Robert J. Kerrey
Senator Richard G. Lugar
Senator Richard C. Shelby
Senator James Inhofe
Senator John Glenn
Senator John F. Kerry
Senator Charles S. Robb
Representative Floyd Spence

Professor Alvin Z. Rubinstein

Distribution:

Orig - Addressee

1 - O/DDS&T

1 - DCI Executive Secretary

1 - D/FBIS

1 - [redacted]

1 - [redacted]

1 - [redacted]

1 - OCA [redacted]

1 - DCI Registry

1 - FBIS Registry

DS&T/FBIS/[redacted] (10Jun96)

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

School of Arts and Sciences

Political Science Department
217 Stiteler Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6215
215-898-7641

April 24, 1996

Mr. Niles Riddel, Director
FBIS
P.O. Box 2604
Washington, D.C. 20013

Dear Mr. Riddel:

If this letter leads one person interested in intelligence collection and analysis to ask some questions about the wisdom of relying solely on electronic dissemination of data to interested analysts it will have been the effort.

For decades the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports served as the eyes of intelligence analysts and, of course, academic researchers. Without FBIS we would have been as handicapped as a person walking through a heavily wooded forest with a pole clenched between the teeth. Hard copy facilitated retention of "historical memory", comparison across regions, and speed in scanning diverse sources. I should also note the invaluable supplement provided by the JPRS translations of longer, more serious analyses published in languages such as Russian, Arabic, and so on.

As I understand the matter, the decision has been made. Still, if the logic is weak and the results are not up to high expectations, perhaps those concerned about the quality of intelligence may take another look at the supposed benefits of going electronic. FBIS is to go completely electronic by the end of the year, or possibly early in 1997. This move is driven by the following considerations:

- o the desire of most consumers in the intelligence community for information as soon as possible;
- o the desire to save money (financial constraints);
- o the momentum of technological development.

The desire of the intelligence community for information ASAP. As an academic, I accept and understand the need for obtaining data ASAP. Hopefully, the speedier flow will improve the analysis of ongoing events. BUT WHY STOP PRODUCING THE HARD COPIES OF FBIS Daily Reports? Viewed strictly from the perspective of analysis of data, the implicit assumption underlying the justification of going electronic in terms of speed is that day-old data can be discarded or need not be considered. Once the analyst has seen the electronic data, the assumption goes, he moves on, and yesterday's data become irrelevant. The flaws in such an argument are obvious.

If an analyst needs to take a second look at data from the past, he/she can pull the data up from the computer. This, too, requires a closer look. Is it easier to scan hard copies of FBIS material on Russia or is it easier to do so electronically? And which method provides the analyst with a broader perspective, a sense of the environment within which the data is to be evaluated? Electronically driven and dependent analysis may turn out to be "fool's gold."

The desire to save money. Is ^{it} a saving of several million dollars --- I have not been able to get a dollar-figure approximation from anyone I've spoken with, and so everything is vague (deliberately?). How many positions are being "saved" through elimination: 25? 50? Probably no more than that. In a 260 billion defense budget is that a consequential saving? You couldn't even buy a fighter plane a year for that money.

Administrators may have to cut their budgets, but certainly analysts and analytically responsible officials cannot, surely, think about the manifold issues that face the intelligence community and skimp on data-collection and data-analysis. The argument has been made to me--why should the government in effect subsidize the academic community by continuing to put out hard copies of FBIS Reports? The answer is simple: because the academics constitute another line of intelligence collection and analysis; they publish results that have some relevance for the intelligence community; they help place developments in perspective; and because they are helpful, at times, as prospective short-term government employees and occasional consultants. The research done by academics who have over the decades relied on FBIS and other such publications has been useful for government. In the future, the role of the academic will be more important than during the Cold War, because academics will have greater ability to conduct field research and make assessment on the basis of personal connections that may contravene what the analyst limited to a computer console and to material translated by FBIS.

Technological momentum. Technology is not all bad, but neither is it the answer to all problems. As a teacher, I can see in my computer-literate students that the computer DOES NOT NECESSARILY LEAD TO BETTER THINKING, TO MORE ANALYTICAL ASSESSMENTS, OR TO BETTER WRITING. The computer merely provides faster ways of manipulating material and of churning out neatly appearing papers. The notion, being foisted on unsuspecting administrators, by technology firms such as Lotus that electronic mail can spare a school the need to ever have to bother with paper again is another bit of fool's gold.

The analyst ~~who~~ has to depend on e-mail, which doesn't always work as it is supposed to since main frames get overloaded; the analyst who relies on the computer and never browses through regional newspapers or journals or who never looks at FBIS material that is not of immediate concern; the analyst who thinks that signalling the computer for information on a specific issue will bring all the relevant material to the console; the analyst who expects to develop a necessary perspective on the special issues that are of immediate concern---all of these are being shortchanged by the management decision that is being made. What are the implications of going electronic for the training of anal

In the immediate and long term the most deprived may be the very ones who most need the assessments.

I'll stop. If anyone gets this far, I thank you for your patience. Do think about the implications of what FBIS is bent on. They do affect security -- profoundly.

cc: Dr. John Deutch, Director of CIA
Senator Jesse Helms (NC)
Senator John McCain (AZ)
Senator John Warner (VA)
Senator Arlen Specter, chairman Comm. on Intelli-
Hon. Floyd D. Spence gence
Bob Kerry, Senator (Nebr).
Sen. Richard Lugar (IN)
Sen. Richard Shelby (AL)
Sen. James Inhofe (OK) (OKla)
Sen. John Glenn
Sen. John F. Kerry (MA)
Sen. Charles Robb (VA)

Sincerely yours,


Arvin Z. Rubinstein
Professor

JM

TO : D/OCA via [redacted]	CONTROL # OCA 96-1489	DATE OF REQUEST 19 Jun 96
FROM : DCI/OCA/[redacted] AC/DCI/[redacted]	SUSPENSE DATE	

SUBJECT: LTRS to Sens Helms, McCain, Warner, Specter, Kerrey, Lugar, Shelby, Inhofe, Glenn, Kerry, Robb, and Rep Spence

re: FBIS' Transition from Hardcopy to Softcopy

NOTES

(ACTION ITEM: ER 96-2332 & A/96-05295)

COORDINATED WITH (list names as well as offices)		
NAME	OFFICE	DATE
Niles Riddel	DIR/FBIS	
NAME	OFFICE	DATE
NAME	OFFICE	DATE
NAME	OFFICE	DATE

ACTION REQUIRED BY **D/OCA**

signed 6/26/96
[redacted]

Review and Signature on Letters (12)

action closed