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CIA
(Copy in CIG) IX/2
IV/18
Cites Darling IX/12 (1)

Vandenberg, H. S.

Interview

March 17, 1952

1. Did you see the letter to Beedle Smith from Donovan September 17, 1943? IX/27

No, I didn't see it, he said. He was never deputy to Smith. IV/22(1)

2. When did you first become interested in central intelligence? Was it through your membership on the Advisory Board? IV/27

General Eisenhower made him G-2 and he appreciated very quickly from his experience that there should be some kind of central intelligence service. It was as G-2 therefore that he automatically became a member of IAB. I remarked that we saw in the minutes that he took a very active part. This led us to think that he might have been interested in the CIG before it was organized. He did not seem to know much about its creation. IV/29
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3. How did you feel about OSS?

He thought OSS made a lot of enemies by "free-wheeling." By that I think he meant that members of OSS threw their weight around and did not respect the discipline that an Army man must. He used the phrase a good many times. I asked him if he thought under stronger controls by JCS it might have continued to operate effectively as an intelligence service. He did not seem to know much about it.

4. What did you think of the Donovan Plan? The battle in Joint Intelligence Committee? The leak to the papers in February 1945?

He didn't think much about the Donovan plan. In fact, I don't believe he was here at the time. Regarding the battle in JIC he asked,

"Which battle?" And when I spoke of the services versus civilian plans

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No Change in ~~our~~ Chapter-I) he did not know. He sidestepped the question about
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the leak to the papers in February 1945. At first I thought he was unwilling to talk but I imagine he was actually not paying much attention at that time and, being honest with me, he was trying to recall what he did think.

5. Did you prefer the JCS plan of the fall of 1945 to the McCormack Plan?

He did prefer the JCS plan to the McCormack plan and went on to say that he much preferred the present plan even to CIG as it was when he took it over.

6. With the adoption of the Presidential Directive did you come immediately on the Intelligence Advisory Board?

Yes, as G-2. At about this time he gave an intimation which I must record here. He said he did not know he was going to be DCI until Admiral Souers said, "The President wishes you to take it over." "Souers," said Vandenberg, "took it, you know, just to get it started." I thought of asking him if it were a matter of first the Navy, then the Army, but I kept still.

7. Why did you establish ICAPS?

He read the question and then he said, "What in hell is ICAPS?" I said: "You established the Interdepartmental Coordinating and Policy Staff." He then said, "Oh, yes, I remember." His remembrance runs something like this: He was having trouble with the representatives of the services on the Intelligence Advisory Board because he insisted that as DCI he was individually responsible. The President had chosen him, given him an order. It was his duty, if he were to hold the office, to take

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the responsibility. In short, the Board was advisory. But he was having so much trouble with them that he thought it might be wise to have their representatives work with him preparatory to the formulation of his opinion. I said, "Well, you mean that you would let G-2 and ONI, through representatives share in helping you make up your mind so that when you came to the top intelligence officers (IAB) they would already know through their representatives what had entered into your thinking?" He said, "Yes, that's just about it."

The more I thought about it coming back the more I thought that he had something. He intended to have the last word because he was responsible to the President. He would accept advice, argument, new facts, but he would make up his own mind and that would be the official position of the Agency. He did not care if others dissented. It would be, however, distinctly a minority dissent and not the official position of CIG.

At this point we talked at some length about individual versus collective responsibility for estimates. Vandenberg was perfectly clear, crisp and decided. He did not choke off dissent. But there would be no "synthesis" (I supplied the word) if everybody had equal rights of opinion. National Intelligence Estimates, according to General Vandenberg, had to be the opinion of the DCI. This Agency was set up to find from every source possible the national intelligence estimate, which should be the opinion of the nation, provided the policy makers took it over. This tied right into Question No. 8.

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8. Why did you establish ORE?

He said, "I established ORE to process the material for me as DCI." That is to say, the body of experts who worked for him would take the information which came from every source and verify it, evaluate it, coordinate it, process it and send it to him. And then he would make the decision which would be official estimate of the CIG. I did not interject the question which perhaps I should have. "What would you do if they were so inept as to overlook the significance of some of the material which lay in front of their eyes? What would you do?" There is no answer to that question even today, I suppose. For Vandenberg it was a simple matter of getting all intelligence from every source and putting it into the hopper of ORE.

He said that he has directed his intelligence officer to send to the CIA everything that the Air Force has. He does not want any of his subordinates to exercise the judgment regarding its importance. He recalled that his chief trouble with IAB, from his point of view, was that G-2 and OHI hold out information. When he sometimes got it from SSU and faced them with it, they just replied that they didn't give it to him. It seemed to me that he had his finger here on one of the chief weaknesses in the system. I remarked that they still were holding out information. He did not reply. He let it go by without comment.

9. Independent Budget. Was the idea to get further legislation so that you could have an independent budget?

He explained that he could not hire or fire or spend. It was an impossible situation. He never knew when his appropriation from one

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of the Departments would be cut. He protested again and again to Congressional Committees that he could not run the Agency without funds under his control.

10. Move to be made executive agent. In the "chain of command" did you feel as DCI that you had "individual responsibility."

When we came to this question we had already talked over the problem of his individual responsibility with regard to estimates. He said he got the NIA to give him the position of Executive Agent of the Secretaries so that he could carry out the orders of the President. He repeated that if the President did not wish him to do the job he would get somebody else. I did not ask him why Admiral Hillenkoetter gave up the position. There was no mention of his successor throughout the conference.

11. The "FBI" in South America.

He said that Mr. Hoover was "mad as hell" at him for insisting that FBI withdraw its men from South America. General Vandenberg explained his position clearly. As head of the national intelligence agency he could not do his job if some other organization were engaged in the same work. He believed that FBI should confine itself to security intelligence at home. He expressed admiration for Hoover and his organization. He illustrated his point well, I thought, by describing how Hitler had put one German service against another. General Vandenberg believed that the Germans peached on each other and sold out because they were so often interfering with one another. They were easy targets.

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12. Were you in favor of unification and establishment of NSC with CIA on statutory foundation rather than a mere presidential directive?

Yes, he thinks that it is a better system. In his opinion it is working well. He went on to say however that NSC did not know all that was going on in CIA. I remarked that there was a great deal over here. He replied that on occasion of course they knew everything but CIA had much more freedom of action than CIG had enjoyed under NIA. He prefers the present system.

13. Do you think there was any great change in the status of the DCI as results of Acts of Congress of 1947 and 1949, the National Security Act and Enabling Act for CIA?

Yes, he thought that there were changes resulting from these Acts of Congress. But he did not specify them. I could not give specific leads.

14. Through the experience of the Agency have they developed better methods of coordination?

Well, he did not know specifically as he had been out of touch with the mechanism and methods. I let this one slide by.

15. What is your view in respect to the expansion of this Agency since the Korean War broke out?

16. Do you think physical subversion should be kept entirely distinct from the collection of intelligence and its processing?

The questions ran together in his conversation. He supposed that the exigencies of the war made expansion necessary and he was thinking, I gathered, of collection and processing of intelligence. Then he saw that I was referring also to "OPC" and he said that physical subversion should be kept entirely separate from collection and processing.



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He thought that intelligence resulting from covert operations might be sent home through separate channels. He did not like the idea of "integration" reaching down into the field. I neglected to ask him about PSB.

17. Did you think collection and dissemination should be kept separate?

This question rose from the fact that in his day there were two separate offices within the Agency. He thought that they should be kept separate so that secret collection would not be subject to exposure. I realized that our Office of Collection and Dissemination was not the question that he had in mind.

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