

Wheaton B. Byers

STAT

October 19, 1980

Mr. Richard V. Allen

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Dear Dick,

Enclosed is a paper on the PFIAB which you requested. It is longer than you hoped, and it is certainly longer than I would like. I believe it is important, however, for you to have the historical background.

In considering the reestablishment of a PFIAB type mechanism there is a logical sequence of steps.

The first decision is what do you want the Board to do ? Historically the Board sought to discharge its responsibility of insuring the best possible intelligence support for the President by stimulation and innovation. Cost benefit ratios were not significant and, generally speaking, the ends justified the means.

With mature intelligence institutions, recently imposed legal and budgetary constraints and serious residual effects remaining from the investigations, a new board will face quite a different set of problems and priorities. For example, restoration of allied confidence in the U.S. ability to keep secrets, low morale (particularly in the DDO) and the degree to which technology developed in the "black" world can be released to the "white" world.

Should the compliance function now vested in the Intelligence Oversight Board remain separate or, as recommended by the Rockefeller Commission, be rolled into the PFIAB ? What should be the nature of the relationship between the Board and Congress ? Should the Board continue the practise of eschewing publicity of any kind ? A very basic question is will it truly be a presidnetial board ? Obviously this depends on Governor Reagan's personal style and preferences but, it has important implications in terms of the kinds of people who might be asked to serve. Stature and prestige provide clout but they also require attention, and tend to limit the demands which can be placed on the members time.

Some sense of the answers to these questions will help shape the composition of a new board - the particular combination of expertise and professional backgrounds desired. It will also begin to define the staff requirements and to answer the question of whether or not a full time Chairman is desired.

From experience, and perhaps to state the obvious, pressures for appointment to a board like the PFIAB come from all sides. Let me urge that the Presidential Appointments Staff, whose judgements must inevitably be influenced by political considerations, not dominate the selection process in this particular case.

Finally, you proposed that a new name be found for the Board. I can see some good reasons for retaining the old one but, in any event, the name should reflect as accurately as possible the new boards mission and responsibilities. I think it will be easy enough to come up with a name once it is determined just what is expected of the Board.

I will give you a call in a day or so to see when it will be convenient for us to get together.

Regards,

W. H. C. M.

A Summary of the History, Operation, Role and Membership  
Of  
The President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board

HISTORY

The 1955 Hoover Commission Report on the Organization of the Executive Branch recommended that:

- A) The President appoint a citizens committee to report on Government foreign intelligence activities and,
- B) Congress set up a joint committee on foreign intelligence.

In light of the controversy surrounding the intelligence community in recent years it is important to recall that these recommendations did not reflect a Commission concern for "intelligence excesses". Rather, there was a belief that intelligence resources were not providing the President and his policy makers with the intelligence support they required. Thus at that time the concept of "oversight" implied "nourish" rather than "restrain".

Congress never did act on the Hoover Commission recommendation but in January 1956 President Eisenhower established a bi-partisan 8 member Board of Consultants on Foreign Intelligence Activities. The members were distinguished private citizens with experience in defense and international affairs. The first Chairman was Dr. James Killian, President of M.I.T. The Eisenhower Board met every three months, had five meetings with the President and made 42 recommendations covering, among other things, the management of CIA, covert operations and strategic warning.

With the admonition "not to let this happen to me again" President Kennedy reestablished the Board in May 1961, one month after the Bay of Pigs invasion. The name of the Board was changed to The President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. Dr. Killian was again appointed Chairman and, while the total number of Board members remained the same, the composition was changed to reflect the growing application of science and technology to intelligence - Dr. William Baker of Bell Laboratories was retained and Dr. Edwin Land was added to PFIAB membership.

In the six months between its appointment and President Kennedy's assassination the Board met almost weekly, had nine sessions with the President and submitted over 50 recommendations covering, inter alia, the operation of NSA, paramilitary programs and the application of science and technology to the intelligence process. The Kennedy Board played a seminal role in the development of photographic reconnaissance.

The PFIAB was retained in tact by President Johnson but, reflecting his personal interests and style, met less frequently with him than with his predecessor. The Johnson Board, however, had a close working relationship with Johnson's National Security Advisor, Walt Rostow. Board recommendations during the Johnson era covered satellite reconnaissance, the application of electronic data handling to intelligence and deficiencies in the collection and analysis of intelligence from South East Asia.

The Nixon Board was appointed in March 1969. The first Chairman was General Maxwell B. Taylor and the traditions of bi-partisanship and continuity (five of the ten members had served previously) were reflected in the Board's membership. The Nixon Executive Order (11460) was generally similar to those of past Presidents but more specific in instructing the Board to work with the various elements of the intelligence community on those matters where the support of the Board would further the effectiveness of the national intelligence effort.

In 1970 President Nixon sent a delegation of Board members to South East Asia to investigate the effect of the U.S. incursion into Cambodia, and in 1972 he directed the Board to do an independent study on how to keep the U.S. Navy second to none. He also directed the Board to assess the effectiveness of agent operations ( Humint Report ). During the Nixon Administration there were a number of changes made in Board membership and by 1974 the roster had increased to sixteen members.

The Nixon Board met eight times with the President and made over 70 recommendations covering such topics as the collection and analysis of economic intelligence, overhead reconnaissance ( it saved the KH-11 from becoming the victim of bureaucratic infighting ), weaknesses in the strategic Estimates specifically and in the estimates process generally (team B) and counter intelligence (the Board tenaciously focused Administration attention on the massive Soviet intrusion into U.S. telecommunications networks).

President Ford retained the PFIAB without change but without much enthusiasm. He made limited use of the Board and supported several important recommendations; however, the barriers erected between the Board and the President in the second Nixon Administration and subtle denigration of its role (it was outside the circled wagons and therefore a possible threat) were never successfully overcome.

In summary, each President found the Board an essential instrument. The way in which the Board was employed by each President reflected the needs of that President, the intelligence community at the time and the particular requirements for intelligence information as perceived by the President, his principal advisors or the Board.

OPERATION OF THE NIXON/FORD BOARD

The PFIAB met regularly in plenary session for two full days every other month. The agenda for each meeting was worked out by the Chairman and Executive Secretary and was based on directives from the President, requests from the National Security Advisor, cabinet members or senior administration officials. It reflected the members perceptions of intelligence issues, problems or deficiencies and their insights on new ways to improve the intelligence process.

Schedules provided for the requisite briefings and discussions with the directors and staffs of intelligence organizations, meetings with cabinet officers and other administration officials and for summary deliberations by the members. Following each meeting the staff prepared detailed minutes and, as appropriate, summarized Board findings and recommendations in letters to the President and/or the heads of the various departments and agencies.

In addition to its regular meetings the Board had an informal committee structure where-in individual members devoted substantial additional time to particular areas or problems of intelligence which their special competences best equipped them to assess for the Board.

At the request of the President or on their own initiative members of the Board visited intelligence installations in the U.S. and abroad. In those countries with which the U.S. had intelligence exchange agreements Board members met with the foreign intelligence officials, ministers and on occasion with chiefs of state.

Through special committees or in plenary session the Board did a number of post-mortems of intelligence failures (real or alleged) such as Sihanoukville, Chile and the 1973 Middle East War. It investigated intelligence compromises and directed changes in security procedures.

By design the Board worked without publicity. The members were convinced that if they were to effectively serve the President in areas of the greatest sensitivity, the task would be made more difficult by public discussion of anykind regarding the Boards advice. However, there was a price attached to this. With no public understanding of the role of the Board and only a limited comprehension of its activities within any administration, its real support was limited to those intimately familiar with the intelligence process and who could understand the significance of the close and completely confidential nature of the relationship between the Board and the President.

Members of the Board were <sup>paid</sup> payed per diem and expenses (many chose not to accept either) for the time spent and travel on Board business. The Chairman served part time and the Executive Secretary, his assistant and four secretaries full time. Board members and the Executive Secretary held presidential appointments.

#### THE ROLE OF THE PFIAB - WHY A BOARD ?

The responsibility for producing intelligence is shared by a number of government departments and agencies. Each carries out technically complex and humanly taxing functions, each asserts competing claims for resources, each has strong parochial interests and each is isolated, both physically and conceptually, by the security measures necessary to protect intelligence sources and methods.

The programs and activities of the intelligence community are necessarily exempt from public oversight and the checks and balances which these impose on functioning of other government departments. OMB examines intelligence budget rationality, the Intelligence Oversight Board assess propriety and the NSC (by statute) and the Director of Central Intelligence exercise day-to-day responsibility for activities and resource allocation.

The PFIAB has provided a different kind of overview. Because it has no operational responsibility and answers only to the President it looks at the inescapable conflicts, rivalries and differences within the community solely from the standpoint of the national interest - what will best meet the needs of the country and the President rather than just the requirements of a particular agency or department.

Board members possess all the necessary clearances and are empowered to call upon all those who operate as well as manage intelligence resources. There is no other forum in which national intelligence priorities and issues can be debated free from political and bureaucratic responsibility and departmental bias.

The PFIAB has been a unique and a working board. At times its efforts have been frustrated and there have been occasions when logically it might have been called upon but was not. It has been the object of informed and uninformed praise, and it has been criticised justly and unjustly. But, its reputation for integrity and the personal stature of its members have meant that its judgements and recommendations have benefited from the frank expression of views by Executive Branch officials at all levels, as well as acknowledged experts from the private sector.

PFIAB MEMBERSHIP

Enclosed is a list of all former PFIAB members. It reflects a wealth of experience and dedication to national service. It reflects men of wisdom and stature who have achieved eminence in the fields of science, law, economics, communication, diplomacy and politics. It reflects men of unquestioned probity who can look at the problems and difficult decisions of leadership through the eyes of the President. And it reflects patriots in the deepest sense of the word; men who derive sustenance from their contribution to the preservation of the national security and welfare.

It is these qualities which have enabled the Board to stimulate creativity and the development of new intelligence concepts and techniques. And it is these qualities which have assured five presidents of informed, critical and detached judgements.

Wheaton B. Byers, October 19, 1980