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10 May 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Post Mortem of NIE Production for 1953

BACKGROUND

1. The IAC considered the matter of doing post mortems of NIE's on 22 May 1952. The record of action is as follows:

"General Smith stated that the identification of intelligence deficiencies in our production, including the conduct of post mortems on estimates, was an essential part of the intelligence process. It was agreed that the IAC representatives should proceed to produce jointly statements of intelligence deficiencies on estimates in appropriate cases. Statements of intelligence deficiencies will be sent by the Director of Central Intelligence to members of the IAC for appropriate action."

2. Based on that record of action, ONS issued a procedure which was followed during 1952 and early 1953: several post mortems were held on individual important estimates.

3. It then became apparent that to avoid repetition, estimates dealing with a particular region had to be considered together rather than separately. We therefore decided to experiment with a post mortem on the whole of the 1953 production.

SUBSTANCE

4. The agencies are generally content with the present draft though it is all too apparent that they only reluctantly associate themselves with any document that suggests that the intelligence effort is in any manner less than perfect.

5. Specific objections taken by the Air Force and the Army are footnoted, in the text.

6. The Air Force representative took the position that it was inappropriate to state that "An improvement

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in the liaison between operational and intelligence elements... would result in the more timely receipt of intelligence".

Comment: Any suggestion which could lead to the production of better estimates is appropriate to note.

h. The Air Force representative objected to the breakdown used in parts of the section on the Soviet Bloc, preferring to lump these under one general "military" category (see e, d, g, on p. 3 of text).

Comment: While the present arrangement perhaps highlights air matters in this case, as a general proposition the more specific we can be in identifying categories of subjects about which we need to know more, the more useful will our statement be as a guide for corrective action.

g. The G-2 representative objected to the reference on page 6, which states that we encountered a deficiency in firm intelligence on [redacted] intentions and capabilities during the preparation of SE-4E. He rested his case on the grounds that G-2 had in fact obtained a G-3 FRODO field judgment in time to serve as a contribution to SE-4E.

Comment: The fact that it was necessary to go to the field and that the contribution received, however useful, still left some questions unanswered is in the opinion of the other agencies sufficient grounds for leaving this in the text.

REFERENCE CHANGE IN PROCEDURE

6. All the agencies favor the recommended change in the procedure. The change calls for doing post mortems quarterly. This will avoid the difficulties we encountered when using the estimate-by-estimate approach. It will also avoid the culling over of stale estimates which would be the result if the review were done less frequently than quarterly.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

[redacted]

Acting Chairman

O/NE:PAB:11

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