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THE THREE PILLARS OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

Current intelligence has three principal manifestations--daily publications, weekly publications, and ad hoc memoranda. Although suggestions are sometimes made to eliminate or drastically alter one or another of this trio, the chances are that in some form all will be with us for a long time to come. Each springs out of the needs of high-level officials and American reading preferences.

Obviously American policy-makers require daily reports on any problem, such as Indochina, on which it is vital to have the latest information and on which daily decisions must be made. Even on less urgent matters and those not calling for US action officials want to learn about developments when they are news. They need a daily. At the same time, Americans seem to have been conditioned to expect a weekly round-up of events that makes more generalized sense out of the daily details and looks ahead a bit. When a policy-maker is seized of a problem, he will need more intelligence than is carried in daily and weekly articles; he wants the story laid out fully and neatly. This calls for a memorandum, which he may

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request or which may be self-initiated by the intuitive analyst. Enduring problems will call forth a string of memoranda.

Intelligence writing in any of these forms seeks to be analytical rather than simply reportorial. That is, it brings out the significance of a development by answering the questions that naturally come to mind, providing related facts and background, and explaining why the event has occurred and what its consequences are likely to be.

Though the Office of Current Intelligence does many other things--such as providing briefings, contributing to National Security Council studies, writing National Intelligence Surveys--the heart of its business is the production of dailies, weeklies, and memoranda. The beginning of this activity predates the formation of OCI.

In January 1946 President Truman asked the new Central Intelligence Group, soon to be renamed the CIA, to provide him with a daily intelligence summary. He said he had many reports coming to him from different sources, but he needed one compilation that would draw together and evaluate the most important intelligence. The CIG responded with the Daily Summary under the editorship of [REDACTED] The

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CIA daily, called The Central Intelligence Bulletin for the past 14 years, has continued in an unbroken line down to the present, though it has been a product of different offices in the Agency. Since 1951 it has been produced by OCI, with the regular collaboration of the Office of Economic Research, and, in recent years, the Office of Strategic Research.

A Matter of Definition

President Truman did not specify what he meant by "important intelligence." It was left to the CIG to make its own judgment of importance, and to decide what intelligence was. CIG's course was not to adopt a definition of intelligence and proceed in conformity with it, but to steer largely by instinct informed by the experience its members had gained in the intelligence field during World War II. Later on, newcomers who had not had this experience sought a precise definition, thereby opening up a discussion which has been carried on sporadically, but without any great intensity, to this day.

There is plenty of room for argument and it is not uncommon to hear someone disparage a piece of information by saying, "That isn't intelligence!" If pressed, however, he would probably not be able to say what intelligence is.

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Some practitioners of the art have argued for the clandestine nature of intelligence. A proper definition, however, must reflect the way a word has come to be used. In this case, it must allow for the fact that reports from ambassadors and attaches, information from travellers, and monitored radio broadcasts and telecasts, are as much a part of the intelligence "take" as intercepted communications, overhead imagery, and agent reports. One hesitates to call press stories "intelligence," but there is no doubt that they are often the factual basis of finished intelligence, which is normally interpretive.

Not only is it unprofitable to define intelligence by method of collection but it is also meaningless to limit it in terms of subject matter, aside from its dealing with things "foreign." Intelligence can treat political, economic, sociological or military subjects; it can concern friend, foe, or neutral, good news or bad, danger or opportunity. Looking at the record of what CIA has been producing over the years, we get an ostensive definition of intelligence that is quite broad, and has been consistently so. The only characteristics common to all the intelligence reports published over the past quarter of a century are that they convey foreign information--i.e., they concern foreign countries, persons, and organizations--and they have been written by US intelligence officials.

In other words, intelligence is official information on foreign developments and situations. It may have been acquired

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from public media and, even as interpreted, differ little from what is known by the man in the street, or it may have been acquired expensively by elaborate collection methods and constitute sensitive information known to only a few. Whatever its subject matter, it ought to be more accurate and authoritative than non-official writing since it can draw not only on public information but on a variety of sources exclusive to the government.

It may be unnecessary to explain the distinctiveness of the variety of intelligence known as current intelligence. Nonetheless, the National Security Council has done so to mark out jurisdictional lines. NSCID No. 3 of 13 January 1948 lays down that current intelligence is "that spot information or intelligence of all types and forms of immediate interest and value to operating or policy staffs, which is used by them usually without the delays incident to complete evaluation or interpretation." In simpler terms, we could say that current intelligence deals with current foreign events and is produced promptly. The events in question may or may not be subjected to more thorough evaluation later on.

#### Crises, Threats, and Favorable Developments

From the beginning of the Daily Summary, current intelligence has logically, instinctively, and unavoidably

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focused on foreign developments of greatest significance to the US. Its first concern has been with events having an immediate impact on this country and calling for policy decisions. The hot issues--the crises--demand treatment. Prime examples of "must" coverage are wars. Since OCI was formed, the two wars in which the US has been involved have regularly been given prominent coverage in the regular daily. They have also called forth special dailies of their own. Sometimes war reports are eclipsed by pressure tactics by our antagonists, such as the various Soviet squeeze plays on Berlin and the attempt to plant missiles in Cuba. Developments regarding our antagonists' military capabilities, and, of course, what we can divine of their intentions, are covered conscientiously. All these are matters directly affecting US security.

One of the main purposes of the Bulletin is to guard official Washington against "surprises," particularly of the unpleasant variety. When the Bulletin fails, as it has occasionally, there is a post-mortem to determine the reasons.

Crises do not arise solely over issues of direct security significance; there are crises in diplomatic and economic relations between the US and its allies, and between other countries, with repercussions on the US. Moreover, intelligence deals as much with non-critical situations as with crises. It is quite possible that the most important intelligence is non-critical in nature, even if crisis reporting tends to hog attention. When the dam has broken,

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officials tend to be caught up by events; their capability of control is limited. On the other hand, if they can spot trouble coming in the future, they can plan carefully to meet, and perhaps, preclude it. It is this kind of "look ahead" that intelligence should provide.

Officials responsible for the conduct of foreign and defense policy cannot be adequately served only by information of a defensive nature, whether it concerns crises or future problems. For a full understanding of situations, they need to be informed of developments favorable to US interests and of opportunities for the US to promote its objectives. This is an important side of intelligence.

#### The Wide US Interest

In general, intelligence reporting must cover all countries and situations where there is a US interest. This is not in fact a restrictive prescription. Although it varies enormously in degree, there is a US interest in every country in the world. This follows from our desire to avoid the outbreak of wars, which always are a peril to the international community, to counter the extension of our antagonists' influence, and to safeguard our economic interests.

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The developments and situations that each country regards as most important to itself--usually its current major issues--are likely to have at least a potential impact on the country's political stability, economic and social welfare, defensive capabilities, or foreign policy. Consequently these issues must always be examined as possibly reportable subjects. Whether in a particular case the matter should be reported in an intelligence publication, and in what level of publication, depends on the impact it is apt to have on the foreign country, and then on the US.

A change of government holds the potentiality for effecting many changes within a country and altering its relations with the outside world. Consequently either orderly or sudden changes of government in even the smallest countries are normally dealt with, and analyzed, in intelligence publications. Since some changes could have an adverse effect on US interests, there is always an attempt to predict coups d'etat.

#### The Publications

The CIA daily has carried interpretive reporting on the most important spot developments for 26 years. As the

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main publication for the President, however, the Bulletin yielded in 1961 to the new President's Intelligence Checklist, later renamed the President's Daily Brief. The PDB is written chiefly on the foundation of the Bulletin although the form of presentation conforms to the preferences of the White House.

The weekly and memoranda also have histories going back before the formation of OCI. The Weekly Review attempts to look at situations with more perspective than the Bulletin. Though the writer is limited by space considerations, he tries to be analytical, clarifying foreign objectives, identifying trends, making the US interest clear (at least indirectly) and projecting judiciously into the near future. The Weekly in the past year has experienced a considerable face-lifting, marked not so much by a new prose style as by sprightlier headlines, more flexible arrangement of the articles, and the use of more pictures and imaginative art work.

The adjunct to the Weekly known as the Special Report is a different creature from a regular weekly article. Although it is factually up to date, its purpose is not to relate the most recent developments, but to provide a broad (though not exhaustive) examination of a current topic worthy of wide attention.

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Intelligence memoranda follow no set pattern and are as long as necessary to convey their messages, usually sharply focused. One of their chief distinctions from Special Reports is that their dissemination is determined in each case, rather than being fixed and widespread as it is for Special Reports. The choice of the memorandum form, with its selected readers, is usually made for one or more of the following reasons: the report is not deemed to be of general interest; it is too long--or even too short--for a Special Report; it is too highly classified or too delicate in subject matter; or it is required by the consumer before a Special Report could be turned out.

The subject matter and focus of finished intelligence vary according to the intended readers and their presumed needs, but there is a general similarity in the nature of all issuances. Whether they have a broad or narrow scope, are concerned with long-term trends or only with the events of yesterday, are largely political, economic, or military, or a mixture, they all deal with foreign developments that do now, or could potentially, affect US interests.

The Generalist Reader; the Press; US Policies and Interests

Apart from memoranda directed to particular consumers, current intelligence, following the main line set by its

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beginning as a report to the President, is by and large written for the generalist among policymakers. The usual Bulletin item or Weekly article does not carry factual or analytical material that would be new to people in other agencies working on the same countries or problems and normally having the same raw reports, although a concise, organized presentation may be helpful even to the experts. The target readership is principally the top policymakers, who have to come to grips with each major problem as it emerges and who in any case want to keep up with outstanding world developments. Occasionally objection is made to the proposed publication of a report on the grounds that the officials handling the question already have the information. This argument ignores the fact that there are many high-level generalists who are not working on that particular matter but who are among our principal readers.

One of the standard problems for current intelligence is posed by press coverage. Where the intelligence story is unknown to the public, there is no difficulty. Also, if the press is telling an incomplete or inadequate story, it is obviously desirable for OCI to set things straight. However, there is apt to be hesitation in those cases where press coverage is excellent, and let us admit that it often is. The answer usually lies in the importance of the event

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involved. If the Soviet Party Politburo has met and issued a pronouncement about US policy in the Middle East, the fact that the press will have the full story does not relieve OCI from writing its own piece. Probably the analyst will have some unique interpretive contribution to make, but even if this is not the case the assumption should be that officials will be looking to see whether OCI, on its all-source basis, confirms the press, corrects it, or adds something of significance. The touchstone is whether officials need to be apprised of the development; if they do, current intelligence has an obligation, regardless of the press.

Although intelligence should not be written to defend or criticize policy, effective intelligence reporting calls for a knowledge of US interests and policies. Without such knowledge, there is a lack of criteria for the selection of developments and their meaningful interpretation. The producers of intelligence do not have to be in personal agreement with current policies, or indeed have any feeling about them at all, but their reporting needs to illuminate foreign reaction to these policies. It is essential that policymakers get a straight story of how things are working out so that they can judge whether to continue on course or take a different tack.

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**SECRET**A Framework for Reporting

In trying to select developments to be reported, or in attempting as a reader to understand why certain events are covered in the publications, it is necessary to regard the events in terms of their impact on the US. Foreign developments in conformity with American interests and policies can be regarded as "favorable." Developments opposed to US interests and policies can be considered "unfavorable" or "threats." Additionally, there are many developments that do not necessarily fall into either category. Some of them, however, are of obvious importance, and hence are reportable because they are likely to produce eventual effects that will matter, one way or another, to this country. The Sino-Soviet border negotiations are an example. Particular developments in these talks may have no direct repercussion on US interests, but they will probably affect the relationship between China and the USSR, which has great importance for the US.

This approach to criteria of reportability results in the following framework for all forms of current intelligence. The examples are drawn from various years.

- I. Direct threats to the security of the US or its personnel abroad.

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Examples:

- a. North Vietnamese intensify attacks on US bases.
- b. Soviets test ABM.
- c. New terrorist actions planned vs US personnel in Brazil.
- d. China develops thermonuclear weapon.
- e. Moscow demands Allies get out of Berlin (1958).
- f. Soviets install missiles in Cuba (1962).

II. Indirect threats to US security and threats to other US interests and policies.

- a. Japanese leftists oppose security pact with US.
- b. East Germans harrass Berlin traffic.
- c. Malta gives Britain deadline for withdrawal.
- d. Violence increased along Israeli-Lebanon border.
- e. Chile refuses compensation for takeover of US copper companies.
- f. Challengers drop out of South Vietnam election campaign.
- g. NATO faces open dispute on the Greek question.

III. Favorable developments for US security, other interests, and policies.

- a. Soviet missile program suffers setback.

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- b. China moderates its foreign policy positions.
- c. Turkish political crisis eases.
- d. Buddhists soften their attitude toward Saigon government.
- e. Left and right extremists are defeated in West German elections.
- f. New Libyan government is cool to Moscow.

IV. Other important developments.

- a. Indonesia having success in controlling inflation.
- b. Serious friction exists among ruling group in Algeria.
- c. Mujib faces many difficulties as he takes over in Bangladesh.
- d. Honduran president in shaky position.
- e. Factional fight continues in Finnish Communist party.
- f. Croat nationalism causing concern to Belgrade.

In selecting material for reporting under this last category (IV), intelligence producers must guard against a natural enthusiasm for their subjects which can lead them to write about events having too slight a bearing on any US interest. If there is a connection with US interests that cannot be easily perceived, it should be clarified.

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There is little doubt that this disunited and contentious world will continue to produce situations demanding the attention of the US. The business of interpretive reporting of foreign events therefore seems to have an assured future. Whether the intelligence message is short and simple, or long and complicated, there is a place for it somewhere in the three types of current intelligence publications.

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→ Three ~~pillars~~<sup>pillars</sup> of current intell

The Matter of Definition

Crises, Threats, & Favorable Developments 4

The Wide US Interest 5

The Publications

The Generalist As Target; Our Rival & the Press;  
US Interests and Policies

A Framework for Reporting

## OUTLINE

### Three Pillars of Curr. Intell.

Three manifestations

daily

weekly

in memo

- All forms shd be analyzed
- Origin of CIB
- Definition of intelligence
- What gets covered -
  - Crises
  - Threats
  - Dev. developments
  - wide US int.
- The publications - Their nature
- Who we write for -- generalist
- Coverage by our press
- Relation to policy
- Framework for reporting

OUTLINE

Reflections on Current Intell.

Origin of current intell

Defin of intellig

Finished intell shld be analytical

~~The nature of the main job types~~

What we write - coverage

- crises
- threats
- favorable devls

← wide US int.

who we write for - generalist.

Selection for Am.

- Question of press coverage

Relation to policy

→ Framework for reporting

The Nature + Target of Current Intelligence

Current Intelligence - what are we releasing?

Some thoughts about Current Intelligence

- N = The news
- RFB = Related facts & background
- MO = motives & objectives
- W = why the event occurred
- T = fit into a trend?
- C = consequences, possible or probable
- S = Significance; why important

Main Message of Items:

- I. Direct threats to the security of the US or its personnel
- II. Indirect threats to US security and threats to other US interests and policies
- III. Favorable developments for US security, other interests and policies.
- IV. Other important developments.