

Foreign Policy: Disquiet Over Intelligence Setup

Following is the fifth in a series of articles exploring the Nixon Administration's style in foreign policy:

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 21 — President Nixon has become dissatisfied with the size, cost and loose coordination of the Government's worldwide intelligence operations.

According to members of his staff, he believes that the intelligence provided to help him formulate foreign policy, while occasionally excellent, is not good enough, day after day, to justify its share of the budget.

Mr. Nixon, it is said, has begun to decide for himself what the intelligence priorities must be and where the money should be spent, instead of leaving it largely to the intelligence community. He has instructed his staff to survey the situation and report back within a year, it is hoped—with recommendations for budget cuts of as much as several hundred million dollars.

Not many years ago the Central Intelligence Agency and the other intelligence bureaus were portrayed as an "invisible empire" controlling foreign policy behind a veil of secrecy. Now the pendulum has swung.

The President and his aides are said to suspect widespread overlapping, duplication and considerable "boondoggling" in the secrecy-shrouded intelligence "community."

In addition to the C.I.A., they include the intelligence arms of the Defense, State and Justice Departments and the Atomic Energy Commission. Together they spend \$3.5-billion a year on strategic intelligence about the Soviet Union, Communist China and other countries that might harm the nation's security.

When tactical intelligence in Vietnam and Germany and reconnaissance by overseas commands is included, the annual figure exceeds \$5-billion, experts say. The Department spends more than 80

per cent of the total, or about \$4-billion, about \$2.5-billion of it on the strategic intelligence and the rest on tactical. It contributes at least 150,000 members of the intelligence staffs, which are estimated at 200,000 people.

Overseeing all the activities is the United States Intelligence Board, set up by secret order by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 to coordinate intelligence exchanges, decide collection priorities, assign collection tasks and help prepare what are known as national intelligence estimates.

The chairman of the board, who is the President's representative, is the Director of Central Intelligence, at present Richard Helms. The other members are Lieut. Gen. Donald V. Bennett, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency; Ray S. Cline, director of intelligence and research at the State Department; Vice Adm. Noel Gayler, head of the National Security Agency; Howard C. Brown Jr., an assistant general manager at the Atomic Energy Commission, and William C. Sullivan, a deputy director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Intelligence men are aware of the President's disquiet, but they say that until now—half-way through his term—he has never seriously sought to comprehend the vast, sprawling conglomeration of agencies. Nor, they say, has he decided how best to use their technical resources and personnel—much of it talented—in formulating policy.

Two Cases in Point

Administration use—albeit, tardy use—of vast resources in spy satellites and reconnaissance planes to help police the Arab-Israeli cease-fire of last August is considered a case in point. Another was poor intelligence coordination before the abortive Sontay prisoner-of-war raid of No. 21, at which time the C.I.A. was virtually shut out of Pentagon planning.

By contrast, the specialists point out, timely intelligence helps in decision-making.

It was Mr. Cline who spotted in U-2 photographs a high-altitude Soviet nuclear submarine buildup at Cienfuegos,

Cuba, last September. suspicions, based on the arrival of a mother ship, plus two conspicuous barges of a type used only for storing a nuclear submarine's radioactive effluent, alerted the White House. That led to intelligence behind-the-scenes negotiations and the President's rewarning to Moscow not to service nuclear armed ships "in or from" Cuban bases.

Career officials in the intelligence community resist talking with reporters, but in views over several months with Federal officials deal daily with intelligence matters, with men retired from intelligence careers with some on active duty indicate that President Nixon and his chief advisers appreciate the need for high-grade intelligence and "consume" it eagerly.

The community, for instance, has been providing the President with exact statistics numbers, deployment characteristics of Soviet missiles, nuclear submarines and airpower for the talks with Russians on the limitation of strategic arms.

"We couldn't get off ground at the talks with this extremely sophisticated formation base," an official commented.

"We don't give our negotiators round figures—about 300 of this weapon. We get it down to the '284 here, here and here.' When our people sit down to negotiate with the Russians they know all about the Russian strategic threat to the U.S.—that's the way to negotiate."

Too much intelligence has its drawbacks, some sources say, for it whets the Administration's appetite. Speaking of Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national-security affairs, a Cabinet official observed: "Henry's impatient for facts."

Estimates in New Form

In the last year Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kissinger have ordered a revision in the national intelligence estimates, which are prepared by the C.I.A. after consultation with the other intelligence agencies. Some on future Soviet strategy have been ordered radically revised by Mr. Kissinger.

"Our knowledge of present Soviet capabilities allows Henry and others to criticize us for some sponginess about predicting future Soviet policy," an informed source conceded. "It's pretty hard to look down the road with the same certainty."

Part of the Administration's plan is to put and organization of the

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Helms Said to Rate High

Sources close to the White House say that Mr. Nixon and his foreign-policy advisers—Mr. Kissinger and Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird—respect the professional competence of Mr. Helms, who is 57 and is the first career head of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in June, 1966, Mr. Helms has been essentially apolitical. He is said to have brought professional ability to bear in "lowering the profile" of the agency, tightening discipline and divesting it of many fringe activities that have aroused criticism in Congress and among the public. His standing with Congress and among the professionals is high.

According to White House sources, President Nixon, backed by the Congressional leadership, recently offered Mr. Helms added authority to coordinate the activities of the other board members. He is reported to have declined.

A major problem, according to those who know the situation, is that while Mr. Helms is the President's representative on the Intelligence Board, only about 10 per cent—\$500-million to