

*An important intelligence  
resource and how it works.*

## BIOGRAPHIC COLLECTION PROGRAMS

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This article is concerned with the care and feeding of the intelligence community's main repositories for positive biographic information, the Central Reference Service of CIA and the Biographic Branches of DIA's Production Center. It is by a collector, for collectors. In other words, it is an exhortation to all who anticipate assignments abroad—for all such qualify as potential collectors of the information needed by the community to ensure an adequate biographic data base for each country.

### *Something About the Repositories*

CIA's Central Reference Service and DIA's Production Center derive their authority in the biographic field from DCID No. 1/9. The former keeps the files and produces biographic intelligence on foreign political, economic, scientific, technical, social, and cultural personalities; and the latter is similarly responsible for foreign military personalities. It is indeed a rare intelligence officer or analyst in Washington—or official concerned in any way with US foreign policy—who has not made some substantial use, direct or indirect, of the services of these two biographic repositories. These offices handle the daily flow of requests for name check data or special biographic reports on personalities of immediate concern to community members (CIA/CRS alone deals with close to 35,000 such requests each year). They provide biographic data to supplement articles appearing in the community's current intelligence publications, and prepare profiles on prominent foreign visitors and on the non-US delegations attending international conferences. They compile biographic briefing books to support top US officials on trips abroad. They issue periodic intelligence memorandum on the appearances and activities of Soviet and Chinese Communist leaders, as source material for the community's political analysts. And they are the producers of such community reference aids as the directory of key personnel in foreign governments, revised and circulated monthly;

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the detailed directories of officials in Communist countries; the CIA Biographic Handbooks, containing finished biographic sketches on the essential political leadership figures in each foreign country; and the similar DIA Handbooks on key foreign military personalities.

Many of us have, in fact, paid these two offices the ultimate compliment on numerous occasions. We have simply taken them for granted. We accept without question that there should be a strong community biographic capability at our beck and call for each foreign country. The need is obvious: for who could follow and understand the political forces at work in a foreign country without knowing something of the character and proclivities of its leaders; or assess the capabilities of its military forces (for war or coup) without considering the training, experience, loyalty, and outlook of its military commanders; or estimate the likelihood of its achieving a nuclear capability without having some knowledge of its scientific community? Since CIA/CRS and the DIA Production Center are supposed to provide the biographic services of common concern for the community, we accept a prompt and full report on the foreign personage currently interesting us as only our proper due.

There are, however, those other occasions, when our request for biographic data results in a report disappointingly thin in detail, or in no report at all. If our need is not a critical one, we are merely disturbed; we merely wonder how CIA/CRS or DIA could be without a complete dossier on such a prominent Ruritania figure. (We recall quite clearly that he attended all of the Embassy's functions when we were serving in Ruritania.) If our need is more pressing—if it's coup-time in Ruritania and a prompt assessment is needed on the new set of leaders—we are apt to be much more exercised. We may even approach outrage when we learn later that the new Minister of Interior spent two years at Amherst in the late fifties, and that the colonel whose paratroops pulled off the coup learned some of his trade from US advisors. We conclude sadly that something must be wrong with the community's biographic set-up.

There is indeed something wrong in such instances, but it is hardly the set-up. The fault is more likely to lie with us and our poor biographic banking practices. All too often we do not make the necessary regular deposits when opportunity allows, and then there is nothing to withdraw from the biographic repositories when the need is upon us.

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### *Collection Responsibilities*

DCID No. 1/9 also assigns the primary responsibilities for the collection of biographic information: to the Department of State for collection on political, economic, scientific, technical, social, and cultural personalities; and to the Department of Defense for military personalities, and for such scientific, technical, and economic personalities as may be engaged in military-related activities. At the typical overseas post, these responsibilities are lodged with the Chief of Mission, usually operating through the Embassy's Political Section, and the Defense Attache. The Chief of Mission usually designates one officer to serve as "Biographic Coordinator" to oversee the local Foreign Service biographic collection and reporting effort.

The collection of biographic information at an overseas post is, however, not a matter of specific assignment; it is rather one of opportunity. Virtually all officers who serve at the post will have at least some of that opportunity; in fact, it will be almost impossible for them to avoid acquiring useful biographic data in the course of carrying out their primary assignments. The Political Attache in discussing US-Ruritanian relations with Foreign Ministry officials will certainly evaluate the professional capabilities of those officials and note their attitudes toward the US, and probably pick up at least the bare outlines of their personal and career history. This he will undoubtedly do for his own benefit, to increase his effectiveness in dealing with them—even without considering the community's long-range biographic needs. Similarly, the Assistant Air Attache touring a Ruritanian Air Force base will make every effort to "get to know" his hosts and assess their flying experience and capabilities. The Public Affairs Officer will do likewise in his encounters with local press and media executives, the MAAG officer will cultivate his local contacts in the armed forces, and so forth. Each will acquire much useful biographic data during his tour without even trying, and much more will be available to him with a minimum of effort.

Both the State and Defense Departments recognize the need to draw all personnel at a post into the biographic collection effort. A forthcoming revision of the State Department's Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) notes that biographic reporting is "an integral part of the activities of overseas posts," and that "all officers should submit reports or contribute information for use in reports, and furnish their impressions of foreign personalities of actual or potential influence of

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whom they have knowledge.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Defense Intelligence Collection Requirements Manual (DIRM) declares its basic guidance on biographic reporting to be applicable “to all Department of Defense activities that have a basic intelligence and/or counterintelligence mission, as well as other departmental activities that have a collection capability with regard to biographic data.”<sup>2</sup> And the community’s recently established joint program with regard to potential leaders even more explicitly calls for the collection of the desired information by all “Foreign Service personnel (including USIS and AID officers), Department of Defense personnel (including Attache, MAAG, and other personnel represented on the Country Team).

*Targets: The Question of Who*

The key consideration for the biographic collector is not what, but who. Most of us are pretty much aware of what constitutes useful biographic data on a given personality; and, if our memory needs some jogging on that score, we can always refer to the carefully detailed rundowns on types of information needed appearing in the FAM or the DIRM. But what we really need—especially at the outset of an overseas tour (new as we then are to the area)—is some specific guidance as to who is important enough to bother with. In narrow terms, we want to know who is important enough among the contacts we will have (or can make) locally to justify our preparing and filing a biographic report.

Such guidance will be available to us through three programs designed to focus biographic collection and reporting efforts on those target personalities of essential interest to the community. The first of these, the CIA Biographic Handbook Program, covers a country’s current leadership, is essentially political in its orientation, and is of prime concern to Foreign Service collectors. The second, the DIA Biographic Handbook Program, involves military and military-related biographic targets and is of main concern to military attaches and

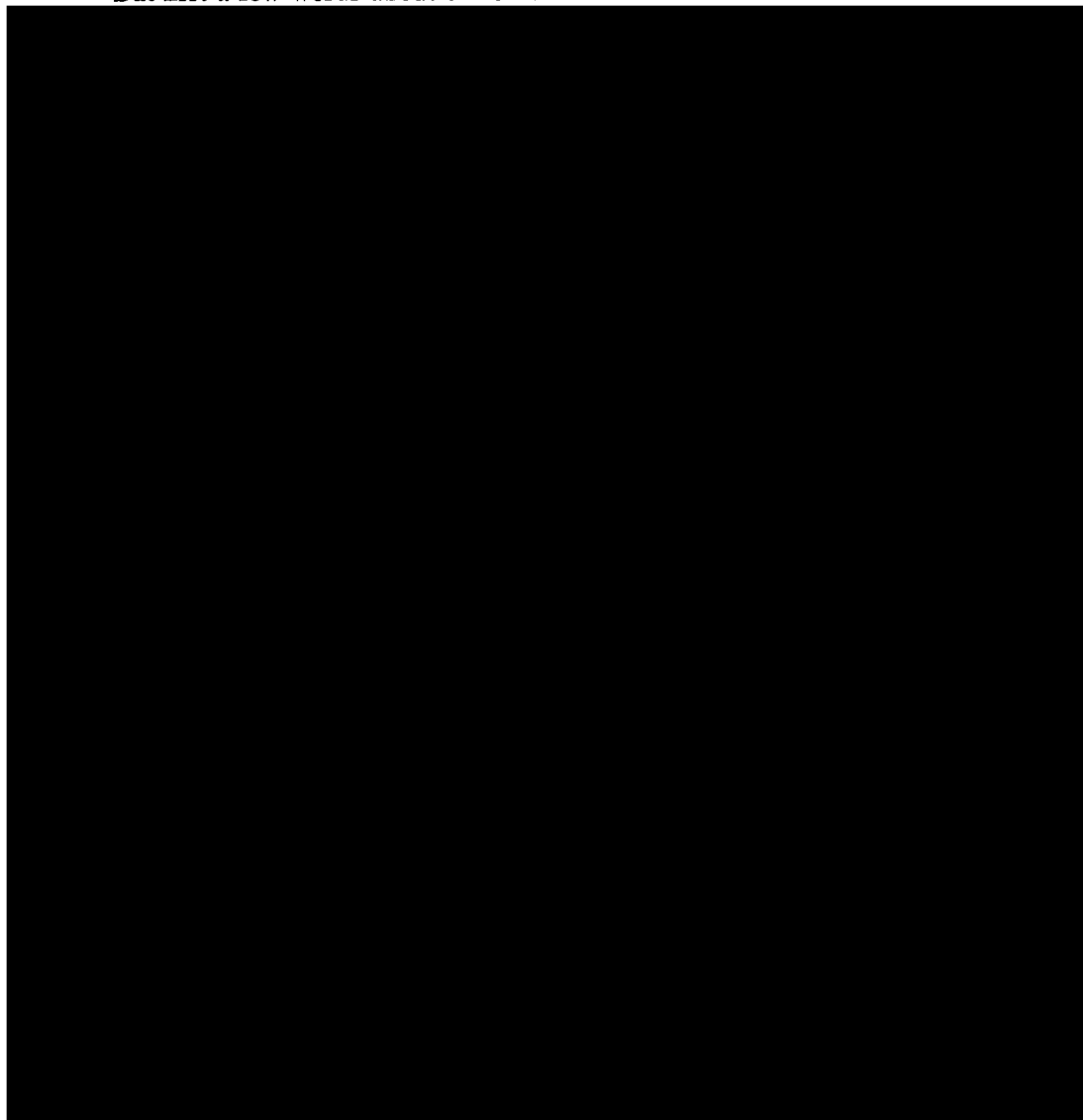
<sup>1</sup> 11 FAM 311 and 313c. (State’s “Biographic Information Program” is presently covered in Chapter 500, Volume 11 of the Foreign Affairs Manual, but will appear as Chapter 300 in the forthcoming revision.)

<sup>2</sup> DIAM 58-2, Volume II, Part Nine, Chapter 2. (Two separate sections of the DIRM deal with biographic collection: the afore-cited one covering biographic reporting responsibilities and procedures; and DIAM 53-2, Volume I, Part One, Chapter 7, which delineates military and military-related targets.

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other collectors present at the post. And the third, the Potential Leader Biographic Reporting Program, deals with a country's potential leadership and is a joint enterprise for all collectors. This last program will be accorded special attention in the descriptions to follow since it is the newest of the three and the most ambitious community effort to date at developing specific target guidance in the biographic field. But first a few words about the other two.

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