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Intelligence played major role in the Gulf War, says CIA director Webster

By BRADLEY GALKO
 News Writer

Intelligence played an important role in the Gulf War in combating terrorism, enforcing sanctions, selecting targets and bomb damage assessment, according to William Webster, director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Webster spoke to a packed library auditorium Wednesday night as part of the Student Government sponsored "Public Forum on Contemporary Issues" lecture series.

"The global scope and use of intelligence during the Gulf War was extraordinary," said Webster.

"Intelligence on issues ranging from Iraqi military capabilities to sanctions busting to counter-terrorism, all helped toward the international cooperation and resolve that we saw



William Webster

against Iraq's aggression," he said.

"That activity wasn't around ten years ago," added Webster. "It was just beginning to take place, reminding that nations can cooperate on important issues such as this and that the intelligence communities can work with each other to try to make this a safer and better

world."

Webster said that good intelligence allowed the allies to "develop the modus operandi" of Saddam Hussein and prevent many incidents of terrorism.

"I'm amused when people talk about how we overestimated the terrorist threat," said Webster, "but we know what we did to keep the terrorist incidents from taking place."

Enforcement of sanctions against Iraq also required the support of the world's intelligence communities, he said. Sanctions were "only important if we could make sure they continued," Webster said, "and in that respect intelligence played an important role."

Human intelligence and signal intelligence (the monitoring of radio and other signals) were

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both used in this capacity, he said. "We tracked every one of Saddam's ships anywhere in the world."

Intelligence also helped the President and other leaders decide on the appropriateness of military force early on in the conflict.

"It was the uniform assessment of the entire intelligence community," he said, "that sanctions alone would not cause Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait."

He added that "although we were destroying his (Saddam's) economy, the military would only be affected marginally."

Intelligence also identified the locations of chemical plants, nuclear reactors, bunkers, facilities and infrastructure. Webster said much of this was based on the CIA's "encyclopedic knowledge of the hot spots of the world" that has accumulated over many years.

"SMART weapons made the difference in this war," he said, "but they were only smart in the sense that someone had to tell them where to go . . . a function of intelligence."

As to whether the CIA knew of Iraq's invasion before hand, Webster said "we had indicators that said 'he's ready to go'" within 12 to 24 hours, just prior to the invasion.

Webster said the CIA is now in the process of "second-guessing ourselves . . . asking how we could do it better if we ever had to do it again." He added that General Norman Schwarzkopf has told him that the Gulf War was the "best informed war that was ever fought" but that some information could have been provided "better or sooner."

"As we emerge from the Gulf War" he said, "the United States is in a stronger position to foster greater international cooperation in confronting the global issues, particularly weapons proliferation."

Webster warned of the spread of so-called "weapons of mass destruction" saying "all will be attainable within time unless international efforts to stop this (proliferation) . . . are taken."

On other issues, Webster discussed recent developments within the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's instability "could have a significant impact on our own national security," he said.

He added that "while our relations with the Soviet Union have come a long way, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Soviet Union is now facing severe international problems." Webster said that as international pressures mount, it will be exceedingly difficult to resolve competing forces.

As to the internal conflicts between the republics of the Soviet Union and the central government, Webster said "it remains to be seen how much room there is for compromise between the government and those pressing for greater freedom."

"He (Gorbachev) appears to realize," said Webster, "that a return to the techniques of massive repression and force will only lead to a larger cycle of violence and instability."

These internal Soviet developments will have a "ripple effect" on Eastern Europe in the form of a "flood of immigration," he added. He said some Eastern European leaders predict as many as four million refugees from the Soviet Union will enter their countries in the next few years.

He also said that "the democratic prospects (in Eastern Europe) look far better than anyone would have ever imagined a few years ago." He added that their success depends upon how well the countries learn from each other.

"The longer the tough decisions are postponed," he said, "the harder it will be to overcome decades of communist mismanagement."

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"It's important that the breakthroughs of the 1980's don't become the breakdowns of the 1990's" said Webster.

Responding to a question concerning the extent of the CIA's covert activities, Webster who became the director of the CIA in 1987, said that the CIA spends only three percent of its resources on covert activities and only by request of the President. However he said that these activities account for "97 percent of the grief and suspicion of intelligence."

"One of things we do not do," he said, "is assassination . . . we cannot (by executive order intentionally set out to cause the death of a public figure."

Before becoming the director of the CIA, Webster enjoyed a thirty-year career as an attorney and judge of various federal courts.

He then became director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1978 until taking over the CIA in 1987.