

Vandenberg's Tenure as Director of Central Intelligence

Souers had agreed to serve as the first Director of Central Intelligence with the understanding that it was an interim appointment. By at least April 1946, he, Admiral Leahy, and the President had found a successor, General Hoyt Vandenberg, the Army's Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2).

Souers had established the basic, although still embryonic, institutions of what today is known as the Intelligence Community and had emphasized planning for their development and elaboration. In his final report to the National Intelligence Authority, however, he articulated the view that more far-reaching steps would have to be taken in the future to make the Presidential directive of January 22, 1946, effective.

If Souers had been a conciliator who moved cautiously in order to maintain the "cooperative interdepartmental activity," Vandenberg was an aggressive Director of Central Intelligence who actively sought to extend the responsibilities of the Central Intelligence Group and the powers of his office. Because the relatively simple beginnings under Souers became an increasingly complex pattern of intelligence activities and institutions under Vandenberg, there are many lines of development to be traced in the history of his directorship, brief though it was. There are two dominant themes, however. One was Vandenberg's effort to alter drastically the balance between the Central Intelligence Group and the departmental intelligence agencies, at the expense of the latter. The second is the resulting contest between Vandenberg and the departmental intelligence chiefs over their respective powers, which was really a clash between (or among) different concepts of the national intelligence system. Vandenberg's tenure began and ended with high points in these controversies, and in between there were few issues concerning the developing intelligence structure that did not reflect the tension.

The documentation in this chapter is fairly full and gives a reasonably accurate sense of the main issues, especially as they relate to the debate over the allocation of power within the intelligence structure. As in the case of Souer's tenure, the documentation is increasingly bureaucratic in character and in numerous instances the debates are waged over or reflected in fairly routine or at least undramatic issues. During the period covered by this volume, the Director of Central Intelligence and the departmental intelligence chiefs rarely discussed substantive intelligence issues concerning foreign developments or the capabilities and intentions of foreign governments. Although there was considerable debate in the intelligence system, what was recorded at senior levels almost exclusively concerned the intelligence system, jurisdictional, organizational, and procedural issues.

The minutes of the National Intelligence Authority and the Intelligence Advisory Board, together with the papers prepared for their consideration, document these concerns, albeit somewhat formally. There is also a limited amount of material available on Department of State and to a lesser extent Central Intelligence Group views on developments in the intelligence system, as well as some documentation on the initiation of various intelligence programs and activities. What are lacking are less formal documents providing more intimate and less discreet

comments and observations, documents giving insights into the making of intelligence policy at senior levels, and documents clearly reflecting the impact of intelligence on foreign and strategic policy. By comparison with the period leading up to the signing of the January 22 Presidential directive, the subsequent documentation tends to be much more guarded and less revealing.

When Vandenberg took over as Director of Central Intelligence on June 10, 1946, he inherited a going concern but a small one whose future was still uncertain. If the Central Intelligence Group in fact was to become the dominant agency in the national intelligence structure, and the Director of Central Intelligence the effective and unchallenged head of that structure, there were major obstacles to be overcome. One of these was that the CIG existed on a non-statutory basis and depended on budgetary allocations from the State, War, and Navy Departments. In addition to these, however, there were other major barriers. One was that the Central Intelligence Group had only a minimal capability for research and analysis. It had, of course, been producing political summaries, but it lacked the resources to produce on its own "strategic and national policy intelligence," however that term was defined.

Another barrier was the unsettled status of the Director of Central Intelligence in the national intelligence structure and, by extension, the respective roles of the Central Intelligence Group and the departmental intelligence components. Was the DCI independent of and above the departmental intelligence chiefs, or were the latter, in their common capacity as the Intelligence Advisory Board, a "board of directors" who had collective status and authority? Neither of these issues was resolved by the time Vandenberg left office, but during his brief tenure he defined them sharply and highlighted their significance by taking strong and sometimes confrontational positions on them. To some degree he even provoked these conflicts (although they were probably latent in the system) since it was in reaction to Vandenberg's policies that the IAB first seriously asserted the doctrine of "collective responsibility."

A Central Intelligence Agency historian (who was also a participant in and observer of many of the events of which he later wrote) sums up Vandenberg's tenure as follows:

"Although Vandenberg had no long-term interest in the subject, he had very positive ideas about the proper role of the DCI and the CIA. He had a poor opinion of Souers' cautious, consultative approach to the IAB and was resolved not to follow it. A youthful, vigorous, and self-confident man at forty-seven, his instinct was to take command and issue orders. In this he was a reincarnation of General Donovan. Indeed, he outdid Donovan, who had been more realistic. Vandenberg's simple conception was to build up the prospective CIA into an independent, entirely self-sufficient, national intelligence service. He would then discover wasteful duplication of intelligence effort and reduce the departmental intelligence services to mere staffs of briefers for presenting the CIA product in their respective departments. Thus, Vandenberg's purpose was to create the single intelligence service that the wartime G-2 Policy Staff had warned against. Moreover, it was entirely contrary to the intention of JIC 239/5, JCS 1181/5, the Lovett Report, and the President's letter." (Ludwell Lee Montague, *General Walter*

Bedell Smith as Director of Central Intelligence, October 1950-February 1953 (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pages 27-28)

Vandenberg had been in office about 10 days when he circulated to the Intelligence Advisory Board a draft NIA directive, proposing "a redefinition of the functions of the Director of Central Intelligence which will give him the necessary authority to augment the Central Intelligence Group so that he may effectively perform his assigned missions." The draft directive authorized the Director of Central Intelligence to centralize interagency research and analysis, "to act as the executive agent of this Authority in coordinating and supervising all Federal foreign intelligence activities," and to conduct "all Federal espionage and counter-espionage operations for the collection of foreign intelligence." The draft directive also required the State, War, and Navy Departments to "make available to the Director of Central Intelligence, upon his request, the necessary funds, personnel, facilities, and other assistance required for the performance of the functions authorized herein."

The Intelligence Advisory Board, with a strong lead from Dr. William L. Langer, the Secretary of State's Special Assistant for Research and Intelligence (the successor to Colonel McCormack), forced Vandenberg to draw back, although not necessarily to back down. As eventually adopted by the National Intelligence Authority, the directive was cast in milder and less prescriptive language. Nevertheless, Vandenberg had won some, and perhaps a great deal, of the substance he was seeking. Moreover, his financial problem was considerably eased by the NIA's agreement to seek new arrangements for handling CIG funding.

Although this initial clash was echoed in a number of other engagements throughout the months that followed, Vandenberg did not again seek an across-the-board expansion of his authority until February 1947, when he once more asked the National Intelligence Authority to clarify his powers vis-à-vis the Intelligence Advisory Board and the departmental intelligence chiefs. After discussion, the Authority agreed to approve a formula proposed by Vandenberg which read as follows:

"The Director of Central Intelligence shall operate within his jurisdiction as an agent of the Secretaries of State, War and the Navy, and the necessary authority is hereby delegated . . . to the Director of Central Intelligence so that his decisions, orders and directives shall be considered as emanating from them and shall have full force and effect as such, provided any aggrieved agency may have access to that agency's Secretary and through him to the N.I.A."

The Authority's action did not settle the matter and, indeed, probably intensified the conflict. Within a month, Admiral Inglis, Director of Naval Intelligence and perhaps the most persistent and articulate proponent of the idea that the Intelligence Advisory Board was a board of directors for the national intelligence system had circulated to the IAB a paper proposing procedures to ensure that the comments or concurrence of the Board were secured on all matters referred by the Director of Central Intelligence to the NIA. But the issue raised by Inglis was to be debated during Admiral Hillenkoetter's directorship rather than Vandenberg's and not really settled until General Smith became Director of Central Intelligence in the fall of 1950.

The controversy over the DCI's authority permeated, or at least touched, a number of other issues. Discussions of such subjects as "static intelligence" (the then current term for what later became known as "basic intelligence," the preparation of intelligence handbooks and encyclopedias), the delineation of collection responsibilities (a project pressed by the Department of State) and the development of the first set of "National Intelligence Requirements" (on China), all had overtones of the authority question.

One of the most sensitive issues concerned intelligence estimates, the "strategic and national policy intelligence" of the 1946 Presidential directive. The directive made the DCI responsible for this kind of intelligence but said no more. Hardly any aspect of the subject escaped debate; for example, how estimates were to be produced, who should produce them, whether and how agencies were to participate in the process, and how dissents would be handled. Even the definition of "strategic and national policy intelligence" was involved. In fact, it was a central issue, because the definition of the term also involved a definition of the powers of the Director of Central Intelligence.

As noted earlier, one of Vandenberg's major goals was to build up the CIG's research and analytical capability. He established an Office of Research and Evaluation and began to build up an analytical staff, proposing to expand an existing establishment of 60 to a strength of 2,000. In July 1946, he directed the preparation of an assessment of "Soviet Foreign and Military Policy," designated as "ORE-1." (Text reproduced in Michael Warner, ed., *CIA Cold War Records: The CIA under Harry Truman* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1994), pages 65-76) ORE-1 was a forerunner of what later became known as National Intelligence Estimates. It also touched off renewed controversy about procedures and responsibilities for estimative papers and revealed deep and genuine differences of view on these issues. The estimates controversy overlapped the separate but related issue of whether CIG should engage in the production of finished analytical intelligence, a source of particular concern to the Department of State, which saw CIG encroaching on its responsibilities for political and economic analysis. It was for all of these reasons that the definition of "strategic and national policy intelligence" was so important to Vandenberg, since the definition held one of the keys to breaking down a major obstacle to a predominant CIG role in the production of finished intelligence.

Eventually, in February 1947, Vandenberg went to the National Intelligence Authority and won the Authority's endorsement for the following definition:

"Strategic and national policy intelligence is that composite intelligence, interdepartmental in character, which is required by the President and other high officers and staffs to assist them in determining policies with respect to national planning and security in peace and in war and for the advancement of broad national policy. It is in that political-economic-military area of concern to more than one agency, must be objective, and must transcend the exclusive competence of any one department."

As with so many other issues, the NIA's action did not settle the case, and estimative intelligence remained a source of contention throughout the tenure of Vandenberg's successor, Admiral Hillenkoetter.

The long controversies over jurisdictional boundaries and authority were often more substantive than they appeared. Although there were unabashed bureaucratic contests for power, there were also genuinely held and fundamentally different concepts of how the intelligence system should function and what it should do, differences that went back to 1945 and before and that were to last long beyond the 1940s. In retrospect, the national intelligence leadership, which was trying to do a number of things for the first time, inadvertently fueled many of the controversies. Never having had a peacetime national intelligence system before, there was an inevitable process of trial and error in which the participants often magnified and complicated what appear now to be relatively simple problems.

Nevertheless, the conflicts and difficulties of the time should not obscure the incremental progress toward the construction of a national intelligence system. Vandenberg reorganized the CIG, made an important beginning in the field of scientific intelligence, dealt with the vexing and arcane problem of the relationship between the CIG and the Joint Intelligence Group of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, began developing a centralized system of biographic information and reference, helped to give foreign broadcast monitoring a permanent home, and made some progress on the production of "basic intelligence" handbooks and encyclopedias. These and many other subjects were prosaic, but they played important roles in the formation of the national intelligence system. In all of these fields, too, the departmental intelligence components made significant contributions and, more important, were at this period the major producers of finished intelligence.

As in the case of his predecessor, Vandenberg's tenure was short. As the administration and Congress moved toward armed services' unification, Vandenberg was being mentioned as a candidate for a senior post in the soon-to-be-created independent Air Force. By February 1947, the National Intelligence Authority had chosen his successor, and on May 1 Vandenberg departed to become Deputy Commander of the Army Air Forces and shortly thereafter, Vice Chief of Staff (and later Chief of Staff) of the U.S. Air Force.

"Vandenberg's Tenure as Director of Central Intelligence". Foreign Relations of the United States, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment, 1945-1950. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996, pp 364-369.