

Remembrance: Douglas John MacEachin (1937-2021)

by *Joseph W. Gartin*

The story goes, from those who were there, that Doug MacEachin leaned back in his chair, put his feet on the Directorate of Intelligence (DI) conference table, and plucked a paper from a large stack before him. Let me show you how your customers read your papers, he said. With that, he glanced at a title and tossed the paper to the floor. Grabbed another, read the first paragraph, and pitched it aside. Then another, and another, until the pile was much diminished.

The assembled roomful of office directors representing the leadership of the DI, as it was known then, watched in silent dismay. Long-term research papers (the longer the better) were the currency of the realm. Promotion panels would discuss how thick an analyst's production folder was; only rarely would they consider impact on policy. After months of research, writing, and revising, if you were lucky enough to bring a paper to print (literally, as there was no electronic publication), the final step would be preparing a mailing list. Unsurprisingly, there was little chance that the list of names and addresses would be even remotely up to date. It was as if CIA analysts were literally tossing their papers over the transom. In a looming digital age, the DI was decidedly analog.

Doug was appointed Deputy Director of Intelligence (DDI) by James Woolsey in 1993, after serving as director of the Arms Control Intelligence Staff, the focal point for supporting US efforts to track Russian compliance with strategic and conventional arms agreements. For some 20 years Doug had been one of CIA's most capable Soviet hands, eventually becoming the director of the Office of Soviet Analysis from 1984-1989. Joining the CIA in 1965 after a stint in the Marine Corps, he had worked his way up through the system, writing and reviewing the kind of research papers that he had just scattered on the floor.

It was a system that he would set about to improve. Driving him were real-world lessons about how intelligence was used—or ignored—by policymakers. Expressions like “the first customer,” “writing for the president,” or “decision advantage” had not yet entered the lexicon. There were no metrics, no measuring clicks and engagement. But Doug understood that intelligence analysis was relevant to decisionmakers only if it came at the right time and answered the right questions with real insight and expertise.

Looking at anyone's career in the rearview mirror lends an illusion of inevitability to the outcome, but for Doug becoming DDI was anything but inevitable. Just two years before, in a highly unusual event, he had been called to testify before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence as it debated the nomination of Robert Gates to be Director of Central Intelligence. This was Gates' second time as a nominee—the first in 1987 was derailed by controversy over the Iran-contra affair. In addition to renewed challenges over what Gates knew about the arms-for-hostages deal, he faced charges that later as DDI he had politicized intelligence.^a With characteristic directness, Doug told Chairman David Boren in open session,

Anything I say in his favor will be viewed by some as statements of a bureaucrat taking care of his career. Anything I might say which is not viewed as favorable will be seen by others as taking care of my career in yet another way. All I have to hold on to, Mr. Chairman, and I hope at least to have some of it left, is—after this hearing—is the credibility I think I've demonstrated over some 26 years as being willing to challenge the conventional view and take whatever flak comes with it.^b

Befitting his service as a Marine, speaking truth and taking flak were things that came naturally to Doug, and

a. https://www.loc.gov/law/find/nominations/gates/005_excerpt.pdf accessed 1 March 2021

b. <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/10/03/us/the-gates-hearings-excerpts-from-senate-hearing-on-nomination-of-cia-chief.html>, accessed 1 March 2021

All statements of fact, opinion or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

as DDI he was determined to accelerate the DI's development as a profession and to improve the quality of its analysis. Soon after Woolsey picked him to be DDI, Doug focused on the work of Richards Heuer and Jack Davis, pioneers in what we now call analytic tradecraft. A colleague remarked to this author that Doug was the first person he ever heard using the phrase. Doug made Heuer's *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* required reading and mandated training on denial and deception. An even more consequential effort was his creation of T-2000 (T for tradecraft), the first course aimed at instilling structured analytic techniques to combat cognitive biases. T-2000 would become the forerunner to the Career Analyst Program, CIA's introductory course and the model for several other analytic agencies. The eventual creation of the Sherman Kent School for Intelligence Analysis owes much to Doug's leadership.

Doug finished his career as the officer-in-residence at Harvard, and eventually moved to his beloved France for a few years. Yet even in semi-retirement, Doug never let go of his passion for hard work and intellectual rigor. He was a staunch defender of the CIA's analysis of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact, producing monographs on the Intelligence Community's record predicting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and another rebutting accusations that the CIA had been oblivious to the Soviet Union's

deteriorating economy and social system.^a He was the natural choice to run an investigative team on the rise of al-Qaeda for the 9/11 Commission, leaving France to take up work in a dilapidated office on K Street. He and his team examined tens of thousands of pages of Intelligence Community and law enforcement documents and drafted what became Chapter Two of the Commission Report, "The Foundation of the New Terrorism."

A few years ago, before Alzheimer's clutched at him slowly but relentlessly, I saw Doug in the CIA headquarters cafeteria, motionless amid the noonday crowd, an eddy of employees swirling around him. We did not speak that day. Doug veered off in another direction, I grabbed a sandwich and headed back to my desk. I wondered then, and now, how many recognized him and knew of his contributions. I also knew that he would have dismissed that question as sentimental claptrap and made a quip about getting a martini; "not the best, but probably the biggest," he was known to say. Like many others, I am sorry not to have had the chance to say farewell to Doug properly and to thank him for a lifetime's work. But even if you did not know him, you are benefiting from his efforts to build up the profession of intelligence analysis. He left a genuine legacy of accomplishment that is still shaping the craft. Rest in peace, Doug.



Joseph W. Gartin is a retired senior CIA officer. His last assignment was CIA chief learning officer.

a. <https://www.cia.gov/static/462ef87088e6178e83e074e7f404914a/CIA-Assessments-Soviet-Union.pdf> accessed 1 March 2021