

Studies in Intelligence

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Fifty Years On: Nixon, Helms, and Watergate

Libya and Nautical Terrorism

Intelligence in Public Media

Master of the Game

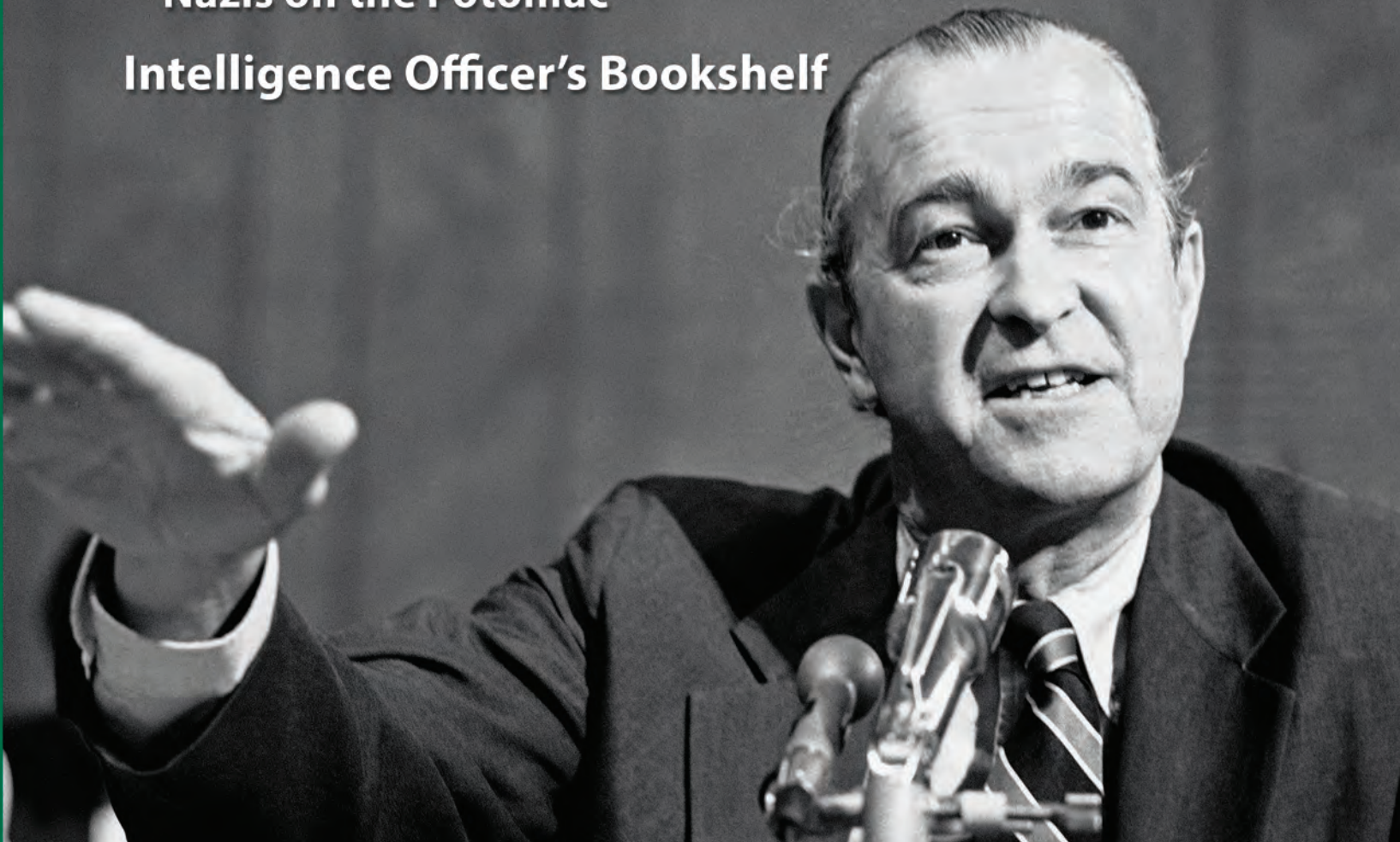
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The White House, Richard Helms, and Watergate: A Clash between Executive Power and Organizational Responsibility

Peter Usowski

For someone like Helms, who believed in his obligation as DCI to support the office of the president, refusing White House requests could not have been easy. But he was not prepared to cross a line that would have had a long-term effect on CIA and future DCIs. This would be part of Helms's legacy as the first careerist to head the agency.

Between July 1971 and July 1972, senior officials of the Nixon administration sought CIA assistance to help it mitigate the damage of the leak of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 and the arrest of five men who had broken into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate Hotel on June 17, 1972. These requests were seemingly minor intrusions into the many strategic challenges Richard Helms faced as director of central intelligence (DCI) under President Richard Nixon.¹ Yet the damage to CIA's reputation and Helms's place in history was potentially far-reaching. As the seemingly isolated requests from White House officials trickled in, Helms was the only one in a position to eventually ascertain the pattern of behavior of the Nixon administration leading up to the Watergate cover-up.

Although not a seasoned political operative, Helms was a crafty Washington insider who was not naïve to the use—and abuse—of power in government. Protecting the agency and his role as DCI meant keeping the agency out of partisan politics. By the time that H.R. Haldeman tried to use the Bay of Pigs failure as leverage to coerce Helms to stop an FBI investigation, the administration's motives were evident.

Helms ultimately halted CIA assistance for the White House's illegal

plans. For someone like Helms, who believed in his obligation as DCI to support the office of the president, refusing White House requests could not have been easy. But he was not prepared to cross a line that would have had a long-term effect on the CIA and future DCIs. This would be part of Helms's legacy as the first careerist to head the agency.

Doing Some Things for the President

On July 7, 1971, John Ehrlichman, assistant to President Richard Nixon for domestic affairs, telephoned CIA Deputy Director Robert Cushman requesting CIA's assistance. Ehrlichman told Cushman that former CIA employee E. Howard Hunt had been hired by the White House as a special consultant working on security problems. Ehrlichman said that Hunt would be contacting Cushman and asked the deputy director to lend Hunt a hand. Ehrlichman emphasized that Hunt was "doing some things for the president." Cushman, an active-duty Marine general who had served as then-Vice President Nixon's national security advisor, agreed to meet with Hunt.²

The next day at the director's morning meeting, Cushman reported that Hunt might require some assistance from the agency.³ Helms acknowledged Cushman's update

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Much has been written about CIA's involvement in Watergate, including many unsubstantiated assertions regarding Helms's actions and motives. Watergate, CIA, and government secrecy provide fertile ground for conspiracy theorists, when the reality of what happened is disturbing enough.

but, at that time, gave it no further attention.

This seemingly innocuous request would be the first in a series of engagements between the White House and CIA leadership in which the president's senior officials would attempt to drag CIA into their illegal schemes, including the break-in of the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate Hotel on June 17, 1972, and the subsequent cover-up.

Fifty years on, it is instructive to see how DCI Helms ended up in the middle of a clash between executive power and organizational responsibility and the actions he took. This article explores the challenges the DCI faced and the lessons learned when Nixon and his senior staff abused their power in relation to the CIA.

The publication by the *New York Times* in June 1971 of part of what became known as the Pentagon Papers—a classified Department of Defense history⁴ of US political and military involvement in Vietnam in 1945–67, leaked by RAND Corporation researcher Daniel Ellsberg— and Nixon's use of former CIA employees as political operatives set the stage for a series of extraordinary events that would shake the foundation of the agency's relationship with the White House. No previous DCI had experienced the type of pressures that Helms would confront. These stemmed not only from

Nixon's distrust of the CIA but also from his closest aides' unprecedented requests for CIA assistance. Helms was forced to weigh his responsibility—and professional desire—to serve and support the administration against his duty to protect the CIA.

From July 1971 to July 1972, Helms and his deputies would be put to the test by White House requests to:

- furnish technical support for White House operative E. Howard Hunt;
- prepare a psychological profile of Daniel Ellsberg;
- turn over sensitive files related to the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion (1961) and the ouster and assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem (1963) as fodder to attack the Democrats;
- order the acting FBI director to stop the bureau's Watergate-related investigation in Mexico; and
- make available unvouchered CIA funds to the Watergate burglars.

Much has been written about CIA's involvement in Watergate, including many unsubstantiated assertions regarding Richard Helms's actions and motives. Watergate, CIA, and government secrecy provide fertile ground for conspiracy theorists, when the reality of what happened is disturbing enough.

Helms and Nixon

To understand the interaction between White House officials and senior CIA leaders, we can look to Helms's testimony before congressional committees; his oral history interviews and published memoirs; contemporary memorandums drafted by the participants; the testimony and subsequent writings of CIA and White House officials; and the Nixon White House tapes.

The context for Helms's dealing with the White House on these matters was set in the operating procedures that President Nixon and his national security team established for engaging CIA. Nixon did not hide his disdain for CIA, believing that CIA hurt his campaign in the 1960 presidential election by sharing intelligence on the Soviet Union's missile capabilities with his opponent Sen. John F. Kennedy, who used the purported missile gap to criticize then-Vice President Nixon during the campaign.

Upon taking office, Nixon surprisingly chose to keep Helms in place as DCI, even though he was not comfortable dealing with Helms. He regarded Helms as a favorite of a liberal Georgetown set, a group the president despised.⁵

Helms's entry point into the White House on intelligence and national security matters was National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. The *President's Daily Brief*, CIA's intelligence summary prepared specifically for the president, was first delivered to Kissinger's office, from which he would then make the material available to the president. Feedback and requests for information to CIA would be handled by Kissinger, who

dealt directly with Helms.⁶ Helms recalled that only rarely did he deal with anyone other than Kissinger:

The problem was, if there was a problem, that he [Nixon] was a man who operated through his staff.... So Nixon himself would issue orders and you would get instructions that the president wants this done and that done and the other things. But he very seldom personally got on the phone or got one-on-one with another individual.⁷

Slippery Slope

Ehrlichman's request for CIA support initially was specific and limited. In early July 1971, Charles Colson, special counsel to the president, hired CIA veteran Hunt to work on a strategy to investigate Daniel Ellsberg and to research information on the John F. Kennedy administration and Sen. Edward (Ted) Kennedy.⁸ Hunt mentioned that a former boss at the public relations firm Robert Mullen Company (which had close ties to CIA) had a former employee with information on the fatal 1969 accident involving Ted Kennedy on Chappaquiddick Island, Massachusetts, that might be of interest to the White House.⁹

Colson asked Hunt to meet with the Mullen employee. Colson was intent on hiding Hunt's connection with the White House, and Hunt thought a disguise and false documents would be necessary. Colson suggested that he get it from his CIA colleagues. Hunt told Colson, "It has been my experience that a call from the White House always produced whatever the White House wanted."¹⁰

Ehrlichman's request for CIA support initially was specific and limited. In early July 1971, Charles Colson, special counsel to the president, hired CIA veteran E. Howard Hunt to work on a strategy to investigate Daniel Ellsberg and to research information on the John F. Kennedy administration and Senator Edward (Ted) Kennedy.

On Colson's behalf, Ehrlichman agreed to contact CIA. He called Deputy Director Cushman rather than Helms. Cushman believed Ehrlichman was speaking with the authority of the president and agreed to meet with Hunt.¹¹ Cushman had earlier served as Vice President Nixon's national security advisor (1957–61). After becoming president, Nixon selected General Cushman to serve as deputy director of CIA.

According to Ehrlichman, Nixon appointed Cushman to the job in order to keep track of Helms. Ehrlichman said, "Cushman was, we then thought, Nixon's man over there at the agency."¹² Helms did not know why the call did not come to him. Aware of Cushman's previous relationship with Nixon, Helms thought that because Cushman was a Nixon appointee and a military officer, he might be more likely to respond to orders from the White House.¹³

On July 22, Hunt met with Cushman at CIA. Hunt's requirements were simple. He needed a physical disguise and some identification cards for what he described as a "one-time operation."¹⁴ At no time did Hunt reveal specifically why he needed this equipment, and Cushman did not ask. Cushman directed agency personnel to provide Hunt with the material.

In the following weeks, while working directly with CIA's Technical Services Division, Hunt requested additional equipment and

documents including more disguise and alias material, special recording equipment, and a concealed camera and film. The technical staff would also help Hunt by developing the film.

Hunt's added requests for the temporary services of a CIA secretary based in Paris and for a backstopped New York telephone answering service had raised red flags among the CIA team supporting Hunt.¹⁵ They did not know specifically why Hunt's requirements had expanded. When these new demands were brought to Cushman's attention, he decided to put an end to CIA's support to Hunt.¹⁶

CIA's technical staff and the deputy director were unaware that Hunt's role in the Nixon White House had broadened to include working with a unit nominally under John Ehrlichman called the Special Investigations Unit, which included former FBI agent G. Gordon Liddy. This group, which would become known as the Plumbers, was set up to address leaks and to investigate Daniel Ellsberg and portray him as a traitor.¹⁷ The Plumbers surveilled the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist in California and subsequently broke into the psychiatrist's office in search for embarrassing material on Ellsberg.

Pain in the Neck

Cushman followed up on his decision to end CIA support by calling Ehrlichman. On the routing sheet of

Helms and Cushman maintained that they had no idea that Hunt would ultimately use some of the CIA-provided equipment for any type of burglaries.

his August 27, 1971, memo, Cushman wrote for the attention of Helms: “I called John Ehrlichman Friday and explained why we could not meet these requests. I indicated Hunt was becoming a pain in the neck. John said he would restrain Hunt.” Helms initialed the routing sheet and wrote the word “Good.”¹⁸

Cushman and Helms differ in their recollections of when and how much Cushman told Helms of the Hunt requests. According to Cushman, after giving instructions to the technical staff to provide Hunt with the requested material, “I reported this a few days later to the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Richard Helms, and he assented to what I had done.”¹⁹ And later when he determined that Hunt was going beyond what the agency should be furnishing him, Cushman said: “I so reported it to his superior in the White House and to Mr. Helms. This stopped all dealings with Mr. Hunt.”²⁰

Helms, on the other hand, did not recall when he was first informed of the request to have CIA provide support to Hunt. His initial view was that it was a routine request from the White House for standard pieces of equipment.²¹ Helms, in retrospect, did not question the fact that Cushman handled the request from the White House himself. “The decision to supply the equipment might be interpreted as falling within the deputy director of central intelligence’s area of responsibility, but it was a close call.”²² Helms, however, did wonder why Cushman did not ask what the White House staff planned to do with the material.²³

By the time Hunt’s requests became excessive, Cushman asserted that he took the initiative to let Ehrlichman know that CIA would no longer be supporting Hunt. Helms remembered it differently: “General Cushman and I had a talk, and I asked him to please call Ehrlichman and tell him that Hunt could not have this secretary, and I thought the support to him should be stopped.”²⁴

Helms and Cushman maintained that they had no idea that Hunt would ultimately use some of the CIA-provided equipment for any type of burglaries. Helms asserted, “I certainly was totally unaware of any illegal activity, any improper activity, or anything that would have raised a question about the type of thing that Mr. Hunt was involved in.”²⁵ Helms did not view it as the type of matter that needed to be addressed with either the president or Ehrlichman. However, he later admitted, “I can only say that if we had the benefit of hindsight, maybe we should have asked a lot more questions.”²⁶

Helms said he first became aware of the burglary of Ellsberg’s psychiatrist’s office when he read it in the newspaper in May 1973.²⁷ The expanded nature of Hunt’s requests for CIA support clearly indicated that he was involved in more than a one-time activity as he initially claimed. Yet no evidence shows that Helms was aware of the purpose of Hunt’s work and the activities of the Plumbers. The Rockefeller Commission, established by President Ford in 1975 to investigate CIA’s domestic operations, concluded, “Nor has the investigation disclosed facts

indicating that the CIA knew or had reason to believe that the assistance it provided to Hunt and Liddy would be used in connection with the planning of an illegal entry.”²⁸

Profiling Ellsberg

CIA was also approached separately to support another Ellsberg-related White House idea. In mid-July, David Young, a former assistant to Henry Kissinger on the National Security Council who had been reassigned to support John Ehrlichman in reviewing classification procedures and preventing unauthorized disclosures, phoned CIA Director of Security Howard Osborn asking CIA to prepare a psychological profile of Daniel Ellsberg. Helms had earlier designated Osborn as his point of contact for Young on matters related to classification procedures.²⁹ In addition to these duties, Young was part of the White House effort to deal with the fallout from the Pentagon Papers.

Concerned that Ellsberg was being viewed by some in the country as a hero, the White House wanted to destroy his public image and credibility and portray him as a traitor. During his time on Kissinger’s staff, Young had become familiar with the psychological profiles CIA had done on foreign leaders. He believed such a profile might be of value in painting the type of damaging picture of Ellsberg that he and the Plumbers had in mind.

Osborn told Young that he would not proceed with such a request without the approval of the DCI. Osborn went to Helms with the request. Helms remembered his immediate response: “I said, ‘Why should we do a personality assessment

on Dr. Ellsberg?"³⁰ Subsequently, Helms spoke to Young directly about the request, expressing his reluctance to do the profile.³¹ According to Helms, Young emphasized that the White House wanted this done and the CIA was the only place with the capability to do it. Helms noted, "They very much wanted the agency to do it, that it had the highest White House level support, and so forth."³² Young told Helms that he needed the profile for a White House study about the whole Pentagon Papers business.³³

Young reminded Helms of his responsibility as DCI to protect sources and methods and national security secrets and that this request was consistent with those obligations.³⁴ Helms later explained the dilemma he faced while under White House pressure: "I was reluctant to have such a psychological profile done, but on the other hand it did not seem to me to be excessively out of line, particularly if it was not used in any nefarious scheme or devious ways."³⁵

Helms instructed Osborn to proceed with preparation of the profile. CIA's Office of Medical Services (OMS) psychologists initially objected because the subject was a US citizen. They agreed to prepare the profile, given the DCI's direction. By August 10, the OMS team sent their first attempt of the Ellsberg profile to Helms, who in turn sent it to Young. Young and others working on the Ellsberg matter were not satisfied.

This led to a series of meetings between Young and the chief of the Psychiatric Staff with the intent of producing a more useful profile. The White House provided additional material on Ellsberg.

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"How Does One Know?"

The OMS team produced a second version by November 9. Helms reviewed the draft and forwarded it to Young with a cautionary note: "I have seen the two papers which Dr. Malloy [chief of CIA Office of Medical Services] prepared for you. We are, of course, glad to be of assistance. I do wish to underline the point that our involvement in this matter should not be revealed in any context, formal or informal. I am sure that you appreciate our concern."³⁶ Despite the additional material and the OMS revisions, Young also found the second profile lacked the type of information that would be useful in their attempt to smear Ellsberg.

Helms's note accompanying the profile indicated his concern about what he had agreed to do. Expecting the matter to be kept secret, he did not question his decision at the time. As he later reflected, "I didn't think it was any mistake until the time that it was blown up into a big balloon . . . so that in retrospect it would have been better, I suppose, to have had the fight at the time, but how does one know? You just use the best judgment you can."³⁷ He justified his action further, saying, "This was not one of those events that you would talk to the president about because it wasn't any big deal."³⁸

Helms later acknowledged that agreeing to prepare the profiles was a bad judgment call on his part; CIA had overstepped its charter. As he admitted, "In retrospect, it was mistaken of me to have permitted this

psychological profile to be written. I should have said, 'No, we will not do this, since the man involved is an American citizen.'³⁹

The fact that Howard Hunt was present at some of Young's meetings with the CIA psychologist also complicated matters. Helms claimed he was not aware of Hunt's involvement in this White House request. He testified, "In May 1973, I was informed at the agency that during this period, this psychologist who had been consulting with David Young at the White House, that Howard Hunt had been present on one occasion. . . . They certainly did not inform me, so I was totally unaware of his identification with this exercise in any form whatever."⁴⁰

Those in CIA involved in the preparation and review of the Ellsberg profiles were unaware that another part of the agency was also supporting Hunt. Helms did not consult with Cushman on the profile request. In his testimony to the House Select Committee on Intelligence (known as the Nedzi Committee) investigating CIA activities related to Watergate and Ellsberg, Helms explained this decision:

I handled hundreds of things every week that I didn't inform General Cushman about, not because there was any reason not to inform him. It was simply there were so many going on I never got around to it. That was the way I operated, for better or for worse.⁴¹

There is no evidence the White House was concerned about the propriety of using CIA to deal with Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers.

These disconnects inside CIA contributed to a muddled picture of the White House's Ellsberg-related activities. There is no evidence the White House was concerned about the propriety of using CIA to deal with Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers. Nixon and his team saw themselves as protecting national security secrets and striking back at their political opponents.

Request for CIA Files

Outraged over the Pentagon Papers leaks, Nixon contemplated releasing additional documents from the Kennedy and Johnson administrations for political gain in his battle with his Democratic opposition. The Nixon White House recordings reveal that during their meeting on July 2, 1971, Nixon told Haldeman, "I'm not so interested in Ellsberg, but we have got to go after everybody who's a member of this conspiracy. There is a conspiracy and I've got to go after it."⁴²

One of Nixon's tactics was to declassify documents that would embarrass opponents. The White House tapes captured Nixon arguing: "Well, we just can't let them [the Democrats] get away with this. That's the point.... [It's] their complicity and the Pentagon Papers are about their administrations. That is why it's to our interest to put the war in their administration."⁴³ In this regard, the CIA would be helpful; Ehrlichman told Nixon, "I've got to talk to Helms about getting some documents which the CIA has on the Bay of Pigs and things like that which they would

rather not leak out. It's a challenge." Nixon agreed, "It's going to be hard."⁴⁴

Following up on Nixon's plan to obtain and release documents from the Kennedy-Johnson era, Ehrlichman called on Helms on September 22, 1971. Ehrlichman asked Helms for CIA material on the Diem coup, the Bay of Pigs, and other activities involving the CIA.⁴⁵ Ehrlichman gave no reason for the request other than that the president wanted them. Helms agreed to gather and review the requested material.⁴⁶ The two met again on October 1, and Helms told Ehrlichman he would only turn the files over to the president himself and not give the files directly to Ehrlichman.⁴⁷

Helms met with Nixon and Ehrlichman on October 8. The Nixon tapes show just before Helms joined the meeting, Nixon and Ehrlichman strategized how to deal with Helms, given the director's reluctance to hand over material. Nixon and Ehrlichman would justify to Helms the need for the material by saying the president must know all the facts bearing on these matters. But they would emphasize to Helms that they were not going to release the documents or "put them all out."⁴⁸

When Helms joined the meeting, Nixon explained why he needed the CIA files. He stressed that when it came to the Bay of Pigs and the assassination of Diem and other topics, he needed to understand everything that might bear on the "Cuba confrontation." Moreover, in light of the Pentagon Papers, the president said

he needed to be prepared to address any further inquiries from the media regarding the leaked material or be prepared to handle any further leaks. He said he needed the information, "for defensive reasons . . . 'the who shot John' angle. Is Eisenhower to blame? Is Johnson to blame? Is Kennedy to blame? Is Nixon to blame?"⁴⁹

Nixon assured Helms that he was going to protect CIA and would not release any of the CIA files. The material would not go further than the president and Ehrlichman. Contrary to his earlier discussion with Ehrlichman, Nixon told Helms,

I am not talking to you as...one that's out to get the CIA, that's out to get Kennedy, out to get Johnson, the rest. I think it's very harmful to the presidency, as an institution, to make it appear that a former president lied.⁵⁰

In the course of the conversation, Helms pointed out that his obligation was to Nixon because he could only serve one president at a time and that any papers in his possession were at the disposal of the president.⁵¹ Helms just wanted to be sure that it was the president who was making the request because the material he was providing happened on another president's watch.⁵²

Closed Like a Safe

In his 1978 memoir, Nixon described the difficulty he had in obtaining information from Helms. With regard to CIA's files on Diem and Castro, Nixon wrote, "The CIA protects itself, even from Presidents. Helms refused to give Ehrlichman

the agency's internal reports dealing with either subject."⁵³ According to Nixon, Ehrlichman concluded that the material Helms provided was incomplete. From this experience, Nixon believed, "The CIA was closed like a safe and we could find no one who would give us the combination to open it."⁵⁴ In response to Nixon's criticism, Helms in 1988 told interviewer Stanley Kutler, "I don't know what he's talking about. I gave him those files."⁵⁵

Nixon kept the files Helms delivered, but he did not follow through on his original plan to declassify select documents to embarrass the previous administration, or to use them in his own battles with Democrats. Also, no evidence shows that the material Helms provided included any documents related to sensitive matters such as CIA's assassination plots. Nixon, neither during nor after his presidency, publicly raised CIA's plans to assassinate Castro or other foreign leaders.

The available records do not show that either Nixon or Ehrlichman revealed to Helms their real motive for requesting these various CIA files. Nor did Helms ask why Nixon wanted them. In his own accounts of this episode, Helms did not provide any hints that he knew why Nixon wanted the material. Defending his actions, Helms said, "When the top man in the White House asks for some support and assistance, it is given to him."⁵⁶

The Rockefeller Commission examined Nixon's requests and was somewhat critical of Helms. The commission concluded that Helms had every reason to believe Nixon's request was for "proper purposes"

With regard to CIA's files on Diem and Castro, Nixon wrote, "The CIA protects itself, even from Presidents. Helms refused to give Ehrlichman the agency's internal reports dealing with either subject."

and that the DCI cannot refuse a direct order from the president without being ready to resign. Nevertheless, the commission maintained,

In the final analysis the proper functioning of the agency must depend in large part on the judgment, ability and integrity of its director. The best assurance against misuse of the agency lies in the appointment to that position of persons of such stature, maturity and integrity that they will be able to resist outside pressure and importuning.⁵⁷

Controversial CIA–White House matters like these would not surface again over the next eight months. During that time, Hunt and the Plumbers had shifted their efforts from Ellsberg to supporting the Committee to Reelect the President's intelligence operations.

Watergate Break-In

On June 17, 1972, Helms received a call from the director of security informing him of the Watergate break-in, the names of the burglars, and that Howard Hunt might be involved.⁵⁸ Helms, wasting no time, quickly called acting FBI Director Patrick Gray and told him CIA had nothing to do with the Watergate burglary. At his morning meeting on June 19, Helms said that those implicated in the burglary with CIA connections should be referred to as former employees. Helms also pointed out "We have no responsibility with respect to an investigation

except to be responsive to the FBI's request for name traces."⁵⁹

Those around the table were concerned that there would be speculation that CIA was behind the operation. Helms asked his executive director at the time, William Colby, to coordinate the agency's internal response. According to Colby,

Helms spelled out a fundamental strategy with which all his associates, myself included, agreed. To protect itself from even the appearance of involvement in Watergate, the agency was to distance itself from the event to every extent possible. "Stay cool, volunteer nothing, because it will only be used to involve us. Just stay away from the whole damn thing." That was the gist of Helms's advice.⁶⁰

On June 22, Gray called Helms to ask whether, in the course of the FBI's investigation of the break-in, the bureau might be touching upon CIA operations. Helms told Gray that since the break-in the agency had been looking into the matter, but Helms stressed, "There was no CIA involvement."⁶¹

Within days of the burglary, the White House began plotting to use CIA to stop the FBI's investigation. The FBI was beginning to trace money from Republican campaign contributions to the burglars. Such money was being laundered through Mexico. Gray initially thought, because of the burglars' status as former CIA employees, that Watergate might

Nixon instructed Haldeman on how to approach the CIA leaders: “When you get these people in say, ‘look, the problem is that this will open up the whole Bay of Pigs thing.’”

be a CIA operation. John Mitchell, the former attorney general and director of Nixon’s reelection committee, drew upon Gray’s speculation and concocted a way to keep the matter under control. He suggested that Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman call in the newly appointed deputy DCI, Gen. Vernon Walters, and have him ask Gray to halt the investigation into the money because it might touch upon CIA activities.⁶²

On the morning of June 23, John Dean, the president’s counsel, who was emerging as the point figure in controlling the Watergate fallout, shared Mitchell’s recommendation with Haldeman. In coming up with this approach, Mitchell and Dean gave no thought to whether it was appropriate to use CIA in such a fashion. Rather, they rationalized it as protection of CIA operations—with absolutely no knowledge of what the agency might in fact have been doing in Mexico. Haldeman, likewise, raised no objection to trying to use the CIA to stop the FBI’s investigation.

The same day, Haldeman broached the idea with Nixon, who was on board immediately.^{63, a} Haldeman proposed that he and Ehrlichman call in Helms and Walters. Nixon said, “All right, fine.”⁶⁴ Nixon instructed Haldeman on how to approach the CIA leaders:

When you get these people in say, “look, the problem is that this will open up the whole Bay of Pigs thing, and the president just feels that,” I mean, without going into the details, don’t lie to them to the extent to say there is no involvement, but just say this is sort of a comedy of errors, bizarre, without getting into it...they should call the FBI in and say that we wish for the country, don’t go any further into this case, period! And that destroys the case.⁶⁵

Haldeman met Nixon a second time that morning on another matter, when Nixon again raised the meeting with Helms and Walters. Nixon again instructed Haldeman on the approach:

I’d say, the primary reason, you’ve got to cut it the hell off. I just don’t think, ah, it would be very bad to have this fellow Hunt, you know, he knows too damn much. And he was involved, we happen to know that. And if it gets out, the whole, this is all involved in the Cuban thing...the CIA looks bad, it’s going to make Hunt look bad, and it’s likely to blow the whole Bay of Pigs thing, which we think would be very unfortunate for the CIA and the country at this time.⁶⁶

The president did not spell out his concerns regarding CIA and the Bay of Pigs.

Ehrlichman summoned Helms and Walters to his office for the meeting on June 23. They were unaware of why they were called.⁶⁷ Helms also did not recall a time when both he and his deputy had been called to the White House. Haldeman joined them. Haldeman took charge and referenced the Watergate affair and the trouble it was causing; the FBI investigation could make it even worse.⁶⁸

He asked if there was a CIA connection; Helms said there was none. Helms mentioned that he spoke with Gray the day before and relayed the same message. Haldeman then got to the point of the meeting. According to Walters’s contemporaneous memo for the record,

Haldeman said that the whole affair was getting embarrassing, and it was the president’s wish that Walters call on Acting FBI Director Patrick Gray and suggest to him that since the five suspects had been arrested that this should be sufficient and that it was not advantageous to have the enquiry pushed, especially in Mexico, etc.⁶⁹

Following Nixon’s guidance, Haldeman said that if the investigation in Mexico were not stopped, it would open up the Bay of Pigs matter. Helms was apparently surprised that Haldeman would bring up the Bay of Pigs. Helms later testified: “I said, ‘Well, you know the Bay of Pigs

a. Nixon’s White House recordings clearly reveal that Haldeman followed up on Mitchell’s recommendation. Haldeman, however, chose to discuss it with Nixon first instead of going directly to Walters, as Mitchell and Dean had recommended. Had Haldeman followed their guidance, the president would have been kept out of this scheme to use CIA, at least during the early days of trying to contain the political damage resulting from the break-in. H.R. Haldeman with Joseph DiMona, *The Ends of Power* (Times Books, 1978), 31–32.

was a long time ago. I don't care anything about the Bay of Pigs, so don't worry about the Bay of Pigs' . . . the problems arising from it had been liquidated."⁷⁰ Beyond the general reference to the Bay of Pigs, no other Cuba-related covert actions were mentioned. Walters agreed to speak with Gray that very afternoon.

Helms and Walters initially differed in their accounts of one important part of the meeting. Walters in his memo noted that Haldeman said that "It was the President's wish that Walters call on Acting FBI Director Patrick Gray." Helms, on the other hand, recalled that "Mr. Haldeman then said something to the effect that it has been decided that General Walters will go and talk to Acting Director Gray of the FBI."⁷¹ Helms did not believe Haldeman specifically mentioned the president as the one who recommended that Walters call Gray.

Helms was uncertain and unclear about several aspects of the meeting. First, why did Haldeman ask Walters to talk with Gray? Helms believed that if the president wanted a message delivered to the acting director of the FBI, it should have been delivered by the DCI and not his deputy.⁷² But Helms acknowledged his reasoning in an interview a decade later,

I always assumed that the reason General Walters was picked was that he had just recently been made deputy director of central intelligence; he had only been there for a few weeks, and that Haldeman and Ehrlichman and possibly the President himself, felt that since he was obliged to them for the appointment, he would do their bidding more obediently and with less

The Bay of Pigs was the one big public CIA failure up to that point the administration could use as leverage over the DCI. Helms, however, believed there was nothing additional to expose to embarrass the agency.

*argument possibly than I would have done.... In other, words, that having come on board, he was now being asked to pay for his new appointment by carrying out their wishes. This explanation seemed perfectly logical to me and I don't think that one has to look much further for the reason.*⁷³

According to Dean, Ehrlichman recommended that it should be Walters and not Helms because Walters was a friend of the White House.⁷⁴ With Walters at CIA, the White House could have some influence through him.⁷⁵ Walters had served in the army since 1941; Nixon nominated him to be DDCI on March 2, 1972, and Walters was sworn in a month later. Walters admitted Nixon was instrumental in his getting the job. He explained, "I think it came about mostly through President Nixon, whom I had known for a long time."⁷⁶

Helms also couldn't quite understand the reference to the Bay of Pigs. He later wrote, "It baffled me then, and it does today."⁷⁷ The Bay of Pigs was the one big public CIA failure that the administration could use as leverage over the DCI. Helms, however, believed there was nothing additional to expose to embarrass the agency. The assassination attempts against Castro had not been fully uncovered at that time. No evidence suggests that Haldeman was aware of such plots, and the chief of staff gave no indication that he was tying the Bay of Pigs to assassination plots.

Helms and Walters agree that Watergate was the lead-in to the meeting.⁷⁸ But Haldeman did not reveal the fact that the FBI was pursuing leads in Mexico that would connect the burglars' money with Republican campaign funds. Thus, Helms did not understand how their concern with Mexico was tied to the Watergate affair. Helms testified,

*And I frankly was hard put at the time to understand what Mexico was involved with. This was only a week after the break-in. I did not know why Mexico was being mentioned, and it never occurred to me that it had anything to do with the Watergate burglary.*⁷⁹

With his admitted confusion over Haldeman's concern about CIA operations in Mexico and with Watergate in the background, it is surprising that Helms did not push back on their request. The only objection he raised in the meeting was the reference to the Bay of Pigs. Helms, however, at the time did not view Haldeman's request as a direct order to have Walters tell the FBI to halt its Mexico investigation. As he testified later,

Mr. Haldeman then said something to the effect that it has been decided that General Walters will go and talk to Acting Director Gray of the FBI and indicate to him that these operations—these investigations of the FBI might run into CIA operations in Mexico and that it was desirable that this not happen and that the investiga-

“It simply did not occur to me that the chief of staff to the president might be asking me to do something that was illegal or wrong. If one were to question every order from the White House, it would be almost impossible to conduct the daily business of the government.”

*tion, therefore, should be either tapered off or reduced or something but there was no language saying stop, as far as I recall.*⁸⁰

His failure to say no also comported with his role as a senior officer in the executive branch. He explained to one congressional committee this way:

*I was sitting talking to the two principal lieutenants of the president, and they were sitting there together, and saying this is what has been decided to do. They declined to come up with any further explanation or descriptive material, and I can only say that an assumption had to be that they knew what they were talking about and this is what they wanted.*⁸¹

In testimony to another committee, Helms gave Haldeman the benefit of the doubt on the Mexico angle:

At this point the references to Mexico were quite unclear to me. I had to recognize that if the White House, the president, Mr. Haldeman, somebody in high authority, had information about something in Mexico which I did not have information about, which is quite possible—the White House constantly has information which others do not have—that it would be a prudent thing for me to find out if there was any possibility that some CIA operation was being—was going to be affect-

*ed, and, therefore, I wanted the necessary time to do this.*⁸²

After the meeting, Haldeman reported to the president that he raised the Bay of Pigs issue. According to Haldeman’s account, he also brought up Howard Hunt. As the White House recordings revealed, Haldeman told the president, “The whole problem [is] this fellow Hunt, so at that point Helms kind of got the picture, very clearly. He said ‘We’ll be very happy to be helpful to, you know, we’ll handle everything you want.’” Haldeman was not going to share anything else about the matter. He told Nixon that Helms said “fine” and Walters was ready to meet with Gray.⁸³

Neither Helms nor Walters in their accounts of the meeting mentioned Haldeman’s reference to Hunt. Also, Haldeman’s depiction of Helms as ready to be helpful is at odds with Helms’s description of the session.

As Helms and Walters left the meeting, both were prepared to comply with the request. But Helms cautioned Walters on what specifically he should ask Gray to do. Helms remembered, “He [Walters] should only go so far as to say that if Mr. Gray in his investigations ran into any CIA operations in Mexico, he should remember about the delimitation agreement between the FBI and the CIA, and advise the CIA that he had done so.”⁸⁴

Knowing that Walters had only been in the job for six weeks, Helms

wanted to make sure Walters did not go too far in what he said to Gray:

*I wanted him in his comments with Mr. Gray to stay within legitimate parameters.... What I was telling him to do was legitimate, because in any investigation in a country like Mexico, there is no way of knowing what one might come across the next day, the next week or the next month in the way of CIA assets.*⁸⁵

Walters, likewise appreciated the situation he was been put in:

*It simply did not occur to me that the chief of staff to the president might be asking me to do something that was illegal or wrong. If one were to question every order from the White House, it would be almost impossible to conduct the daily business of the government. Had I been asked by Haldeman to stop the whole investigation, I might have become suspicious, but at this moment the Mexican aspects of the case had not even come to my attention.*⁸⁶

Walters met with Gray later that afternoon. He pointed out that “while the further investigation of the Watergate affair had not touched any current or ongoing covert projects of the agency, its continuation might lead to some projects.”⁸⁷ Walters cited the delimitation agreement between CIA and FBI. Gray said he was familiar with the agreement and said that the bureau would abide by it.⁸⁸ In his memo for the record, Walters recalled what happened next:

I repeated that if the investigations were pushed “south of

*the border” they could trespass upon some of our covert projects and, in view of the fact that the five men involved were under arrest, it would be best to taper the matter off there.*⁸⁹

The Mexico Connection

Walters had done exactly what Haldeman asked. Following the meeting, Gray informed John Dean what had occurred.⁹⁰ Walters went back to CIA headquarters and asked Colby to examine the records and determine if there were any CIA operations in Mexico that would be threatened by an FBI investigation.⁹¹ By June 24, Colby told Walters that it was unlikely that any CIA operations in Mexico were in jeopardy.⁹²

The key to the FBI investigation in Mexico was an attorney named Manuel Ogarrio. Tracing the money, FBI found that four checks had been made out to Ogarrio. In agreeing to Walters’s request, Gray had told his agents only to hold up on interviewing Ogarrio but to proceed with everything else. “If there was indeed a CIA connection in Mexico, as Gray later wrote, “I surmised, Ogarrio would have to be it”⁹³ The investigation into the Ogarrio angle had slowed. Helms described the CIA’s next steps: “We have to check files and records and we would have to check with people in Mexico. . .”⁹⁴ After four days, with his team anxious to move ahead with the interview, Gray called Helms and pressed him about any CIA interest in Ogarrio. Helms called back in a few hours and reported the CIA had none.⁹⁵

Even though Gray had receive oral feedback from Helms on Ogarrio, he wanted something in writing. On July 5, he called Walters and said

In the immediate aftermath of the break-in, FBI’s overall investigation had continued, but because of Walters’ intervention, the Mexico angle had been delayed by almost two weeks.

that unless he received a document stating that “their investigation was endangering national security” the FBI would proceed with interviewing Ogarrio.⁹⁶

Walters promised he would deliver, and on the next day he presented Gray with a memorandum that covered the CIA relationships with Hunt, James McCord, and the other burglars. Walters told Gray that he could not ask him to stop the investigation for reasons of national security.⁹⁷ As soon as Walters left, Gray ordered that the interviews be conducted.⁹⁸

In the immediate aftermath of the break-in, FBI’s overall investigation had continued, but because of Walters’s intervention, the Mexico angle had been delayed by almost two weeks. Helms, in retrospect, defended the action he and Walters took:

*It may be alleged that we did have some hint or that we could have guessed, I simply do not accept that fact. How we would have known about this convoluted process of sending money to Minnesota, to Mexico and all over the place, is something I don’t have a clue about; but I want to make the record absolutely clear that we knew nothing about it at that time.*⁹⁹

Unvouchered Funds

While the Mexico investigation was playing itself out, Walters was dragged into another desperate effort

by the White House to contain the damage from the Watergate break-in. On June 26, John Dean asked to meet with Walters. The two met over the course of the next three days. Dean reviewed with Walters the different theories about the Watergate break-in, one of which was that it was organized by the CIA. Walters stressed that he was sure the agency was not involved.¹⁰⁰ Dean raised the possibility that the burglars were still working for CIA. Walters emphasized that they were not.¹⁰¹

According to Walters, at the second meeting, Dean explored the possibility of CIA providing unvouchered funds to those who were arrested. Walters wrote, “Dean then asked whether there was not some way that the agency could pay their bail. He added that it was not just bail, that if these men went to prison, could we [CIA] find some way to pay their salaries while they were in jail out of covert action funds.”¹⁰²

Walters pushed back on the idea of getting the CIA involved. He wrote, “The scandal would be ten times greater as such action could only be done upon the direction at the ‘highest level’ and those that were not touched by the matter would now certainly be so.”¹⁰³

Trying to portray himself in a more positive light, Dean testified, “Before Walters departed, I assured him that I agreed that it would be most unwise to involve the CIA and I thanked him almost apologetically for coming by again. At no time did I push him as I had been instructed.”¹⁰⁴

Helms concluded that there was nothing to be gained by confronting the president. As he later acknowledged, “I can only assume that the president would have treated me as he did others and that is, he would have lied to me.”

Walters kept Helms informed of his meetings with Dean. Helms was very clear that CIA could not comply with the suggestion. He reportedly told Walters,

“It [the CIA] can be hurt badly by having somebody act improperly who was in the line of command, and I don’t want you to acquiesce in a single thing that will besmirch this agency.” And he agreed.¹⁰⁵

Helms further pointed out that only the DCI could release unvouchered funds and that, if he did so, he would have to report it to the Senate and House Appropriations Committees. He would not use funds set aside for secret intelligence operations to pay burglars.¹⁰⁶ Helms did not regard this as a direct order from the White House. He told the Senate committee investigating the Nixon presidential campaign, “These were feelers to find out if there was some way that the CIA might do—according to General Walters’s report to me, he was never requested to do anything.”¹⁰⁷ After these meetings, neither Dean nor anyone else in the White House again raised the idea of using CIA funds to pay the burglars.

Walters was at the center of the White House’s Watergate requests. Helms, however, later chose to emphasize his role in drawing the line when it came to White House requests:

In his book, Silent Missions, I don’t like the way Walters dealt with his role in the chapter of

the book where he is talking about Watergate, because he gives himself a lot of kudos for having stood up to the Nixon administration. It was not him making the decision to stand up. It was me telling him exactly what he had to do under the circumstances.... I was the one who stood up to the White House. I am not trying to preen myself. I am just telling you that a man who had been in the agency about two months was in no position to deal with a complicated matter like this.¹⁰⁸

Dean’s desperate plea to Walters for CIA funds was the last time the White House would turn to Helms or Walters for help with Watergate.

Given the way the White House tried to use the CIA to support what ultimately became a cover-up, questions remain as to why Helms did not raise objections directly with the president early on or why he did not report to Congress or the Department of Justice. Part of Helms’s decision not to go directly to the president can be seen in his overall views on the relationship between a DCI and the president. He testified,

If the White House asks me to do something, I believe it is my proper duty to go ahead and do it. I have a very keen sense, I thought, of what my responsibilities were and where to draw certain lines and when to appeal decisions that were improper.¹⁰⁹

Helms acknowledged that there was an effort by some in the White House to “use” the agency.¹¹⁰ At the time, he did not believe Nixon was part of a cover-up:

President Nixon was not put forward by any of these people in their discussions. They were conducting them on their own as far as I was aware.¹¹¹

Helms concluded that there was nothing to be gained by confronting the president. As he later acknowledged, “I can only assume that the president would have treated me as he did others and that is, he would have lied to me.”¹¹²

Based on what he knew at the time and considering the circumstances, Helms also did not believe that he needed to get Congress involved:

I don’t recall having wrestled with whether I should come and speak to any congressional committees. I was doing my level best to handle the Agency’s affairs, to keep it out of involvement in this burglary, which there seemed to be a lot of effort on the part of newspapers and other to put us into it. I was attempting to fend this off to protect the Agency’s name. I had been reasonably successful and didn’t see anything about these things I needed to report on.¹¹³

Helms’s objective as DCI was to protect CIA from being implicated in the Watergate mess; to that end, he calculated that Congress would not be of much help.

Lack of Trust

When it came to reporting to the Department of Justice, a lack of trust and Watergate-related leaks influenced Helms's decisions. He explained,

Even in retrospect, I don't know who I would have talked to about these things because I think it became clear that officials at the top level of the government, if not the president himself, knew about these matters to a greater or lesser degree, depending on who they were, and that Gray's behavior toward the agency, after I tipped him off in the early stages as to where I thought the problem in this whole affair was, made me very uneasy about whom I could have any confidence in, if I had to come up with something on a fiduciary basis.¹¹⁴

In following this approach, Helms would be accused of not fully cooperating with the FBI in its investigation. He defended his decisions by pointing at the FBI:

It was not long after the burglary took place, and not long after efforts were being made to get the burglars counsel and money for their defense and all the rest of it, that the FBI, for the first time, at least in my knowledge, in its history began leaking information about the on-going investigation.¹¹⁵

Helms had informed CIA General Counsel Lawrence Houston about Haldeman's instructions to Walters at the June 23 meeting. Houston did not advise Helms to report the episode to federal prosecutors.¹¹⁶

Nixon's presidency ended in ignominy, but how do we judge Helms? As a career intelligence officer who had been at CIA since its creation in 1947, Helms had a great deal of pride in the agency and his profession.

In the weeks following Walters's meeting with Gray on July 6, the FBI asked CIA for information about Hunt's relationship with CIA after he retired and James McCord's attempts to inform the agency that they were being set up to take the fall for Watergate. The bureau also requested access to current agency employees who were aware of CIA's support to Hunt in summer 1971. Accusations would be made that CIA was not being fully cooperative with the FBI's investigation, especially with regard to giving access to agency employees.

Helms, did, in fact, on June 28 ask Gray that the FBI not interview two current employees at all. Gray agreed. However, the interview of one of the employees had already taken place by the time Helms called.¹¹⁷ Helms would later maintain, "Because for the first time in my memory there were definite leaks out of the Alexandria office of the FBI after the Watergate break-in, and it struck me that there was no need to get people from the agency who were on active duty involved with the agents at the field office."¹¹⁸ When the facts emerged later, Gray believed Helms had lied to him in order to hide the fact that the CIA had been providing Hunt with technical support well before the Watergate break-in.¹¹⁹

Judging Helms

For Nixon, who cruised to reelection in 1972, the reckoning would come in 1974 with his resignation before impeachment votes in the House and Senate took place. Recognition of the Nixon White House's abuse of CIA was noted in the articles of impeachment affirmed by the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives in July 1974. As stated in Article 2, Section 5:

In disregard of the rule of law, he knowingly misused the executive power by interfering with agencies of the executive branch, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Criminal Division, and the Office of Watergate Special Prosecution Force, the Department of Justice, and the Central Intelligence Agency, in violation of his duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed.¹²⁰

Nixon's presidency ended in ignominy, but how do we judge Helms? As a career intelligence officer who had been at CIA since its creation in 1947, Helms had a great deal of pride in the agency and his profession. For him, the CIA was essential in the defense of the nation. To be effective, the agency had to be able to operate in secret with its integrity and objectivity protected from unwarranted political interference. He stated, "Without objectivity, there is no credibility, and an intelligence organization without credibility is of little use to those it serves."¹²¹

In his testimonies, interviews, and memoirs, Helms was consistent in explaining and justifying his decisions. With respect to the Ellsberg profile, he acknowledged his error in judgment. On other issues, he defended the steps he took, arguing that he acted based on what he knew at the time. Helms presented his case with an expectation that we take him at his word about what he knew or did not know about the various White House schemes.

With the benefit of the released Nixon White House tapes and the information that emerged from executive and congressional reviews, a clear picture emerged of what actually went on in the White House. How much of this picture should Helms have surmised as it took shape?

Having served as DCI under President Johnson, when CIA was asked to investigate possible links between American antiwar protestors and hostile foreign governments, Helms was not unaccustomed to dealing with White House requests that crossed over into domestic operations. Yet the political and self-serving nature of the Nixon administration's requests and their later gravity were not readily apparent to the DCI as they occurred one by one. He was not experienced in the world of cutthroat political battles led by such operatives as Haldeman and Ehrlichman, with whom he had few dealings. It is not unreasonable to take him at his word about how much he knew about what Nixon and his men were contriving.

In dealing with any presidential administration, Helms felt it was important for the DCI to be at the



Having spent most of his career avoiding the limelight, Helms would testify to Congress multiple times in the 1970s, as in this September 1975 appearance before the Church Committee on intelligence activities to explain his decisions about CIA's stockpile of poisons. (©Harry Griffin/AP/Shutterstock)

table if CIA was to be relevant. A DCI that did not support the White House would find himself or herself disinvited and marginalized. Helms acknowledged that CIA was “part of the President's bag of tools... and if he and proper authorities have decided that something needs to be done, then the agency is bound to try to do it.”¹²²

In the end, did Helms keep CIA at the table while keeping it distant from the Watergate affair? After Nixon's reelection, the president, seeking an overhaul of his administration, requested the resignation of his cabinet members. Helms was not a cabinet member and viewed his position as apolitical; he did not submit a resignation. In November 1972, Nixon called Helms to Camp David to inform him that he was going to be replaced as DCI.

One interpretation for this move is that Helms was fired for not supporting Nixon on Watergate. There is nothing in Nixon's records and audio recordings to indicate that this was the case. Helms himself was unsure whether Watergate was the reason for his dismissal. He said, “It might have been a factor, it might not have been a factor. Maybe he was planning to make the change after the election, if he won. In any event, I simply don't know.”¹²³

At no point did Helms consider resigning during these controversies. “I don't mean to be immodest,” he explained, “but I felt that I understood about these matters and these delimitations and I thought I could take care of the agency better if I stayed where I was.”¹²⁴

Unlike the suspicions that Nixon, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman had about

Helms, Kissinger respected Helms for his sense of duty and the way he handled the job.¹²⁵ During a discussion with Nixon regarding Helms's future assignment as ambassador to Iran, Kissinger said, "Helms is a loyalist. . . . We won't have any problems with Helms."¹²⁶ The Nixon White House tapes reveal that, even after the turmoil of Watergate, Helms in his last days in office remained deferential to the president and treated Nixon with the type of respect that a president expects from a CIA director.¹²⁷ On February 2, 1973, Helms's seat at the table was taken by James Schlesinger, a man more to Nixon's liking.

Overall, Helms was not completely successful in keeping the agency from being tied to the Watergate scandal. His efforts to reaffirm that CIA had nothing to do with Watergate and limit FBI access to CIA personnel and materials in the immediate aftermath of the break-in kept CIA out of the early FBI leaks. Nevertheless, public speculation and congressional interest in CIA's Watergate role grew. In May 1973, at Ellsberg's federal espionage trial, Howard Hunt would reveal the extent of CIA support he received. This again put CIA in the public spotlight.

Congress followed up this revelation with its own investigation. The Special Subcommittee on Intelligence of the House Committee on Armed

It is not excusing Helms to argue that his approach must also be viewed in the context of the time. Congress was only beginning to be more assertive in matters related to CIA.

Services held an inquiry and issued a report on CIA's involvement in the Watergate and Ellsberg matters. Helms and others in CIA would be called to testify that same year at the the Irvin Committee. Sen. Howard Baker, the vice chairman, would pursue a deeper investigation into CIA's role and attach an annex to the committee's final report. Baker's annex drew no new conclusions about CIA's role in Watergate, but it highlighted CIA's involvement in domestic activities.

A Different Era

It is not excusing Helms to argue that his approach must also be viewed in the context of the time. Congress was only beginning to be more assertive in matters related to CIA. The type of congressional oversight of CIA that exists today would not begin until the implementation of the recommendations of the Church Committee in 1976.¹²⁸ The media was starting to uncover more of CIA's secrets, but not until Seymour Hersh's revelations in December 1974 of CIA's domestic operations was the agency put under the type of constant scrutiny that exists today.

In addition, the DCI was just beginning to deal with former agency officers who were writing books critical of CIA activities. The volume of books and articles by former CIA officers that are commonplace today was rare until 1974 when Victor Marchetti and John Marks published *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, a scathing critique of CIA operations.

And although the DCI was organizationally the head of the entire Intelligence Community, it was a responsibility that Helms and his predecessors devoted little time to, unlike the role that the Director of National Intelligence fills today. With all of this in mind, Helms was able to operate without many of the constraints that more recent directors have faced.

What has not changed is the fact that the CIA director still supports the president and is responsible for protecting the agency from executive abuse and enabling the intelligence professionals to carry out the agency's mission. In this regard, Helms's experience from 50 years ago is instructive.



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Endnotes

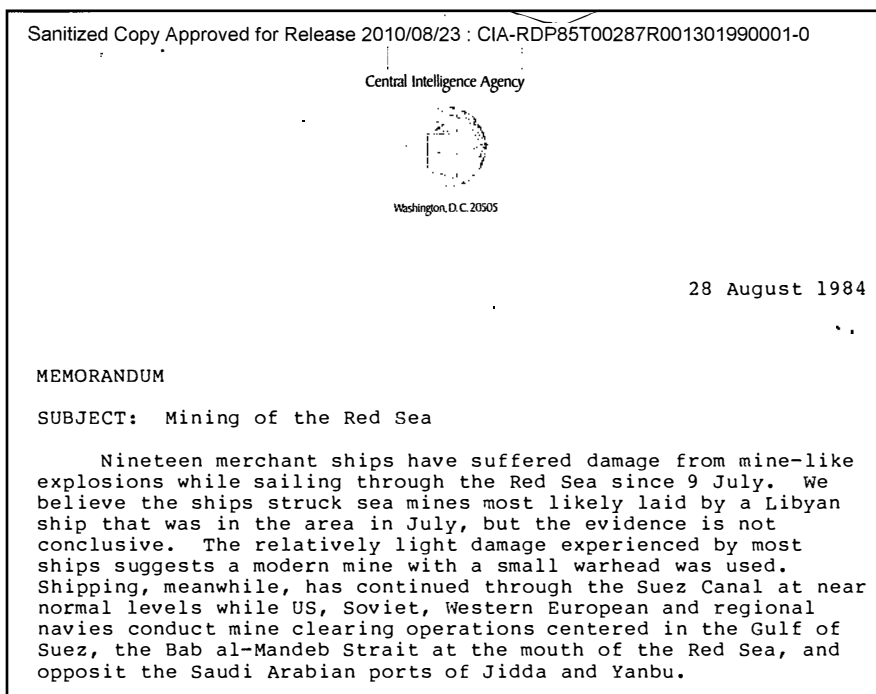
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14. Commission on CIA Activities within the United States, *Report to the President* (Government Printing Office, 1975) (hereafter, Rockefeller Commission), 180–81.
15. *Ibid.*, 179.
16. Cushman testimony, Nedzi Committee, 10.
17. Hunt, *American Spy*, 181–82.
18. Helms testimony, Nedzi Committee, 84.
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20. *Ibid.*, 6.
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22. Richard Helms with William Hood, *A Look Over My Shoulder: A Life in the Central Intelligence Agency* (Ballantine Books, 2004), 5.
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26. Helms testimony, Nedzi Committee, 79.
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43. NWHT, Nixon, Haldeman, Mitchell—Oval Office, September 18, 1971, in Kutler, 36.
44. NWHT, Nixon, Ehrlichman—Oval Office, September 8, 1971, in Kutler, 28.
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57. Rockefeller Commission, 193.
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63. *Ibid.*, 56.
64. *Ibid.*, 58.
65. *Ibid.*, 60.
66. *Ibid.*, 61.
67. Helms testimony, Irvin Committee, 3,243.
68. Vernon A. Walters, DDCI, Memorandum for the Record, June 28, 1972.
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70. Helms testimony, Nedzi Committee, 93; Helms testimony, Irvin Committee, 3,275.
71. Helms testimony, Irvin Committee, 3238.
72. Helms, *A Look Over My Shoulder*, 11.
73. Richard Helms, Bross.
74. John W. Dean 3d testimony in *The Watergate Hearings: Break-in and Cover-up*, Staff of *The New York Times*, ed. (Bantam Books, Inc., 1973), 316.
75. *Ibid.*, 275.
76. Quoted in Benjamin B. Fischer, “Consummate Intelligence Insider,” *Studies in Intelligence* 49, no. 2 (Summer 2005), 57–58.
77. Helms, *A Look Over My Shoulder*, 10.
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79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, 3238.
81. Helms testimony, Nedzi Committee, 95.
82. Helms testimony, Irvin Committee, 3238-39.
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84. Helms testimony, Nedzi Committee, 94. According to the delimitation agreement, the CIA and FBI agreed that if either organization found that lines had been crossed in overseas operations, the other party would be informed immediately.
85. *Ibid.*
86. Vernon A. Walters, *Silent Missions* (Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978), 588.
87. Walters memorandum, June 28, 1972.
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91. Colby, *Honorable Man*, 324.
92. *Ibid.*
93. Gray, *In Nixon’s Web*, 72.
94. Helms testimony, Irvin Committee, 3,249.
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96. Vernon A. Walters, DDCI, Memorandum for the Record, July 5, 1972.
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100. Walters memorandum, June 28, 1972.
101. Walters, *Silent Missions*, 596.
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103. *Ibid.*
104. John W. Dean 3d quoted in Walters, *Silent Missions*, 598.
105. Helms testimony, Nedzi Committee, 97–98.
106. Helms, *A Look Over My Shoulder*, 12–13; Helms testimony, Irvin Committee, 3271.
107. Helms testimony, Irvin Committee, 3271.
108. Richard Helms, Kutler interview, July 14, 1988.
109. Helms testimony, Nedzi Committee, 104.
110. Helms testimony, Irvin Committee, 3250.
111. *Ibid.*, 3256.
112. Richard Helms, Bross interview.
113. Helms testimony, Nedzi Committee, 103.
114. Richard Helms, Bross interview.
115. *Ibid.*
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118. Richard Helms testimony March 8, 1974, quoted in CIA Watergate History, 99.
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120. Articles of Impeachment, July 27, 1974.
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123. Richard Helms, Bross interview.
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127. NWHT, Telephone Conversation between Nixon and Helms, January 25, 1973.
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Revisiting the 1984 Naval Mining of the Red Sea: Intelligence Challenges and Lessons

Richard A. Mobley



The above clip of the opening of a CIA memorandum summarizes what was known late in August 1984 of the rash of reported instances of ships suffering mine damage in the Red Sea during July and August. Classified Secret//Noform when it was published, it and other documents from CIA records were declassified and released in 2010. The British released similar documentation in 2016.

British and US intelligence analysts faced significant challenges in assessing the causes, actors, and weapons involved in the apparent mining of nearly 20 ships transiting the Red Sea in July and August 1984. The episode was the subject of considerable media coverage and speculation at the time and soon after.¹ The best public treatment of the episode appeared in a May 1985 article in the *US Naval Institute Proceedings*.

However, formerly classified archival documents released by CIA and the British government since 2010 permit a reexamination of the episode as a case study for military intelligence analysts. The documents highlight the intelligence gaps and numerous uncertainties analysts faced in trying to establish that sea mines were indeed responsible for the reported incidents; the challenges associated in identifying the culprit or culprits; and the

difficulty in determining the source and type, or types, of mines that may have damaged the merchant ships traversing possibly the busiest shipping channel in the world. Finally, the released material offers tradecraft lessons for analysts who might face a similar challenge, given the potential that US adversaries might turn to offensive mine warfare to disrupt shipping channels and deny access to strategically important areas.

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The Events

At least 17 merchant ships passing through the Red Sea were damaged by explosions attributed to naval mines between July 9 and August 15, 1984 (see facing page).² The strike reported on July 9 in the northern Red Sea damaged a Soviet-flagged merchant ship, the *Knud Jespersen*. The next strike occurred 18 days later, a time period that would figure in later resolution of the mystery.

US allies in the region—Egypt and Saudi Arabia—sought international mine countermeasures (MCM) support in early August 1984, an urgent request given the volume of traffic in the Red Sea (estimated to be between 1,800 and 2,000 ships per month), the importance of Suez Canal revenues to Egypt, and Saudi concerns about the safety of pilgrims traveling to and from Mecca by sea in August and September for the annual gathering of Islamic worshipers to participate in the Hajj. The international community responded by deploying 26 ships from six countries to conduct MCM operations throughout the Red Sea for several weeks starting that August.³ Despite extensive minehunting and minesweeping under problematic conditions, the minehunters by mid-September had found only one mine of a type that might have been involved in the mining, a previously unknown, apparently export version of a single, large, relatively advanced and recently produced Soviet mine.⁴

Untangling the Mystery

Who laid the mines?

Initially with only one claim of responsibility—improbably by the terrorist group Islamic

Jihad—untangling the mystery forced analysts to deal with circumstantial evidence in addressing questions made more difficult to answer by the delay in engaging the intelligence communities and military establishments in London and Washington in analyzing maritime activity that had occurred well before collection assets could be focused on the problem. One key breakthrough—the Royal Navy’s discovery on September 12 of the aforementioned mine (dubbed Type 995 because of an apparent serial number etched on its surface)—occurred only after weeks of intelligence reporting and speculation on the subject.

The declassified documents show that in August, analysts in London and Washington considered at least four candidates for the mining. They quickly ruled out two: Islamic Jihad and the Soviet Union. Islamic Jihad, an entity associated with Iranian and militant Shia interests, telephoned international news services in late July to claim that it had laid 190 mines in the Red Sea. CIA’s August 28 summation of the situation noted that several Middle East terrorist groups associated with Iran had used “Islamic Jihad” as a cover name and, as did UK analysts, discounted the claim, judging that the scope and sophistication of the mining operation went well beyond the capabilities of terrorist organizations operating without “extensive state assistance.”^{5, 6}

Analysts discounted Moscow—even after discovery of the Type 995 mine—because the mines threatened Soviet trade, had already damaged two Soviet ships, led to an unwelcome increase of Western naval presence in the region, and forced the Soviet Navy to conduct its own

countermeasures for several weeks in the southern approaches to the Red Sea.⁷ Separately, in an October 16, 1984, letter, a UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office official flatly told British author Louis FitzGibbon, “We have no reason to believe that the Russians were responsible for laying the mine.”⁸

Focus turned to Iran and Libya.

Analysts instead devoted their attention to Iran and Libya. Iranian media initially praised the Islamic Jihad on August 7, claiming “the arrogant powers were helpless.”⁹ Top Iranian leaders, however, emphatically reversed this position the same day. Ayatollah Khomeini, Prime Minister Mousavi, and Majlis Speaker Rafsanjani publicly denied Iranian involvement in the mining.¹⁰ UK diplomatic reporting from Tehran also relayed the Iranian denials.¹¹

Discussion of Iran’s role in the mining was contentious, however. The UK’s Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) initially drafted an assessment in mid-August stressing the Iranian culpability theme, but coordinators within the Ministry of Defence pushed for a more balanced approach that strengthened the case against Libya while reducing the focus on Tehran. The comments noted that the major flaw in the JIC’s draft was its inference that Iran was the most likely culprit. The reviewer urged the drafter to back away from that judgment, arguing that other countries blamed Libya; Iran’s leaders had emphatically denied their role, and mining was against Tehran’s self interest; and, what’s more, a Libyan-flagged ship had acted strangely in the Red Sea.¹²

CIA’s August 28 analysis concurred in its dismissal of the case

against Tehran, noting that Iran was the “canal’s fourth-ranking user in terms of imports and exports.” The CIA’s analysts, too, made a circumstantial case against Libya, which made “minimal use” of the canal. CIA analysts concluded that public statements by Iran’s leaders suggested they “were concerned about the adverse impact a closure of the Suez Canal would have on the Iranian economy.”¹³

US analysts may have had reporting on Libyan mining plans, though the formerly classified documents show no indication of any such reporting. The August 28 memorandum cited only the “circumstantial” evidence that focused analysis on the behavior of a Libyan-flagged ship. However, on August 6, the UK naval attaché in Cairo reported that the US defense attaché had information that mining, using 110 or 150 mines, had been discussed in Libya in late May 1984.¹⁴ In 2012, historian David Crist wrote in his book on Iranian-US relations that “communications intercepts soon revealed [Qadhafi’s] culpability” in the mining. That claim seems improbable in light of the contents of the released CIA documents.¹⁵

What motives might Libya have had?

With respect to Libyan aims, the CIA memorandum argued that Qadhafi’s motives for mining the Red Sea stemmed from his ambitions and feuds with others in the Arab world and with Israel and the United States. It observed that “Qadhafi may be making good on threats made last June against Arab regimes who fail to unite against Israel and the United States,” and he wanted to “seize the initiative in regional affairs from moderate Arab regimes, and the mining would be a way to emphasize

Why Libya?

Although mining the Red Sea—which Qadhafi denied responsibility for—seems strange in retrospect, the episode was consistent with a pattern during the time of Libya’s bombings, coup attempts, and conventional attacks. A lengthy chronology of such acts was included in the Special National Intelligence Estimate in March 1985. Examples of Libyan misbehavior cited in the estimate¹:

February 1983	Libyan-sponsored coup attempted in Sudan
July 1983	Libya invaded Chad for the second time
August 1983	Libya provided material support to coup leaders in Upper Volta
January 1984	Libyan bomb damaged French hotel in Kinshasa, Zaire
March 1984	Libyan TU-22 bomber struck Omdurman, Sudan
March 1984	Four bombs exploded in London and Manchester near the homes of Libyan exiles or businesses frequented by them
May 1984	A number of British subjects in Libya arrested on trumped-up charges
May 1984	Norwegian merchant ship seized in Tripoli and crew accused of spying
July 1984	Two Libyan students murdered in Athens in a crime reminiscent of Libyan killings of anti-Qadhafi students in 1980–81
September 1984	Libyan-sponsored coup plotters arrested in Bangladesh.

1. Scott Truver, “The Mines of August: An International Whodunit,” *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1985 and Director of Central Intelligence, SNIE, *Libya’s Qadhafi: Challenge to US and Western Interests*, March 1985, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/CIA-RDP08S02113R000100310001-4.pdf>.

to Arab moderates the consequences of close relations with Washington.” The memo also asserted that Qadhafi might have viewed mining as a way to “embarrass Egypt’s President Mubarak by highlighting Cairo’s dependence for security on the United States and Western Europe.”¹⁶

The Case Against the Ghat

The Libyan-flagged ship that aroused suspicion was the RO/RO (roll-on/roll-off) ship *Ghat*. The

extensive documentation Suez Canal officials required from each shipment provided the strongest direct evidence—cited in US and UK documents on the subject—of the *Ghat*’s and Libya’s responsibility. Foremost of these were the *Ghat*’s changing crew lists. Also providing strong circumstantial evidence are the few location/time points known along the *Ghat*’s south- and northbound voyages.

Egyptian authorities had come to the conclusion that Libya was

responsible by August 17, when Egyptian Defense Minister Abu Ghazala in meeting with a US congressional delegation on August 19 said he was “in a position to say it is Libya [who is responsible for laying the mines]. . . . Since two days ago, 100 percent sure.” He based his judgment on the “timing of *Ghat*’s passage through the area and that Libyan military officers had been substituted for regular crew members prior to that passage.” Ghazala also claimed to “have information” that the mines used came from Italy.¹⁷

Changes made in *Ghat*’s crew.

As a commercial merchant ship, the *Ghat* was not subordinated to the Libyan Navy but, equipped with a stern vehicle ramp, the RO/RO was an ideal minelayer. According to the August 28 CIA summary, which reflected access to the *Ghat*’s crew list, the composition of the ship’s crew was adjusted at least twice for the special mission. Most notably, CIA analysts concluded that the Libyan Navy’s chief frogman was on the *Ghat* when it passed through the Suez Canal three days before the first reported explosion on July 9. “We speculate that he supervised the mining,” the memorandum said. It made the following additional points:

- Another man joining the crew was Hani J. Wanis, the name of a known Libyan naval officer.
- When the *Ghat* was seized—on other violations—in Marseilles in August after it returned to the Mediterranean Sea, CIA sources reported that the entire crew was replaced. The changeover suggested that Libya was “concerned about possible security leaks if

French officials were to question the crew.”¹⁸

The Ghat’s unusual Red Sea operations.

The *Ghat*’s probable track could have put it in position to lay mines. A UK Ministry of Defence memo dated September 12 concluded that the *Ghat*’s “dates of passage fit well with the earliest mining incidents at both ends of the Red Sea.”¹⁹ The *Ghat*’s declared cargo was “agricultural machinery” to be delivered to Assab, Ethiopia—the *Ghat*’s only port call. In fact, it delivered 950 tons of military materiel, mostly ammunition and small arms. It was scheduled to arrive in mid-July, according to UK diplomatic sources.²⁰ Unfortunately, other than Assab, there are few datapoints revealing the ship’s actual locations during its two transits through the Red Sea south of the Suez Canal.

As noted above, the duration of the *Ghat*’s trip from Libya to Ethiopia was suspicious. The voyage lasted 15 days—seven days longer than a typical merchant ship would take to traverse that distance.²¹ Only three days sailing time was typically required for a RO/RO to steam from Suez to Assab, according to the UK Defence Intelligence Staff.²²

Consideration of a Libyan mine warfare planner’s likely planning precepts would suggest an explanation. To make the most of a single shipload of mines, important priorities would have been stealth, speed of delivery, focus on mining choke points, and measures to make sure no explosions took place before the *Ghat* was able to get back to the Mediterranean.

The requirement for stealth depended on confidence that any inspection on entry into the Suez Canal

would not lead to discovery that the ship’s cargo manifest was false. With respect to speed, mines would have to be quickly and stealthily laid since secrecy was paramount and accuracy was secondary. Parts of the voyage absolutely had to be clandestine.

The cargo apparently did go undetected, and the ship’s minelaying efforts were unseen, but the *Ghat* did not carry out its operations quickly enough to avoid suspicion, although it succeeded in distributing its full load in key choke points. Possibly the need to set timers to arm the magnetic/acoustic bottom influence mines—eventually determined to be the type laid—most likely slowed the process. Still, the *Ghat* completed its return, northbound transit of the Suez Canal and avoided Egyptian seizure of the ship as a suspect. Indeed, once the series of incidents occurred, the Egyptians did seize or escort suspect ships.

The *Ghat* could have laid mines on both north and southbound runs to reduce time spent laying mines going in either direction. The first explosion, three days after its southbound passage, suggested the RO/RO laid mines on the southbound run out of the Suez Canal. According to UK Defence Intelligence Staff analysis, the *Ghat* also would have been positioned to lay mines on the northbound run in the Gulf of Suez, approximately nine days before most of the mine strikes started occurring there on July 27. The timer on the surviving Type 995 mine had been set to arm the mine in just under nine days, suggesting the timing and positioning would have coincided with the mine strikes nine days after the *Ghat* passed through the area.²³

Notional Timeline of Ghat Minelaying Operation

The few known locations of *Ghat's* track are in bold-face type. Estimated locations/activities (in italics) are based on the ship's known capabilities.

6 July	Southbound transit through Suez Canal¹
<i>7 July</i>	<i>Placed mines near the traffic separation scheme south of Suez</i>
<i>9 July</i>	<i>First (single) mine strike in northern Red Sea</i>
<i>11 July</i>	<i>Mined Bab al Mandeb</i>
12–13 July	In port at Assab, Ethiopia²
<i>17 July</i>	<i>Possibly in Assab³</i>
<i>19 July</i>	<i>Mined northern Red Sea</i>
22 July	Northbound transit through Suez Canal⁴
23 July	Returned to Libya⁵
<i>27 July</i>	<i>First of a cluster of mine strikes in northern Red Sea</i>

1. Loose minute from UK Defence Intelligence Staff to internal distribution, "Gulf of Suez/Red Sea-Mines," October 16, 1984, (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.

2. Ibid.

3. UK Embassy Addis Ababa to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Mines in the Gulf of Suez and Red Sea," August 9, 1984 (FCO 31/4166), TNA.

4. Loose minute from UK Defence Intelligence Staff to internal distribution, "Gulf of Suez/Red Sea-Mines," October 16, 1984, (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.

5. Chris O'Flaherty, "Red Sea-Mines of August," posted on Vernon Link (Vernonlink. UK/Red-Sea).

Assab is only a few hours steaming time from the Bab al Mandeb, so the *Ghat* readily could have laid the mines in the strait before or after the port call without disrupting its return transit schedule to Libya.

After the Red Sea voyage, the *Ghat* sailed to Marseilles for repairs but was seized because of an unrelated legal issue. An inspection of the *Ghat's* aft ramp revealed that it probably had been damaged by waves, presumably because it had been lowered while at sea. Truver concluded, "It now seemed a simple matter to roll the mines down the ramp and into

the water, no special apparatus being necessary."²⁴

What type of mines were laid? And how many?

Identifying the type, number, and location of mines the *Ghat's* crew laid was problematic for the IC and contributed to knowledge gaps that forced MCM ships to conduct slow, methodical minehunting operations. Although the allies eventually benefited from detection and exploitation of the Type 995, the extent, location, and composition of minefields were largely unknown.

Answering questions about such minefields would be complicated because Qadhafi could seed them with several different types of mines. The CIA wrote in 1984 that Tripoli had a variety of moored and bottom types, detonated by acoustic, magnetic, or contact devices. It elaborated: "Some of these include delayed activation, making them particularly difficult to sweep. Some of the mines can be planted in waters as deep as 290 meters. Libya's largest mines can sink a ship."²⁵

In recapping the mining in late August, the CIA judged that the relatively light damage to most ships "suggests a modern mine with a small warhead was used."²⁶ Several factors led UK and US analysts to consistently judge throughout August that Libya had laid modern bottom-influence mines with relatively small 100-kg warheads. Given the number of mining incidents and the number of units eventually searching for them, analysts would have presumed that older tethered floating mines (relatively easily seen) would have been readily detected, unlike influence mines resting on the bottom and partially covered with mud. Their cases could comprise materials more difficult for minehunting sonars to detect. The influence mines could embody features that would complicate MCM, such as delayed arming, ship counters that would delay activation, and sterilization software that would simply turn the mine off after a certain number of days.

CIA analysts initially focused on the possibility that an Italian-made bottom-influence mine, the Manta, was the weapon used. Acknowledging that Libya had a variety of sea mines, CIA in late August

would not rule out that Libya had acquired the Manta—a mine Libya had had “a strong interest” in obtaining.²⁷ The Manta had a warhead of about 100 kg and could function in waters up to 40 meters deep, characteristics matching the light-to-moderate damage ships had received from the explosions in the Red Sea. The Manta’s nonmetallic construction would make it difficult to detect, even with the advanced minehunting sonars aboard the UK, French, and Italian ships, according to CIA assessments.^{28,29}

CIA also raised a second but less likely possibility in an assessment produced on August 21: Qadhafi might be using Libyan-produced mines or low-quality mines from another Third World country. Perhaps envisioning the simple, moored contact mines in the Iranian and Iraqi arsenals, the analysts judged that the devices would be unsophisticated and a larger number would be required to achieve the same number of hits, “thus increasing the chance that one or more would have been recovered or at least detected by now.”³⁰

That same month, however, the UK and the US ICs also received warnings that Libya was laying Soviet-built mines. Lt. Col. Viatcheslav Kondrachov, the Soviet assistant military attaché to Jordan, told his British counterpart on August 10 that Qadhafi was laying Soviet mines provided to Libya in the mid-1960s. He added that the Soviets were furious with the Libyans because the action implicated Moscow in an area where it did not wish to become involved, and Soviet merchant ships had been among the casualties.³¹

The colonel’s admission was in part borne out when HMS *Gavington* on September 12 discovered the partially buried, sea-growth-free, torpedo-shaped mine in 42 meters of water on the western edge of the southbound traffic separation scheme exiting Suez.³² The British and CIA designated the mine as the Type 995 and concluded from its serial numbers that it had been manufactured in 1981. British explosives and ordnance disposal experts beached the mine, cut it in two, and sent the section containing its electronic components to the UK. The large section containing the explosives was steamed out and sent to the Admiralty Research Establishment (ARE) Portland in the UK for exploitation, according to the Royal Navy’s after-action report for the operation.³³

CIA provided a thumbnail sketch of this mine. The Type 995 had a warhead sufficiently large to damage a supertanker beyond repair. It had several features to defeat MCM operations, would be easy to lay, and difficult to defend against.³⁴ This was a far more destructive mine than the naval staffs and intelligence analysts had been expecting during their searches over the preceding month.

The UK’s Defence Intelligence Staff wrote in October that the mine was a combined magnetic/acoustic bottom influence mine with a warhead containing 750 kg of RDX/TNT—a finding “not consistent with previous estimates for the Suez incidents of a 100-kg charge.”³⁵ Preliminary tripartite exploitation of the mine was completed by ARE Portland on October 15 and revealed the following:

- The Type 995 was designed for torpedo delivery but examination of the mine itself would not answer the question of how it was delivered.³⁶
- The mine “was not considered to embody their (Soviet) most advanced technology,” a judgment that accounts for some reporting stating that it was an export variant.³⁷ The exploitation team judged that it was possibly the simplest of a range of related Soviet bottom influence mines.³⁸
- The Type 995’s activation clock was set to 8 days, 19 hours, but it failed to start due to an electric fault probably resulting from a manufacturing defect.³⁹ Activation could have been delayed up to three weeks.⁴⁰
- The mine’s ship counter was set to zero with the implication that the first valid target would trigger the mine.⁴¹
- The Royal Navy mine clearance commander subsequently wrote that the mine’s sensor sensitivity could account for why no ships were sunk despite the warhead’s large size.⁴² The mine exploded too soon and too far away to be effective.

Concerning the number of mines laid, analysts lacked information to confidently determine the size and composition of the minefields, and no estimates of a number have been released in the documents available for this paper. Judging from the one report cited by the British, the number might have been relatively small—perhaps only 110 mines—to be spread between the northern and southern entrances to the Red Sea.

Writing long after the event, Scott Truver concluded in 2016 that the composition of the minefield might have been problematic. Observing that Libya had hundreds of mines, Truver noted that Libya had acquired at least 16 Type 995s from East Germany.⁴³ If that is the case and the Libyan plan did include sowing more than 100 mines in the Red Sea, the minefields would have comprised other mines that simply went undetected, given the challenges of minehunting and the possibility that the mines malfunctioned, self-sterilized shortly after being laid, or were improperly laid.

Qadhafi's Motive

The circumstances of the mining may lead us to surmise that Qadhafi was trying to create a propaganda effect and that an extensive mining campaign had taken place over a large area. By mining in highly trafficked choke points, fewer mines would be needed. The effect could be enhanced by increasing the sensitivity of each mine's target detection device, causing the mines to explode at greater distances from approaching ships. In effect, each highly sensitive mine posed a threat to a wider area than a mine with lower sensitivity—but at a cost. Because the mines exploded farther from the ships they detected, the damage they caused was less severe. In his article, Truver noted that the majority of explosions were in fact well away from the ships, and most observers decided that “very sensitive” settings had been selected.⁴⁴

Lessons for the Future

The Red Sea mining episode raises issues that analysts could face again, particularly given the stealthy nature of limited, targeted offensive mining and potential US deficiencies in MCM. A few conclusions follow about the challenges of identifying the actor, the mines being laid, and the importance of intelligence cooperation in MCM.

Determining responsibility.

As this instance showed, identification of responsibility was difficult and based largely on circumstantial evidence and speculation about potential motives. For a time, analysts wavered between Libya and Iran, eventually discounting Iran on the basis of an analysis of its self-interest in Red Sea shipping.⁴⁵ How much more difficult this challenge would be if a coalition of bad actors were to cooperate in a mine campaign against the United States and its allies.

Iran probably did cooperate with Libya in mine warfare after the *Ghat* episode. At least once, the Iranian embassy in Libya arranged for an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officer to travel there to talk with the Libyan commander who executed the Red Sea mining operation, according to the Crist account of the Red Sea mining.⁴⁶ In September 1987, a Libyan cargo plane left Tripoli for Tehran, carrying nine Soviet-made naval mines, according to CIA reporting, which indicated that Libya had then provided Iran with Type 995s.⁴⁷

Avoiding technical and tactical surprises.

Although the personalized, mercurial approaches to national security strategy of leaders like Qadhafi would challenge any intelligence analyst in

predicting a leader's next moves, a US or allied red cell, fusing expertise in deep mine warfare to that of country experts, might have increased operator understanding of the courses of action an adversary might employ and the composition and location of potential minefields under given sets of circumstances. The US Navy mine warfare community, with the support of the IC, used such red cells successfully and repeatedly in the mid-1990s.⁴⁸

Better procedures to identify mines likely to be employed.

The CIA made the case that Libya might have laid Manta anti-invasion mines given Libya's interest in acquiring this mine, its availability on world markets, and apparently the relatively small size of the explosive component. The IC apparently did not address in any detail the larger, Soviet mines reportedly existing in Libya's arsenal because the mine explosions seemed relatively small, particularly compared to the damage that would have been expected from a large Soviet sea mine. Wrong or not, these conclusions would be more useful had the IC shared the reasoning and confidence levels for these judgments and perhaps considered an alternative hypothesis, such as the case that Libya was more interested in creating the illusion of an extensive mining campaign than actually sinking ships.

Discovery of the Type 995 set the stage for a multinational exploitation effort that almost certainly would have improved NATO's capability to conduct MCM operations against Soviet (and now Libyan) naval mines. A rigorous effort over several months against any sophisticated naval mine would provide MCM operators with a more reliable understanding of

mine functioning and composition. The process would also lead to better procedures to render safe a detected mine and more refined understanding of the functioning and sensitivity of the mine's target detection device, reliability, and counter-countermeasures devices, etc. In other words, the rigorous multinational effort undertaken by ARE Portland and other organizations against the Type 995 would have given NATO forces the technical insight they need to more effectively counter such mines in a future conflict.

Mixed successes sharing intelligence.

The United States and the UK were well aware of each other's thinking on the mine threat. Sharing among attachés and in the national level intelligence production effort and mine exploitation effort almost certainly strengthened their responses to Qadhafi's gambit.

At the tactical level among all participants in the MCM effort, however, the Royal Navy was concerned that sharing tactical intelligence was inadequate. A UK briefing summarizing the Red Sea operation stated

that there was a "considerable delay" before other nations found out about the Royal Navy's acquisition of the Soviet-made mine.⁴⁹ The briefing stated that coordination in the Red Sea was "less than ideal." It summarized the concern by saying, "The inability to exchange mine intelligence could have had greater repercussions had a greater threat been realized. Clearly it is essential to have a rapid and free exchange of this type of information for ship and personnel safety reasons as well as to optimize detection and sweeping methods."



Author: Richard A. Mobley was a career naval intelligence officer before completing a second career as a military analyst in CIA's Directorate for Analysis. He was the staff intelligence officer in the US Navy's Mine Warfare Command in the mid-1990s. He has contributed four other articles to *Studies in Intelligence*.

Endnotes



1. See Dr. Scott Truver, "The Mines of August: An International Whodunit," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* Vol. 111/5/987 (May 1985): 95–117. Truver has a PhD in maritime policy studies and has published frequently on the subject since this article.
2. CIA, Memorandum, "Mining of the Red Sea," August 28, 1984, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00287r001301990001-0> and Truver, "The Mines of August."
3. Truver, "The Mines of August"
4. Ibid., 109. The British minehunter HMS *Gavington* located the mine and brought it to shallow waters to be disarmed. It proved to be a "type not recorded in Jane's even."
5. CIA, "Mining of the Red Sea," 3.
6. Attachment to loose minute prepared by Middle East Department in response to a Parliamentary Query, "PQ 9950," 16 October (FCO 8/5420) The National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter TNA). Unless otherwise stated, UK archival material cited in the paper is available only in hard copy.
7. Ibid.
8. Malcom Rifkind (FCO), untitled letter to Louis FitzGibbon, October 16, 1984 (FCO 31/4166), TNA.
9. Truver, "The Mines of August."
10. Ibid. and CIA, "Mining of the Red Sea," 3.
11. Message from UK Embassy Tehran to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Mines in the Gulf of Suez and Red Sea," August 8, 1984 (FCO 3/4166), TNA.
12. Memo from Middle East Department to PUSD, "JIC (84) 33 Draft "Red Sea Mines Responsibility," August 15, 1984 (FCO 8/5417) TNA.
13. CIA, "Mining of the Red Sea," 3.
14. Message from UK naval attaché Cairo to MODUK, "Mines in Red Sea and Gulf of Suez," August 6, 1984 (FCO 31/4166), TNA. The released US documents provide no insight into that report.
15. David Crist, *The Twilight War* (Penguin Press, 2012), 235–36.
16. CIA, "Mining of the Red Sea," 2–3.

17. AMEMBASSY Cairo 25526 to SECSTATE and others, 211604Z Aug 84, "CODEL Solarz Meeting with Defense Minister," August 21, 1984 (originally classified Secret), <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90b01370r000801070040-2>.
18. CIA, "Mining of the Red Sea," 2.
19. Memo from MED to MODUK distribution, "Mines in the Red Sea," September 10, 1984 (FCO 31/4166), TNA.
20. UK Embassy Addis Ababa to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Mines in the Gulf of Suez and Red Sea," 9 August 1984 (FCO 31/4166), TNA.
21. Chris O'Flaherty, "Red Sea-Mines of August," posted on Vernon Link (Vernonlink.UK/Red-Sea).
22. Loose minute from UK Defence Intelligence Staff to internal distribution, "Gulf of Suez/Red Sea-Mines," October 16, 1984, (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.
23. Loose minute from UK Defence Intelligence Staff for internal distribution, "Gulf of Suez Mine," October 19, 1984 (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.
24. Truver, "The Mines of August."
25. CIA Research Paper, "The Libyan Military Threat to the United States in the Mediterranean," October 1984, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00314r000300040004-2>.
26. CIA memorandum, "Mining of the Red Sea."
27. CIA, National Intelligence Daily, "Mine-Clearing Update," August 21, 1984, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp87t00970r000400020078-2>.
28. Ibid.
29. CIA memorandum, "Mining of the Red Sea."
30. CIA National Intelligence Daily, "Mine-Clearing Update," August 21, 1984.
31. Message from UK Embassy Amman to MODUK, "Mines in the Red Sea," August 11, 1984 (FCO 8/5417), TNA.
32. O'Flaherty, "Red Sea-Mines of August."
33. Post-deployment report from Third Mine Countermeasures Squadron to Captain, Mine Countermeasures, "Operation Harling-Report of Proceedings," December 14, 1984 (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.
34. CIA, Talking points for DDCI, "Update on Situation in Persian Gulf," September 17, 1987, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp89b00224r000501750002-7>.
35. Loose minute from DCts to MODUK distribution, "Operation Harling-Mine Exploitation," October 22, 1984 (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.
36. Ibid.
37. Loose minute from DS11 for distribution to MOD, DIS, and FCO, "PQ 9950," October 16, 1984 (FCO 8/5420), TNA.
38. Message, Initial mine exploitation report from ARE Portland, 24 October (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.
39. Loose minute from DCts to MODUK distribution, "Operation Harling-Mine Exploitation," October 22, 1984.
40. Message, Initial mine exploitation report from ARE Portland, October 24, 1984 (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.
41. Ibid.
42. Post-deployment report from Third Mine Countermeasures Squadron to Captain, Mine Countermeasures, "Operation Harling-Report of Proceedings," December 14, 1984 (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.
43. Scott Truver, "Writing U.S. Naval Operational History, 1980-2010: U.S. Navy MCM in Terrorism and War," accessed on Naval History and Heritage website (history.navy.mil) on November 22, 2021.
44. Truver, "The Mines of August."
45. UK Cabinet, "Conclusions of a Meeting Held on Tuesday, 13 September 1984," (CAB 128/79/7), accessed online on November 22, 2021 (<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>), TNA.
46. Crist, *The Twilight War*, 235-36.
47. CIA talking points for DDCI, "Update on Situation in Persian Gulf," September 17, 1987.
48. The author participated in several such exercises.
49. Briefing script, "Mine Clearance in the Gulf of Suez-Op Harling," undated (DEFE 24/3162), TNA.



Intelligence in Public Media

The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War

By Nicholas Mulder (Yale University Press, 2022), 448 pages, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index.

Reviewed by Thomas G. Coffey

“We Russians don’t give a shit about all their sanctions. We are [now] more self-sufficient.” The bravado expressed by the Russian ambassador to Sweden in February 2022 about the threatened use of sanctions to deter an invasion of Ukraine would have been unthinkable in the period covering the world wars of the last century, if *The Economic Weapon* is any guide. World leaders then lived in fear of blockades or embargoes, after the British-led ones during World War I against Germany and ally Austria-Hungary led to the deaths of 300,000–400,000 civilians. Mulder notes that the death toll was just as high against fellow belligerent Turkey in the then “Ottoman provinces of the Middle East.” (5)

Contrary to the Russian ambassador’s suggestion that Western sanctions have only made Russia more independent if not stronger, the League of Nations and its threat or actual use of sanctions was no paper tiger. Fear of the economic weapon unintentionally contributed to the onset of World War II, with Germany, Japan, and Italy striving to protect themselves by becoming autarkic (“self-sufficient”) through the seizure of raw-material-rich territories. *The Economic Weapon* teaches us that sanctions may not always “work” or have “efficacy” in changing aggressors’ behavior but they have an “effect” all the same.

A history of the’ aims, preparations, norms, and effectiveness of sanctions from 1914 to 1945, *The Economic Weapon* holds many rewards for today’s sanction watchers. The “Machinery of Blockade” chapter is the best and most relevant one in the book. To weaken the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey, the Triple Entente of England, France, and Russia relied on the overwhelming dominance of Britain in the world economy. London financed 60 percent of trade and handled two-thirds of maritime insurance contracts. Britain possessed the world’s largest merchant marine, controlled three-quarters of coking coal that powered ships, and operated 70 percent of global telegraph cable network considered vital for processing financial and trade transactions. (34)

Isolating the Central Powers from this infrastructure involved coordination among diplomats, naval officers, lawyers, economists, and intelligence officers. The latter two groups combed German newspapers, customs records, diplomatic reports, intercepted cables, shipping manifests, neutral merchant firms, and “hearsay from the City of London.” (35)

Even so, economists and intelligence officers had their work cut out for them in trying to pinpoint the vulnerability of targeted countries. Mulder’s discussion of the trade, finance, insurance, energy, and shipping elements behind a single case of German imports of Brazilian manganese ore masterfully displays the intricacies of sanctions targeting. From mine to end user, Mulder notes that this transaction “could easily involve seven parties in six different countries other than the Krupp Corporation and the Itabira Iron Ore Company.” At first glance, it’s a Brazilian-German exchange, but in legal-corporate terms it is an Anglo-German trade because the mine was British-owned. “Trade statistics helped clarify what was going on but only up to a point... The most knowledgeable people involved were the mining company officials and the bankers in London who made crucial transactions in support of the trade.” (33)

Piecing together this intelligence puzzle was labor intensive and evidentiary, resulting in “pinprick” inspections of ships suspected of carrying contraband. So, the British Ministry of Blockade switched to a more “scientific and statistical” basis of isolating the enemy. (41) Import levels of neutral countries that exceeded estimated prewar consumption levels were considered contraband destined for a Central Power and thus embargoed. “The logic of the blockade switched from a legal to an economic one.” (42) The burden of proof needed to avoid being blacklisted shifted from the British government to companies, ships, and banks. Despite this more aggressive and cost effective approach toward sanctioning, Germany’s food situation actually improved during July–September 1918, and war production was higher than in any preceding year. Indeed, the German military offensive of spring 1918 nearly won

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the war for the Central Powers. The fall of Tsar Nicholas in 1917 and the takeover of raw-material-rich Russian territories under the Brest-Litovsk Treaty may have helped the Central Powers weather the exacting sanctions.

Nevertheless, wartime sanctions carried a powerful mystique about them. German nationalists exaggerated their importance to deflect blame for losing the war from the military to politicians, while Weimar politicians did so to try to reduce reparations demands. (81) And sanctions placed to ensure Central European powers signed the Treaty of Versailles helped sow political unrest and invited the rise of Bolshevism. (92) This gave the economic weapon a considerable power of deterrence, successfully discouraging Yugoslav and Greek adventurism in the 1920s. (122–33) But as British economic power waned and that of the United States—which was not a League member—grew, sanctions underwent fine tuning while embracing more diplomatic engagement to get neutral countries to participate.

The “Admiralty way” of blockade and cutting off imports was considered inhumane if not illegal, especially if foodstuffs were denied to populations during peaceful times. As a result, the “Treasury way” of sanctions, aimed at the balance of payments, gained favor. By refusing to buy the target’s exports and therefore worsen the trade balance, foreign exchange reserves in the absence of hard-currency finance would run down and risk bankruptcy. Mulder notes that these financial reserves were conceived of as a commodity to be restricted just as much as food, iron ore, oil, or wool. (209–13)

A proof-of-concept moment for the actual employment of sanctions under Article 16 of the League of Nations covenant arrived when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935. (211) League nations calculated that the sanctions would bite hard before the military got to Addis Ababa. (215) However, Rome stockpiled materiel and diverted exports while Italians proved resilient in the face of growing

hardship. They were not as materialistic as sanction planners anticipated and even rallied round the Mussolini government for a time. The Italian Army marched into the Ethiopian capital after attempts at an oil embargo failed. Mussolini later expressed relief that the oil sanctions never materialized. The United States, the largest producer of oil (which was increasingly replacing coal as an energy source), dithered on whether to join a ban on oil sales to Italy. (222) This was a blow to sanction supporters who then lost faith in the League’s ability to deter aggression. Interestingly, the leaders of Germany and Japan were quite alarmed by the near success of League sanctions. Viewing themselves as next on the target list, Berlin made a point of studying Italy’s sanctions-resistance efforts while Tokyo sent a secret mission there for the same purpose. (244–50) They also made preparations to secure alternative sources of commodities and finance.

Mulder does an impressive job weaving together an important story for historians, economists, theorists, and practitioners. His endnotes are first rate; it is reassuring to see so many contemporaneous stabs at making sense of a complicated policy lever. (299–416) The author does not really deliver on the “modern” assessment misleadingly promised in the subtitle, but he takes his own mild stab at it: today’s heavy use of sanctions are mostly ineffective at changing the behavior of targeted countries. “While the use of sanctions has surged, their odds of success have plummeted.” (296)

Still, this reviewer senses, compared with the more destabilizing cyberattacks or the more lethal military levers of today, sanctions are the policy choice by default. Being the least bad option does not mean there is not something unintended and destabilizing going on beneath the surface of sanctions-making. The sanctions bark may be worse than its bite, but targeted countries are taking major long-term steps to avoid their snare.



The reviewer: Thomas Coffey is a member of the Center for the Study of Intelligence and a recovering economist.

Intelligence in Public Media

The World According to China

By Elizabeth C. Economy (Polity Books, 2022), 292 pages, bibliography, notes, index.

Reviewed by Jeffrey W.

Elizabeth Economy, author of *The Third Revolution* (2018), has delivered a valuable update for intelligence practitioners seeking to understand how Beijing sees the world. In *The World According to China*, Economy surveys the wrenching changes to Chinese foreign and domestic policy wrought primarily by the COVID-19 pandemic, while also accounting for the dramatic downturn in relations with the United States that accompanied it. In so doing she has contributed an excellent and concise guidebook to Beijing's impact on the world across the political, economic, security, and technology domains.

In an era when public discourse about China has become increasingly heated, Economy is one of the more balanced and clear-eyed observers. She has consistently approached the myriad, complex issues surrounding China's economy, domestic policy, and foreign relations with an understanding of the issues facing the central leadership and a recognition of the challenges Beijing's ambitions pose for the United States. Economy deftly draws together these many threads to provide a valuable overview of the dynamics most central to what has become possibly the most important place on earth.

Economy details a China at once proud and unsure of what to do with its rising international prominence. As she writes, Beijing has emerged from the pandemic determined to prove the superiority of its political system, assess the effectiveness of its efforts to combat COVID-19 (notwithstanding its poor transparency, lagging vaccination efforts, and continued reliance on city-wide lockdowns), and take its place as a more central global player.

Economy draws on President Xi Jinping's speeches to the UN World Health Assembly (WHA) and National Peoples Congress to make her case. (1, 5) From Beijing's pressure campaigns against US and other foreign businesses (29–34) to a fascinating discussion of China's efforts to influence Hollywood and the global entertainment industry (34–36), Economy sees a China whose presence and position have expanded exponentially from a decade ago, but also one that is often hindered by its

own ham-fistedness and blurred lines between government and private industry (42, 46).

From an intelligence perspective, Economy's discussions of such issues as China's gray-zone political influence activities, her account of the United Front Work Department, for example, provide useful background on some of the less obvious methods Beijing uses to accomplish its objectives abroad. (37–38) Economy provides a compelling case regarding the extent to which the Chinese Communist Party sees this foreign outreach tying back into its priorities on domestic issues such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang. She deftly outlines the centrality of Beijing's views of sovereignty to its overall strategic outlook. (69–71)

Economy is arguably at her best when discussing the more technical and economic elements of Beijing's international outreach. Having made her reputation covering China's environmental policy, she brings a keen eye for data and economic detail to her discussion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in chapter four. Eschewing the usual characterization of "debt trap diplomacy," Economy instead provides a balanced picture of the drivers behind BRI and what makes it most compelling to many recipient countries.

Her discussion of China's investment in the Greek port of Piraeus demonstrates a sensitivity to both Chinese policy and domestic politics in Greece that is made all the more convincing in light of her firsthand interviews with Greek officials. (88–92, 121–25) Similarly, her discussion of BRI's uneven progress in Pakistan reflects an understanding of both the intent and on-the-ground realities that influence the success or failure of BRI projects. (104–16) She explores China's technology sector and the ways that it underpins not only the leadership's global ambitions, but also its strategy to manage the vexing economic challenges China will face in the coming decade. (142–45)

The World According to China is largely successful in laying out the many issues facing both China and any

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observer following it. Where it suffers mostly acutely is in the sheer volume of publications covering China that have exploded over the last several years. Professional China watchers may find the book somewhat repetitive with other recent publications such as Peter Martin's *China's Civilian Army* in many respects. These same issues are also covered in detail on a daily basis on both social media and in other journals.

Like many observers, Economy is also held back by her lack of access to China itself. Most of her first-hand interviews with Chinese nationals are either dated or centered on well-known personalities whose views have been well covered elsewhere. This is not a unique problem, however, as access to Chinese counterparts has become harder to come by as relations with Washington have deteriorated and the breadth of political discourse in China has narrowed. The book also suffers slightly from

timing, having been published only a month before Russia invaded in Ukraine and therefore not reflecting any of the significant changes that have occurred since.

Nonetheless, Economy more than makes up for these shortcomings with her ability to juggle both the big picture and the details of a complex and vital subject. Intelligence readers new to China will find *The World According to China* to be an informative and engaging introduction that covers the waterfront of developments both inside and outside the country. Readers with a background in China will find new and useful information drawn from Economy's research and interviews with government and private-sector contacts who have worked directly on some of the most prominent issues related to China today. Overall, Economy provides a worthy reexamination of assumptions about China from which readers of all stripes can benefit.



The reviewer: Jeffrey W. is a longtime China analyst.

Intelligence in Public Media

African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges

Ryan Shaffer, ed. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 294 pages, introduction, map, chart, index.

Reviewed by Charles Long

The study of African intelligence services is arguably one of the less explored and more narrowly appreciated fields of research. Compared to Western and Eastern intelligence services, the African services are much younger and even more insular, resulting in far less reputable information about them in the public domain. The histories and accomplishments of African services are nevertheless just as fascinating and worthy of global attention as those of any other region or nation.

Historian Ryan Shaffer contributes to such awareness by assembling the research of 13 authors into a well-documented examination of the intelligence services of a dozen African countries—the first such deep dive known to this reviewer. His objective is to survey select African services, with appropriate attention to each country’s circumstances during their early post-colonial histories. This anthology is presented chronologically to depict the evolutions and frameworks of the services. The authors also recap the histories of the countries as they recount their services’ evolutions.

Readers can only appreciate the authors’ exceptional research. African services operate with high levels of secrecy and few legal or political precedents for declassification or public discussion of intelligence matters. Outside of South Africa, the scarcity of declassified information or credible open-source information on the activities of African services hinders research. The authors persevered and pieced together relatively clear pictures of their subjects from the archives of non-African services that operated in Africa; rare peeks into government archives; academic books; and even defector interviews. The authors present inviting lists of sources in their notes that encourage readers to continue similar research and can result in hours of incidental reading.

Shaffer sets the tone for the book with a useful chronology of Kenya’s Special Branch, whose structure and activities were established by Britain, there

as in so many colonies. He develops the history of the Kenyan services that he explored initially in a *Studies in Intelligence* article.^a He explains the under-preparedness of the Special Branch at the start of the Mau Mau movement, its brutal excesses, and its eventual restructuring. At independence from Britain, the onetime targets of the Special Branch rose to become the new political leaders it then served. The new Kenyan leaders did not overhaul the security services, but instead turned the tables and directed them to focus on the new political opposition.

Simon Graham examines the Cold War competition between the two Germanys in Zanzibar and Tanganyika, which Tanzanian postcolonial leaders exploited to advance their respective interests and support their security apparatuses. Readers learn how West German intelligence cooperation on the Tanganyika mainland did not gain as much traction as the East Germans on Zanzibar Island, and how the Tanzanians made similar overtures to the Soviet Union and to China, with the latter emerging as Tanzania’s dominant foreign security partner. Later in the book Christopher Bailey takes a regional look at the prospects for the intelligence structures of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, within the contexts of their legal frameworks and their individual security conditions.

Owen Sirrs examines Mozambique and Angola, where Cold War struggles shaped the intelligence services. The sweeping power and brutality of the colonial Portuguese service in both countries forced the nationalist movements to go underground and adopt harsh tactics. The movements gravitated toward the troika of Soviet, Cuban, and East German intelligence services, which left indelible marks on their security apparatuses with resources, organizational structures, and operational guidance. This Marxist legacy shaped the modern-day services and instilled an enduring “culture of fear” of security services in both countries.

a. Ryan Shaffer, “Following in Footsteps: The Transformation of Kenya’s Intelligence Services Since the Colonial Era,” *Studies in Intelligence—Extracts* 63, no. 1, (March 2019).

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John Burton Kegel maps out the role of the Rwandan security services in factors and events that led to the genocide. He also reveals the debilitating effects of regionalism on intelligence services and on governance in general. In Rwanda, these had tragic consequences. Benjamin Spatz and Alex Bollfrass use vivid examples in Liberia to illustrate another reality: the tendency of leaders to misuse intelligence services led by loyalists to preserve their regimes. The authors explain the unique relationship between the United States and Liberia, but their characterization that Liberia was US intelligence's bastion in Africa may be a misunderstanding of Liberia's strategic importance during the Cold War. (151) Tshepo Gwatiwa and Lesego Tsholofelo describe Botswana's particular political and security structures and their effects on the intelligence service. These authors offer introspective and honest views of Botswanan intelligence and of its relationship with the executive leadership, and they highlight the work ahead for intelligence reform.

In Glenn Cross's thoroughly researched examination of the role of intelligence in the Rhodesian Bush War, readers learn the limitations of the Central Intelligence Organisation in the counterinsurgency, despite its operational successes in penetrating the nationalist movements. Students of Cold War intelligence would probably welcome details to support the contention that Western intelligence services provided Rhodesian intelligence with nearly all its information on Chinese and Eastern Bloc support to the insurgent groups. (110) As Cross points out, after Zimbabwe gained independence, this accomplished service was principally directed to keep Robert Mugabe in power.

Joseph Fitsanakis and Shannon Brophy's study of Sudanese intelligence guides the readers through the rich history of the services and the sources of their outside influences. Sudan watchers might, however, disagree that Gen. Omar al-Bashir's 1999 sidelining of Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi ended the 10-year Islamization of the government and the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS). (177) Such a deep philosophical change

of course in a security apparatus may take a generation or more to achieve.

Kevin O'Brien gives an authoritative history of intelligence in South Africa, which he compellingly observes has been at the heart of every major event in the country and somehow tied to nearly all political players. He offers a fascinating look at the intelligence capabilities of the African National Congress (ANC) during the struggle, juxtaposed with a similarly thorough view of the civilian and military intelligence services of the apartheid government. The intelligence front of the struggle culminated in the pro-apartheid National Intelligence Service working with their ANC counterparts to achieve a negotiated settlement for the transition to democratic majority rule. O'Brien also presents the emergence of politicization of and corruption in the South African intelligence apparatus, which has undercut confidence in this vital state institution.

Ibikunle Adeakin analyzes how the Nigerian military and civilian intelligence services, operating under statutes enacted under former military rule, are effectively unburdened by civilian oversight and have avoided institutional reform. These conditions have given the less effective security service chiefs unregulated autonomy and have permitted their services to often violate the public trust.

Readers' only major disappointment may be that analyses of some intelligence services of former French colonies in Africa are absent from this book, although the reviewer understands that this may be the eventual subject of another study by Shaffer. *African Intelligence Services* might seem aimed at the specialist, but this anthology is valuable for anyone seeking to understanding Africa's broader security issues. By the end of this century, Africa is projected to be the only continent experiencing population growth and home to 13 of the world's 20 biggest urban areas. African governments will experience unimaginable pressures and changes, and their intelligence services will have to adapt.



The reviewer: Charles Long is the pen name of a retired CIA operations officer who served in Africa.

Intelligence in Public Media

Three Dangerous Men: Russia, China, Iran, and the Rise of Irregular Warfare

Seth Jones (W.W. Norton, 2021), 276 pages, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index.

Nonstate Warfare: The Military Methods of Guerrillas, Warlords, and Militias

Stephen D. Biddle (Princeton University Press, 2021), 436 pages, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index.

Reviewed by J.R. Seeger

In the 21st century world of great power competition, Russia and China demonstrate on a regular basis that they actually prefer to operate in a “grey zone” between war and peace. Seth Jones, senior vice president and director of International Security Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, uses biographies of three leaders from Russia, Iran, and China as a starting point for a discussion of what is called in current military and strategic studies “irregular warfare” between the United States and near-peer adversaries. Stephen Biddle’s work serves as an excellent companion, focusing as it does on the low end of the conflict spectrum where the United States faces indigenous hostile forces. Given the rising tensions with our near-peer adversaries and the growing professional interest in operations in the grey zone of war and peace, these two books are essential reading.

The space between war and peace has always been a playground for the adversaries of powerful states. For as long as there has been written human history, there has been “irregular warfare.” Throughout the 20th century, revolutionaries, insurgents, and bandits conducted small scale operations against major powers, especially the European colonial powers. The goal: levying a price on the colonial or occupying power while avoiding direct conflict where the major power would use all means necessary to destroy the irregulars. Irregular warfare tactics were limited to raids, ambushes, and assassinations.

The difference between 19th and 20th century histories of irregular warfare and today is that the US and our allies face near-peer adversaries also willing to conduct long-term irregular operations. Unlike revolutionaries, insurgents, and bandits, our adversaries are interested in global strategic gains. The networked nature of the modern world allows both small and near-peer adversaries to conduct hostile operations using drones, GPS guided missiles, sophisticated improvised explosive devices, attacks inside communications and computer

systems, and propaganda operations through social media platforms. Coupled with the use of proxies such as private military contractors and local militias, irregular warfare has become the primary means of attacking the US and our closest allies.

The problem with most discussions on irregular warfare is they do not address the importance of synchronizing the capabilities of the entire US government and, most especially, the capabilities of the intelligence community. If the United States intends to succeed in the grey zone, it needs to avoid a fractured effort in which the US military works on one set of goals and objectives, US diplomats on another, and the CIA “third option” either is not considered or is not integrated into a single strategic vision.

In *Three Dangerous Men*, Jones focuses his attention on strategic thinkers in Russia, Iran, and China: Valery Gerasimov, Qassem Soleimani, and Zhang Youxia. Jones begins by providing his own definition of irregular warfare. This is especially important because irregular warfare, hybrid warfare, and conflict in the grey zone are used interchangeably in books and journals. Whenever multiple terms are used for what appears to be the same set of actions, the reader must worry if the terms are of any use at all. Jones’s definition is precise and serves the reader as the starting point for his discussion.

In irregular warfare...a country designs and uses these tools to undermine its adversaries as part of a balance of power competition without engaging in set-piece battles.... Some might object to using the term “warfare” to describe non-violent actions...that is not how US rivals see it. (11)

From this point, Jones offers detailed biographies of the three men, including discussion of where they came from and how they gained their strategic perspectives. He demonstrates that each of these three are experts in irregular warfare. Key to the discussion is that there are

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two very clear similarities among the three men: all are combat veterans and all studied US operations from the end of the Cold War to the end of the first decade of the 21st century. While combat experience might be an obvious requirement for military leaders, Jones points out that all three men have frontline combat experience. This is a rare thing inside the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA). Zhang served with PLA forces during the late 1970s and early 1980s during both the very hot and cold war with Vietnam.

Military leaders across the entire globe are expected to have a basic understanding of military history and some understanding of their most likely adversaries. Jones underscores that all three men are true students of modern US military history. They have read and understood the reason US forces were so successful in the first Gulf War, the Balkans, and the early battles in Afghanistan and Iraq. What makes this book so valuable to military and intelligence professionals is Jones' hard work in capturing their writings and public speeches. His book is filled with very concise quotations from each of his dangerous men, and the bibliography alone makes this book worth reading.

Jones points out that the US military focus on how to defeat the conventional forces of Russia, China, and Iran misses the point entirely:

The United States remains ill equipped to compete with China.... The US military continues to focus primarily on low-probability conventional war with China, while Chinese military strategy is to avoid a major war. (171)

To anyone inside the US national security community, this should come as no surprise. In 1999, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service translated an academic document authored by PLA colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui. *Unrestricted Warfare* drew a roadmap to irregular-warfare for the PRC's use in a war with the United States. Of course, China experts rightly point to centuries-old writings by Sun Tzu and other military scholars as central to Mao's historic work, *On Guerrilla Warfare*. In sum, it is not that the Chinese military establishment hasn't said how they intend to fight. It is more likely the West hasn't been listening.^a

Jones is not the only academic who has focused his attention on the grey zone between war and peace. Stephen Biddle's *Nonstate Warfare* also addresses the importance of understanding irregular warfare. Biddle argues academics and military professionals must change their way of thinking about irregular warfare to address the complexities of 21st century war:

The new theory...begins by framing its dependent variable, its outcome to be explained, as a continuous spectrum of military methods, only the extremes of which resemble pure versions of... "conventional" and "guerrilla" war fighting. These extremes, moreover, are empirically very rare. Almost all real warfare for at least a century has been closer to the blended middle spectrum than either extreme. (7)

His central argument is that irregular war is the only war that the United States is likely to fight in the 21st century. Our adversaries—small and large—are not interested in conducting a conventional battle with US forces on land, sea, or in the air. At the same time, they also do not intend to conduct simple raids and ambushes more consistent with guerrilla operations of the first few decades after World War II. Instead, they will use all means available to win strategic conflict while keeping the battle just below the threshold of full-scale war.

Biddle offers a controversial solution to the challenge of irregular warfare. He suggests that the US military might consider returning to a force structure more closely aligned with the force structure of the Cold War rather than the modern design that grew out of the successes of the first Gulf War:

The force best suited for the future might be one that looks much more like US forces of the past.... The ideal force would be a balanced, medium-weight alternative with more dismounted infantry than the high-tech transformed force but more armor and artillery than the low-tech transformed force. In fact, this ideal force bears more than a passing resemblance to the structure of the legacy US land forces of the Cold War. (10)

Although both books are key primers to understanding how the US military might address 21st century

a. See Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Echo Point Books & Media, 1999); Ralph Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Basic Books, 1993); Mao Zedong, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (Praeger Books, 1961).

battlefields, they only represent a small part of a larger discussion of US military strategy, operations, and tactics in irregular warfare. Traditional US and UK military journals, online journals, and RAND Corporation papers have all focused substantial attention on irregular warfare. The US Military Academy at West Point Modern Warfare Institute has partnered with Princeton University to create an Irregular Warfare Initiative.^a Unfortunately, in all these forums, the discussions focus only on the military aspects of irregular warfare. As both Jones and Biddle detail, irregular warfare is far more than just military conflict outside of conventional war. These discussions are absolutely necessary, but they are not sufficient for a successful US policy against either our near-peer adversaries or even against insurgents.

Jones comes closest to this argument near the end of his book when he addresses the importance of George Kennan in understanding how a new Cold War with Russia should be fought. Jones's previous book on US overt and covert efforts to support Poland's Solidarity Movement during the 1980s^b focused attention on how the Reagan administration synchronized its efforts toward a strategic goal. (181–83) Jones pointed to the Reagan administration's willingness to use all available US power, including diplomacy, economic sanctions, military deterrence, and covert action against the Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies.

Reagan's team approach was reminiscent of the early Cold War effort to prevent Soviet and Chinese expansion in the 1950s, defined by George Kennan as "political warfare." In Kennan's words, this effort was designed to confront an expansionist regime in the Kremlin. In the broadest sense, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures...and "white" propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support to "friendly" foreign elements, "black" psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.^c

None of the three adversaries Jones identifies perceives any real distinction between war and peace, and they appear willing to risk economic sanctions to gain the strategic objectives of their nations. They see conflict as the inherent nature of international affairs.

If the United States intends to avoid a catastrophic, conventional war with one or more of these three adversaries, US policymakers must consider Kennan's political warfare as one means of confronting adversaries interested in conducting strategic irregular warfare. In the 21st century, until and unless the United States designs a whole-of-government strategic plan to confront our near-peers, we risk defeat at the hands of the "three dangerous men" and their successors. That is the most important lesson of both books reviewed in this essay.



The reviewer: J.R. Seeger is a former CIA operations officer and regular contributor to *Studies*.

a. The US Military Academy describes the initiative as follows: The Irregular Warfare Initiative began as the Irregular Warfare Podcast in May 2020, when two active duty military officers at Princeton University recognized that there was an abundance of scholarly research on irregular warfare topics that was largely inaccessible to irregular warfare practitioners. The podcast was established to bridge this gap among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers, making research and experience-based insight more accessible across the force. More details can be found at <https://mwi.usma.edu/irregular-warfare-initiative/about-the-irregular-warfare-initiative/>

b. Jones, *A covert action: Reagan, the CIA, and the Cold War Struggle in Poland* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2018), 181–3.

c. George Kennan, *The Problem: The inauguration of organized political warfare*, Policy Planning Staff memorandum, May 4, 1948, available at <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org>.

Intelligence in Public Media

Disruption: Inside the Largest Counterterrorism Investigation in History

Aki Peritz (Potomac Books, 2021) 407 pages, maps, photos.

Reviewed by J.R. Seeger

One of the most common tropes for reviewers is “a true story that reads like fiction.” In the book *Disruption*, Aki Peritz has worked hard to make a complicated counterterrorism (CT) operation read like a thriller. To his credit, he also worked hard to capture as many facts as possible in telling the story. For these reasons, the book will be popular among readers outside of the Intelligence Community. Whether it will be as popular with IC readers remains to be seen.

The basics of the terror plot described in *Disruption* are detailed in the open-source press and in the court cases in the UK. The best summary of the case, known as OP OVERT on both sides of the Atlantic, is Peritz’s own piece published in *Politico*.^a He details how British citizens traveled to Pakistan and met with a known terrorist recruiter named Rashid Rauf. After traveling to Pakistan, these individuals decided to follow through on a plot like one first designed in the 1990s by two notorious terrorist masterminds—Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and his cousin Ramzi Yousef. Their plan focused on placing multiple bombs on aircraft flying from Manila to North America.

That plot was disrupted by a fire caused by the bombmaker, which resulted in a police investigation in the Philippines. In the 2005–2006 plot, the goal was to bring down multiple airlines departing from the United Kingdom headed to the United States. The terrorists planned to carry on board aircraft precursor chemicals disguised as sports drinks, assemble the bombs on board, and detonate them when the aircraft were over the Atlantic Ocean.

Throughout the summer of 2006, the US and UK governments worked together to build the terrorist investigation using a joint operational name OP OVERT. At the same time, the United States worked with the Pakistani intelligence service to track down Rashid Rauf. OP OVERT concluded when the US and Pakistani team captured Rauf and the British team arrested the conspirators in the UK.

In the first half of *Disruption*, Peritz provides the reader with detailed biographies of the various players in the terrorist plot. The main perpetrators of the terrorist plan were UK-born Muslims, whose parents and family members were Pakistani. Peritz relates the step-by-step process of transition from apolitical British men to dedicated Islamic extremist terrorists. At times, the details Peritz offers make for difficult reading. He provides the historical, ethnic, and even personal context leading up to Rauf’s recruitment of the primary perpetrators. Peritz often makes the jump from detailed facts to suppositions on the thoughts and motivations of the players. While the speculations are reasonable, they are no more than that. Unfortunately, they are folded into the facts in a way that it would be difficult for the average reader to distinguish the two.

Peritz focuses much of the second half of *Disruption* on the design and execution of the CT operations in the UK and in Pakistan. He spends considerable time and effort outlining tensions that existed among all the CT players and political figures in the saga. Anyone who has served in the intelligence or the special operations communities in the past 20 years will have no problem relating similar tensions among allies.

In part, these are inherent in the CT world. Law enforcement organizations want to build the best possible case to ensure conviction arresting the conspirators “just in time.” CT organizations within the intelligence and special operations world focus on disruption of terrorism plans. Disruption might mean preventative detention or some type of kinetic operation.

Either way, CT and special operations forces are committed to getting the job done whenever and wherever success will be the result. In a post-9/11 world, the balance between these two viewpoints has shifted in favor of disruption. The “high drama” as described in *Disruption* is not necessarily anything new or surprising among allies.

a. “How the U.S., U.K. and Pakistan teamed up to stop another 9/11,” *Politico* (online), January 2, 2022.

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In sum, *Disruption* is a well-researched book that captures the essence of OP OVERT. It might not have the full details correct, but that is the risk of working solely from open-source information. Future historians with the benefit of declassified documents no doubt will be able to tell the full story. There are small errors that should have been caught by the author or the editors. One example is identification of Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian Salafi Islamic extremist, as one of the founders of al-Qa'ida and the Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani Deobandi extremist group. Azzam was assassinated long before either al-Qa'ida or LET were formed. It is entirely fair to consider Azzam as an ideological ancestor for Salafi extremists, but hardly a founder.

Pertiz manufactures tension that exists only in intemperate comments among counterterrorism operators after long hours of hard work. The revelation of that intemperance will make it a popular book. For professionals, the manufactured drama will undermine the book's utility. They might also skip the first chapter titled "The Killer beside You." Pertiz's fictional summary of what could happen is designed to engage and horrify readers. It may do so for the general public, but the melodrama created in this chapter will not convince an intelligence professional to give the book a chance. For a more concise and less melodramatic version of the story, look to Pertiz's *Politico* article.



The reviewer: J.R. Seeger is a former CIA operations officer and regular contributor to *Studies*.

Master of the Game: Henry Kissinger and the Art of Middle East Diplomacy

Martin Indyk. (Alfred A. Knopf, 2021), 672 pages, appendices, endnotes, index.

Reviewed by Alan Fisher

The last five US administrations each made high-profile efforts at peacemaking in the Middle East, from George H. W. Bush's convening of the Madrid Conference to Donald Trump's Abraham Accords. Despite the achievement of some dramatic and seemingly paradigm-shifting moments—such as the efforts at Israeli-Palestinian peace during the Clinton administration—there have been no results with the same endurance or impact as the agreements negotiated by Henry Kissinger after the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War. At that time, Arabs and Israelis had been plunged into war four times over 25 years. The Soviet Union's involvement in the region—backing radical Arab governments pushing war with Israel—had created another arena for superpower rivalry and the risk of superpower confrontation.

Today, when Russia has returned to the region to play a role contrary to US interests, and radicalism and fundamentalism have sharpened divisions and reignited conflict, it is worth revisiting how Kissinger took advantage of circumstances to “create a new regional order in the Middle East that sidelined the Soviet Union in the midst of the Cold War and stabilized a turbulent region.” (17)

In *Master of the Game*, Martin Indyk presents a detailed and fascinating history of Kissinger's Middle East diplomacy during that period. Indyk weaves together a narrative based on a review of contemporaneous documents from US and Israeli archives, personal papers, official transcripts, memoirs—both published and unpublished—and personal interviews with Kissinger. The result is a compelling and authoritative account of a time when the United States brought warring sides together to make agreements that have endured for almost half a century. Appendices contain the texts of the formal agreements as well as side agreements between the United States and the parties.

The book details Kissinger's role in the US response to the Egypt-Israel clashes in the period after the Six-Day War in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Black September uprising in Jordan in 1970, and Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat's break with the Soviet Union,

outreach to the United States, and subsequent decision with Syria to go to war against Israel in 1973. The core of the text discusses the US response to the October war and Kissinger's subsequent “shuttle diplomacy,” which resulted in Egyptian-Israeli agreements to disengage in the Sinai in 1974–75, an Israeli-Syrian agreement to disengage in the Golan Heights in 1974, and ultimately (under the Carter administration) a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979.

At the height of his shuttle diplomacy from October 1973 until Nixon resigned in August 1974, Kissinger made six trips to the Middle East, visited 28 countries, and traveled some 314,000 kilometers. (570) Indyk makes note of behind-the-scenes maneuvering and personality clashes in Washington with the backdrop of the Watergate scandals, as well as the role played by intelligence, from mistaken assessments of Egyptian intentions and capability to make war to the use of a CIA station chief to facilitate back-channel discussions.

Kissinger's goal, Indyk asserts, was to create a system in which the key states in the region, supported and led by the United States, would share a sense of legitimacy and a balance of power that would encourage stability and make the constant resort to war unappealing. In Kissinger's view, this could only be accomplished in incremental steps, whose completion would allow implacable foes to gain confidence and trust. Indyk relates that Kissinger, growing up in Germany during the rise of Nazi power, learned the lesson that without a sustainable and stable order, peace plans are easily held hostage by those willing to resort to war and can lead to appeasement. In Indyk's view, Kissinger's approach merits revisiting today because after repeatedly trying and failing to reach comprehensive end-of-conflict agreements, “it is time for US policymakers to return to Kissinger's step-by-step approach as part of a broader strategy for building a new American-supported Middle Eastern order.” (570)

Master of the Game flags weaknesses in Kissinger's approach, including his focus on “key” states, which was based on his post-World War II conception of military

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power and influence. Thus, Kissinger focused on Egypt, as the essential Arab power necessary for a military threat to Israel, and Syria, as the radical Arab power with the most leverage to block Egypt from making a deal.

Kissinger did not give much consideration to the Palestinian issue or the possibility of bringing US ally Jordan along for an agreement that involved the Palestinians, which even he recognized at the time was the only alternative to the ascendancy of the more radical non-state actor, the PLO. “To this day, [Kissinger’s] decision does not sit comfortably with him. By summer of 1975 Kissinger was admitting to [Israeli Ambassador to the US Simcha] Dinitz that they had made ‘a big mistake’ by not trying for an interim agreement with Jordan.” (444)

Other missteps include Kissinger’s pre-October War devotion to the regional status quo, which resulted in his not recognizing opportunities to avoid the war, and his failure to recognize strategic opportunities for broader agreements the Israelis, Egyptians, and Syrians might have been willing to pursue had he not been so focused on even smaller steps. In the pursuit of his goals, Kissinger was willing to mislead allies as well as adversaries, and in one instance his willingness to manipulate the situation—by encouraging the Israelis to continue to press for territorial gains after all the parties had agreed to a cease-fire arranged by the United States and Soviet Union—resulted in Soviet moves and US reactions that threatened a superpower clash.

The book relies heavily on US and Israeli documents. Indyk explains that Arab archives for the period “are not accessible, if they exist at all,” therefore the perspectives of Kissinger’s Arab interlocutors are mostly drawn from “the public record and personal biographies.” (596) So while Kissinger stated he “had never seen so effective an example of crisis management” (76) as the US and Israeli responses to the Black September episode in Jordan, others have pointed out that despite US military moves to signal support for the king, and Israeli threats of intervention—which no doubt influenced both Syria’s Soviet sponsors and the then air force chief and soon-to-be Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad, who declined to provide air cover to the Syrian armored brigades sent to support the PLO—a more important and less visible role in resolving the situation may have been played by Jordanian intelligence.^a

Despite such errors, Indyk lauds Kissinger’s achievement of disengagement agreements between Egypt and Israel that set the conditions for an eventual peace treaty, and a disengagement agreement between Israel and Syria that has not had a significant breach by either side for almost 50 years. “Kissinger’s diplomacy had succeeded in creating a more or less stable regional Middle Eastern order. It had taken three years of constant exertion to build; its maintenance would require continued efforts to move the peace process forward.” (551)

Indyk further observes that Kissinger’s success was made possible by Sadat. It was Sadat’s vision and strategic acuity in launching a war with limited objectives and then pivoting to diplomacy, and mostly by turning away from the Soviet Union and toward the United States, that gave Kissinger the scope and incentive to push for an agreement. Indyk quotes Kissinger’s response to President Ford’s observation that the October War had been helpful in creating the conditions for an Egypt-Israel agreement: “We couldn’t have done better if we had set the scenario.” (111) In many ways, it was Sadat rather than the United States who was the indispensable actor.

Indyk, a former assistant secretary of state for the Near East and two-time ambassador to Israel in the Clinton administration, currently is a distinguished fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations. He served as a principal on the team seeking an Israel-Syria peace deal in the 1990s. Upon leaving government service, Indyk became the founding director of the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. He returned to government during Obama’s second term as US special envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Before *Master of the Game*, Indyk authored a book on his experiences in the Clinton administration—*Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Peace Diplomacy in the Middle East* (Simon & Schuster, 2009)—and a review of Obama’s successes and failures in foreign policy during his first term, coauthored with Michael O’Hanlon and Kenneth Lieberthal, *Bending History: Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

Indyk sets the goal of taking “the reader into the rooms where [Kissinger] conducted his diplomacy” and providing an accurate and vivid account of what transpired.

a. Bruce Reidel, “Fifty Years After ‘Black September’ in Jordan,” *Studies in Intelligence* 64, no. 2 (June 2020): 35–40.

He succeeds and goes beyond that by adding insights gained from his own experiences to indicate weaknesses in the peace efforts—including those he took part in—that followed Kissinger. Indyk points out that while Kissinger was able to exploit the sense of urgency felt by Israeli, Egyptian, and even Syrian leaders, the Clinton peace team failed to do so with Asad and Israeli Prime Minister Barak. He compares a time that Kissinger stood up to Asad's negotiating gamesmanship—for which he later received an apology from the Syrian president—to a similar

episode in which Secretary of State Warren Christopher failed to push back on Asad and eventually lost momentum for a deal. He also explains the differences he sees in the agreements brokered by Kissinger and the agreements brokered by the Trump administration and why he believes the former are more in line with US interests. *Master of the Game* is a valuable addition to the bookshelf of those interested in the US role in the Middle East, how we got where we are, and how we might go forward.



The reviewer: Alan Fisher is a retired CIA analyst and manager who served with Ambassador Indyk. He is currently an intelligence scholar in the Lessons Learned Program of the Center for the Study of Intelligence.

The Stasi Poetry Circle: The Creative Writing Class that Tried to Win the Cold War

By Philip Otterman (Faber and Faber, 2022), 201 pages, bibliography, index.

The Matchmaker: A Spy in Berlin

By Paul Vidich (Pegasus Crime, 2022), Kindle edition.

Reviewed by J.E. Leonardson

Say what you will about the German Democratic Republic, but grim and determinedly repressive as they were, the GDR's leaders truly believed in the power of literature to elevate the cultural consciousness of the people. From the moment they returned from Moscow in the summer of 1945, the communists were determined to start a post-Nazi cultural renaissance in the Eastern Zone. Such was the regime's dedication to this vision that factories were required to have on-site libraries—18,000–30,000 volumes with full-time librarians for enterprises of 5,000–10,000 workers, for example—while books and literary magazines poured off the presses for general circulation. To its credit, the GDR became a society of sophisticated readers, albeit only of officially approved works by authors who carefully toed the party line.

Another aspect of the artistic effort to build socialist utopia was to break down the barriers between intellectuals—considered inherently inclined toward bourgeois habits—and workers by assigning writers to factories and mines. This was no Maoist effort to reform intellectuals through manual labor. Rather, the writers established and led workplace-based Circles of Writing Workers that, following the regime's slogan to “Pick up the quill, comrade!” sought to create working peoples' literature. These, too, were an unlikely success, with writers' circles spreading throughout the country and several hundred still in operation when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989.

The Stasi, the GDR's notorious secret police, was not about to fall behind in these programs and by 1960 had established its own Circle of Writing Chekists. The effort seems to have been less successful than the Stasi leadership hoped, however, and in the late 1970s they concluded that the “discrepancy between aspiration and reality” had to be addressed. Uwe Berger, a professional poet and writer, was hired in 1982 to run the Circle and bring discipline and structure to the literary efforts of the secret police.

What happened next is the focus of German journalist Philip Ottermann's account. Thoroughly researched and beautifully written, *The Stasi Poetry Circle* is a fascinating tale filled with irony, tragedy, black humor, and the efforts of ordinary people to express their hopes. It has to be one of the most unusual intelligence histories ever written and illuminates a corner of the spy world that few could imagine, let alone know, existed.

Berger, in Ottermann's telling, was an intriguing figure. One of East Germany's literary leaders, he took his Stasi job seriously and in monthly meetings instructed the members of the Circle in the structures, techniques, and analysis of poetry. His students, in turn, worked on poems of their own. One, Alexander Ruika, seems to have had true talent but most wrote poetry generously described as regrettable. For example, “Night Shift,” by Björn Vogel:

Between night and morning
A radio call
Quickly!
Frenzy.
Phones ringing, teletypewriters chattering.
Tired yawns, but excited concentration.
Precise research through
Accurately filed matter.
Information
To the comrades.
Quiet pride—
Mission completed
In the struggle for peace.

Berger, however, was more than just another writer with a part-time teaching gig. He had risen to the top of the GDR's literary hierarchy, holding senior positions in the Writers' Union and Cultural Association, even though he never joined the party. Berger presented himself to the world as an ascetic artist dedicated to telling truth through poetry, and doing so independent of any political affiliation. This no doubt made him useful to the regime, but not half as useful as his clandestine life as a Stasi informer and cultural assassin.

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From 1970 until the collapse of the regime, Berger eagerly reported on all manner of topics, but especially on his fellow authors and even his Stasi poets. He was particularly happy to pen vicious criticism of any author whose writings he disliked or believed threatened to undermine the regime. In his report on one short story, Ottermann relates, Berger didn't stop at calling it an artistic failure, but instead went on about its "nihilistic, cynical, duplicitous attitude that without doubt takes on a counter-revolutionary quality." Criticism like that didn't just hurt sales, it destroyed lives, and in 1982 it earned Berger one of the Stasi's highest medals.

As slimy as he was, Berger understood a fundamental truth of his work. If poetry, undertaken properly, could raise the workers' consciousness and strengthen the regime, then the wrong type of poetry presented a dire threat. The problem, of course, is that poets tend to be politically unreliable people—even the average ones are creative and questioning types who cannot be counted upon to hew to an official line. Indeed, Ottermann relates the stories of several poets and writers who were hounded by the Stasi and, as well, how the Stasi used its own poets—Ruika was one—to monitor suspect writers.

The unreliability of artists, however, eventually became an internal problem for the Stasi. In 1984, Gerd Knauer, a young propaganda officer and member of the Circle, had become disillusioned with the regime's cavalier attitude toward the possibility of nuclear war. To express his concerns, Knauer wrote "The Bang," an epic poem of more than 20 pages that asked:

Who took a stand
against this ghastly fate?
Was there too little fear at hand?
Did fear show up too late?

When Knauer read his poem to the Circle in June 1984, his fellow students sat in awed silence. Berger

praised his technique and all that his budding poets had learned, but later he unloaded his true views in his reports to his handlers. Knauer, he wrote, was "pig-headed" and "The Bang" was "at odds with his ideological mission." The young officer continued to churn out more suspect poetry, however, leading Berger to report in December 1984 that Knauer had become a saboteur who was "systematically obstructing the Circle of Writing Chekists." All intelligence services worry about insider threats, but the Stasi must stand alone in having created one made up of amateur poets.

One can speculate about where all this would have wound up had the East German regime not imploded in 1989, but the reality is that the work of the Circle of Writing Chekists was quickly forgotten. An anthology of their poems in honor of the 40th anniversary of the GDR was approved to be published on December 31, 1989, but it never saw the light of day; surviving copies of previous collections are now to be found only in the deepest recesses of German used-book stores. Uwe Berger died in 2014, and the Stasi poets went on to other occupations (Björn Vogel is now, among other things, a COVID-19 conspiracy theorist). In recovering their story and recording a strange episode in intelligence history, Philip Ottermann has done us a great favor.

Readers interested in more about the Stasi should look for Paul Vidich's novel *The Matchmaker*. Set in Berlin in the fall and winter of 1989–90, as the GDR was collapsing, the plot concerns a civilian interpreter for the US military, Anne Simpson, who learns her husband is a Stasi illegal. She becomes a pawn in the CIA's effort to take down the mastermind of the operation. While toward the end Vidich borrows scenes from *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, overall *The Matchmaker* is tightly written and carefully plotted. It grabs you in the first pages and never lets go.



The reviewer: JE Leonardson is the pen name of a CIA analyst and regular *Studies* contributor.

Intelligence in Public Media

Nazis on the Potomac: The Top-Secret Intelligence Operation that Helped Win World War II

Robert K. Sutton (Casemate Publishers, 2021), 240 pages, photos, map, appendix.

Reviewed by Warren Fishbein

Retired National Park Service (NPS) Chief Historian Robert Sutton has written the first comprehensive account of World War II intelligence operations undertaken at Fort Hunt, a onetime coastal artillery facility, now a park, along the Potomac River near Mt. Vernon. Sutton draws heavily upon a set of interviews of Ft. Hunt veterans compiled by NPS more than a decade ago but hitherto not systematically exploited for historical purposes. Plumbing the interviewees' personal recollections, Sutton details the intelligence programs and relates them to the backgrounds, motivations, and thinking of the soldiers who served there. This makes for a particularly engaging read.^a

The largest intelligence operation was the Military Intelligence Service-Y (MIS-Y) program for interrogating select German prisoners of war. The decision to base this program, known by its cover address "P. O. Box 1142," at Ft. Hunt reflected the Army's need for isolation to maintain secrecy but also proximity to the Pentagon to facilitate quick transmission of important revelations.^b More than 3,000 prisoners were interned there, including high-ranking officers and weapons scientists.

To question the prisoners, the Army recruited US soldiers fluent in German, many of whom were Jewish refugees who had fled Nazi persecution in Germany. They were well suited to the work, being both familiar with then current idiomatic German usage and especially motivated to obtain information needed to win the war.

MIS-Y techniques evolved through trial and error to become more sophisticated and tailored to different types of prisoners. For instance, cooperative high-value prisoners were rewarded with reading material and liquor, while interrogators would seek to unnerve recalcitrant prisoners

by exploiting captured German Army records documenting their patronage of Wehrmacht-affiliated brothels.

One technique oral history interviewees said interrogators abjured was physical coercion. However, the interrogators did effectively employ one semi-coercive stratagem for pressing the most resistant prisoners: a bogus threat to transfer them to the Soviet Union for questioning. The threat was rendered believable by the presence of fake Red Army liaison officers played by Russian-speaking US soldiers.

The interrogations coupled with audio surveillance of the prisoners—initially controversial due to a lingering "gentlemen do not read each other's mail" mentality—produced numerous important revelations that assisted Allied war efforts. These included learning that the Germans were loading supplies at railway crossings rather than at heavily bombed stations and that the German Navy had built faux concrete structures at submarine pens to confuse Allied bombers—both of which led to productive changes in Allied aerial targeting.

Sutton recounts two other wartime intelligence operations at Ft. Hunt: the MIS-X program for aiding US military personnel evade or escape capture, and a Military Intelligence Research Service (MIRS), which exploited captured enemy documents for building "basic intelligence" on German forces. One of the MIS-X program's signal achievements was to develop a code that allowed captured Americans to send back intelligence information in letters from their prison camps.

Staffed by just a few dozen soldiers, MIRS produced detailed orders of battle that supported Allied military operations from D-Day onward. Looking back, the branch's

a. See also, Thomas Boghardt, "America's Secret Vanguard: US Army Intelligence Operations in Germany, 1944–47," *Studies in Intelligence* 57, no. 2 (June 2013) and his subsequent encyclopedic history, *Covert Legions: U.S. Army Intelligence in Germany, 1944–1949* (US Army Center of Military History, 2022); Jay Watkins, review of *Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program to Bring Nazi Scientists to America*, by Annie Jacobsen, *Studies in Intelligence* 58, no. 3 (Extracts, September 2014); Hayden Peake, review of *Our German: Project Paperclip and the National Security State*, by Brian E. Crim, *Studies in Intelligence* 63, no. 4 (December 2019).

b. According to retired Department of the Army historian Dr. Kathryn Coker, who is authoring a book on POW camps in Virginia, Ft. Hunt was one of at least 23 facilities that held some 17,000 Axis prisoners in the Commonwealth. See "PO Box 1142," www.kathryncoker.com/index.php/2019/05/03/rebel-garden-ladies-at-the-richmond-law-library.

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.

veterans attributed the unit's success to the willingness of its officers to allow enlistees great latitude to organize their work.

Nazis on the Potomac fills a gap in World War II intelligence history by documenting the origins of a number of European Theater intelligence successes thanks to the work of Ft. Hunt interrogators. It demonstrates how good

intelligence arises from patient accumulation and synthesis of information. Sutton also reminds us of the value in selecting the right people for the job and letting them do their thing.

[See also Hayden Peake's brief review of *Nazis on the Potomac* in the Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf.]



The reviewer: Warren Fishbein is a retired CIA analyst, manager, and methodologist.

Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf—June 2022*

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

The Black Banners Declassified: How Torture Derailed the War on Terror after 9/11, by Ali H. Soufan with Daniel Freedman.

The Fourth Man: The Hunt for a KGB Spy at the Top of the CIA and the Rise of Putin's Russia, by Robert Baer

Getting To Know the President: Intelligence Briefings of Presidential Candidates and Presidents-Elect 1952–2016, by John L. Helgerson

MEMOIR

Free: A Child and a Country at the End of History, by Lea Ypi (reviewed by Joseph Gartin)

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HISTORY

All Blood Runs Red: The Legendary Life of Eugene Bullard—Boxer, Pilot, Soldier, Spy, by Phil Keith with Tom Clavin.

Break in The Chain—Intelligence Ignored: Military Intelligence in Vietnam and Why the Easter Offensive Should Have Turned Out Differently, by W.R. (Bob) Baker

Capital of Spies: Intelligence Agencies in Berlin During the Cold War, by Sven Felix Kellerhoff & Bernd Von Kostka, trans. Linden Lyons

The Cold War Wilderness of Mirrors: Counterintelligence and the U.S. and Soviet Military Liaison Missions, 1947–1990, by Aden C. Magee

Fugitives: A History of Nazi Mercenaries During the Cold War, by Danny Orbach (reviewed by Chris K.)

Honey Trapped: Sex, Betrayal and Weaponized Love, by Henry R. Schlesinger.

Nazis on The Potomac: The Top-Secret Intelligence Operation that Helped Win World War II, by Robert K. Sutton

The Nine: The True Story of a Band of Women Who Survived the Worst of Nazi Germany, by Gwen Strauss.

A Spy in Plain Sight: The Inside Story of the FBI and Robert Hanssen—America's Most Damaging Russian Spy, by Lis Wiehl

INTELLIGENCE ABROAD

Head of the Mossad: In Pursuit of a Safe and Secure Israel, by Shabtai Shavit

Spies and Sparrows: ASIO and the Cold War, by Phillip Deery

REDISCOVERED

HHhH, by Laurent Binet (reviewed by J.E. Leonardson)

Naples '44, by Norman Lewis (reviewed by Joseph Gartin)

STREAMING

All the Old Knives Out (reviewed by Joseph Gartin)

*Unless otherwise noted, reviews are by Hayden Peake.

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

Contemporary Issues

The Black Banners Declassified: How Torture Derailed the War on Terror after 9/11, by Ali H. Soufan with Daniel Freedman. (W.W. Norton and Company, 2020) 594 pages, photos, index.

The term “black banners” is attributed to the prophet Muhammad who said that the black banners will come out of the Khurasan region of northeastern Iran and will not be defeated. Osama bin Ladin signed his declaration of jihad against the West and decreed that the flag of al-Qa’ida be black.^a Author and former FBI special agent Ali Soufan adopted the term for the first edition of his book *The Black Banners: The Inside Story of 9/11 and the War Against al-Qaeda* published in 2011.

Mr. Soufan began the book with a compelling expression of displeasure at the often lengthy redactions—some entire pages—insisted on by CIA for security reasons.^b The addition of “Declassified” to the primary title of the second edition signals that Mr. Soufan’s objections have been overcome, and indeed that is the case. Aside from adding some updates (unspecified), an index, photos, and a foreword (it thanks CIA for changing its position)—these additions account for the pagination difference. The new subtitle better reflects Mr. Soufan’s central argument: enhanced interrogation techniques—he calls them torture—don’t work and damage operations. The desired results, he argues forcefully, more often follow from the

nuanced interrogation techniques he developed and applied successfully and to which the majority of the book is devoted.

Do the unredacted portions of the second edition strengthen his assertion that enhanced interrogation produced no useful results and were they justified on security grounds? The answer to both questions is no. Both editions of *The Black Banners* discuss Mr. Soufan’s FBI career from his work in Jordan, his extensive involvement in the investigation of the USS *Cole* bombing, and his contributions to post-9/11 interrogations of terrorist suspects. Although he provides many examples of his approach to interrogations, while insisting those employed by the CIA were ineffective despite claims to the contrary by various CIA officers, the redacted portions do not influence these contentions. Because there are no source notes or other means of verification, the final judgment is left to the reader.

The inherent controversy aside, *The Black Banners Declassified* gives an interesting and valuable perspective on the terrorist interrogation issue.

The Fourth Man: The Hunt for a KGB Spy at the Top of the CIA and the Rise of Putin’s Russia, by Robert Baer. (Hachette Books, 2022) 295, endnotes, index.

In his first book, *See No Evil*, former CIA case officer Robert Baer wrote about his career spent mainly in the Middle East working against terrorist networks. In the mid-1990s, during a tour in CIA Headquarters, he was chief of the Caucasus and Central Asia Branch of the Central Eurasia (CE) Division, in the Directorate of Operations, under division chief Bill Lofgren. One day in March 1996, while they were returning to CIA from a White House briefing, Lofgren announced he was retiring

and that he felt bad about some unfinished business. Then as they were parking, he said, “We’ve got another one. . . . The KGB’s running an asset in that building,” pointing to the Original Headquarters Building in front of them. (19) Baer knew that he wasn’t talking about Aldrich Ames, he was in prison; or Edward Howard, he had escaped to Moscow; or the third suspect who had not been identified and turned out to be Robert Hanssen. Baer concluded Lofgren must have been alluding to some unexplained compromised operations. But Lofgren said no more.

a. Cited in: Kira Zalan: “Dissecting the Threat,” *U. S. News Weekly*, September 23, 2011: 14.

b. Ali H. Soufan with Daniel Freedman, *Black Banners: The Inside Story of 9/11 and the War Against al-Qaeda* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2011) 574, key documents and articles cited, no index.

Lofgren must have been alluding to some unexplained compromised operations. But Lofgren said no more.

Twenty-three years later, by then both retired, Lofgren told Baer, "I think I know who the KGB mole is." (21) And after naming the suspect, he suggested Baer—who knew most of those involved—look into the matter. Baer did, and *The Fourth Man* tells what he found.

Out of the government, Baer could not conduct a formal inquiry. But he could try to contact key players and try to determine what kind of an investigation had been conducted, what was concluded, and what action resulted.

Baer found several cases that the KGB appeared to know about before Ames or Howard revealed them. For example, KGB Col. Oleg Gordievsky was recalled from London and interrogated before Ames gave the KGB his name, at least according to Ames. If not Ames, who? Then there were instances of very sensitive documents in KGB possession that could not be explained. Acquiring all the facts was not easy. Many of those involved, some retired and some still active, refused to discuss the matter. Even the fact that there was a hunt for the fourth man had been restricted. (Ironically, at one point two of the CI analysts involved had been assigned to Baer, but he was not told what they were doing.) But Baer was able to enlist the support of the lead CI analyst, Laine Bannerman, and she explained the methodology applied to attempt to identify suspects, a methodology that had been developed by former CI chief David Blee. (106–109)

In short, four CI analysts—three from CIA and one from FBI—designated the Special Investigative Unit (SIU), conducted the investigation working in a secure vault. They examined all compromised operations that could not be explained and determined which CIA personnel, CIA agents (Baer erroneously calls them "double agents"), and defectors had known or could have known about them. Foremost among the CIA KGB agents was Alekander

Zaporozhsky (called "Max"), who told his handlers—Baer doesn't say when—that he had heard of two penetrations, "one in the CIA and the other in the FBI," and he was "absolutely certain that both were still in place." (11) Then in 1993, he revealed the clue that led directly to Ames. (16) That revelation made it easier to believe Max's subsequent, more sensational, claim: "There was another KGB double agent in the CIA, one more senior and better placed than Ames." (17) Based on all these factors the SIU built a timeline and a matrix that related personnel travel details, bank accounts and deposits, and any unexplained or extraordinary behavior that might correlate with a compromise. *The Fourth Man* describes these complex efforts in detail.

Unfortunately, the SIU never found a smoking gun though it did present evidence that pointed to a very senior staff officer, who did not take the suggestion well. His retaliatory measures, writes Baer, gradually and effectively shut down the investigation. A final point concerns the fourth man's ability to survive. Baer suggests it may have been because he was controlled by the KGB's Second Chief Directorate (now the FSB), since it was and is more secure and powerful, especially under Putin. The SIU, on the other hand, focused on the less secure KGB First Chief Directorate (now SVR). (229)

In his epilogue, after conceding that he doesn't know who the fourth man is, Baer provides a good summary of the many unanswered questions and equivocal issues that leave a firm conclusion in doubt. And after mentioning what happened to the careers of the principal players, he ends by expressing the certainty that without agents in Russian intelligence, the CIA doesn't "stand a chance of understanding the forces and mechanics behind Putin's KGB-backed takeover." (228)

The Fourth Man is very well written and leaves readers with a good idea of how counterintelligence analysts work. A thought-provoking contribution to the literature.

Getting To Know The President: Intelligence Briefings of Presidential Candidates and Presidents-Elect, 1952–2016, Fourth Edition, by John L. Helgerson. (Central Intelligence Agency, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2021) 310 pages, footnotes, photos, index.

Since 1952, presidential candidates and presidents-elect have received intelligence briefings during their campaigns and the presidential transition periods from the CIA and later the Intelligence Community. The first

of four editions of *Getting To Know The President*, each written by John Helgerson, was published in 1996, and it described the contacts made with the candidates through the first Clinton administration. A new edition was

published after each change in administration with the addition of a chapter that covered the previous incumbent and providing insights into how he viewed intelligence.

The new chapter, "Donald J. Trump: A Unique Challenge," is worthy of consideration. After he was inaugurated, President Trump's briefers came to be convinced that "he doubted the competence of the intelligence professionals and felt no need for intelligence support." And, Helgerson notes, he criticized the "outgoing directors of national intelligence and the CIA, and disparaged the work and integrity of the intelligence agencies." (231)

But those were not the impressions Trump conveyed as a candidate or during the transition period, when briefings were presented about twice a week. Trump's reaction to the President's Daily Briefing (PDB), according to the principal briefer, was that "He touched it. He doesn't really read anything." (243) In another departure from his predecessors, Trump was not briefed by the CIA on any covert action programs, although some on his team were.

Tensions between the IC and Trump increased following charges that Russia had interfered in the election, the leaking of the Steele dossier alleging improper conduct

by Trump in Moscow, and the allegations that the Trump team had had improper contacts with the Russians. Helgerson deals with each of these matters in turn before discussing how Trump's support during the 2016 Republican primary campaign for enhanced interrogation techniques created another point of tension with CIA Director John Brennan (254–55) and Trump's irritation following the whistle-blower complaint in August 2019 about his efforts to enlist Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's support for investigating then-candidate Joseph Biden. (266)

The fourth edition also comments on briefings to Trump's staff, his first cabinet appointments, and his visit to CIA Headquarters on his first full day in office, when his "largely extemporaneous remarks backfired." (262)

Overall, Helgerson concludes that "the IC achieved only limited success" with the Trump transition. (269) The final chapter of the 4th edition, however, presents Helgerson's views on the briefing program and the assessments of former presidents that leave no doubt of its unique value to the principals and those concerned about national security in our government.

Memoir

Free: A Child and a Country at the End of History (US edition), by Lea Ypi. (W.W. Norton & Co., 2021), 288 pages.

Lea Ypi's account of coming of age in an Albania that was coming apart is extraordinary. Ypi reminds us, in prose that is at once quiet and suddenly revelatory, that Albania is composed of fellow human beings with stories to tell, not a punchline to a joke or an abstract intelligence problem. Those stories reveal themselves elliptically, as Ypi discovers hidden, sometimes intimate, truths about herself, her family, and their friends and enemies. We learn of the small triumphs, daily compromises, and subtle acts of resistance of life under Albania's cloistered, xenophobic brand of socialism espoused by longtime dictator Enver Hoxha, who ruled from 1944 until his death in 1985.

Isolated by geography and politics, ruled in ancient times by a succession of empires and invaders (Romans, Byzantines, Visigoths, Bulgars, Huns, Ottoman Turks), divided and battered by the great powers during the world

wars, and estranged in succession from Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and China during the Cold War, Albania existed in a kind of political gloaming. Like North Korea under the Kim family dynasty, perhaps the closest parallel in the 20th century, Albania under Hoxha collectivized agricultural production, nationalized industries, and instituted highly centralized economic planning.

Like every communist "socialist paradise," Albania ensured compliance through complex webs of surveillance, repression, informants, self-censorship, and as Ypi details, state files on every individual. These "biographies" sorted Albanians into categories of privilege that depended on a family's revolutionary credentials and political reliability. "Biographies were carefully separated into good or bad, relevant or irrelevant, transparent or confusing, suspicious or trustworthy." (27) For Ypi, coming to age meant learning about her own family's

biography, which had channeled her grandparents, parents, and ultimately herself into lives bounded by unseen but omnipresent fences.

When change came fitfully in 1990, and talk of “civil society” replaced “the Party,” (184) Albanians tried to regain their footing on a changed social landscape. Like others behind the crumbling Iron Curtain, many of Ypi’s family and neighbors reinvented themselves in the blink of an eye. Apparatchiks became entrepreneurs, fervent Stalinists become respectable socialists, and stolid bureaucrats became parliamentarians.

For a time, people seemed to be Albania’s chief export. But as Ypi observes, when Albania was closed, the Europeans wanted to help them leave; when the walls came down, Europe slammed the doors shut, herded refugees into camps, and pushed them back into the sea.

UNCLASSIFIED: My Life Before, During, and After the CIA, by Richard James Kerr. (Rand-Smith Publishing, 2020) 215, photos, no index.

After a somewhat chaotic childhood, he joined the Army, married, and later obtained a history degree from the University of Oregon. In 1960, he joined CIA as an analyst, grade GS-7, retiring 33 years later after serving as acting director of central intelligence. Dick Kerr’s career at CIA was unique and in many ways exemplary though his memoir doesn’t use those terms. *UNCLASSIFIED* is a straightforward account of how he became an intelligence professional and the skills he developed working with Congress and the executive branch. He participated in important world events from the Cuban Missile Crisis to the first Iraq war, often briefing world leaders and gaining their respect even when they were not pleased with the message. At CIA, he was admired for his abilities and impish demeanor. He once attended Director William Webster’s staff meeting wearing a gorilla costume; the director only asked him if he had anything to report. (107) On Halloween he wore it all day. Reaction to the appearance of a six-foot three-inch gorilla in the halls was not recorded, though readers of this review recall with delight Kerr dressed as Sesame Street’s Big Bird or wearing bow ties with blinking lights on select occasions.

In this memoir Kerr treats the details his career chronologically. He served under 10 directors beginning with Allen Dulles. However, it was under John McCone that he

Freedom, it turns out, does not mean the freedom to move, a bitter lesson repeated any times since.

In 1997, Albania descended into civil war; that June, when Ypi graduated from high school, her final exam was interrupted by a bomb threat. Ypi, now a professor of Marxism at the London School of Economics, observes in her epilogue that “if there is one lesson to take away from the history of my family, and of my country, it was that people never make history under the circumstances they choose.” (261) This is a lesson intelligence officers would do well to remember.

Free was awarded prizes by the *New York Times*, *Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *New Yorker*, and shortlisted for more. Ypi deserves every plaudit.

The reviewer: Joseph Gartin is managing editor of *Studies*.

first participated in congressional briefings “as a bag carrier.” (29) The experience served him well. He would go on to brief many presidents and foreign leaders, events that required extensive travel, much of which he describes.

As Kerr advanced up the organizational ladder, he served in various directorates, gaining experience in such functions as imagery collection and exploitation programs and the *Glomar Explorer* operation. Director William Casey made Kerr the deputy director for administration and subsequently the deputy director for intelligence (today’s Directorate of Analysis). It was also under Casey that Kerr became involved in the Iran-Contra affair, although he was prescient enough to express his doubts in writing to Casey.

In 1989, as Webster’s deputy, Kerr was briefed on what later became the Aldrich Ames case, “a real disaster for the CIA and the nation.” In retrospect, he regrets not pushing “to get answers about what was going on.” He had “never worked on a major counterintelligence problem or paid much attention to that area of intelligence.” (109)

Kerr was also deputy director when he was sent to meet Senator Orin Hatch, who wanted the CIA to hire a friend

to fill a senior position. Kerr explains how Hatch made his request, initially in the senator's offices and later by phone. The pressure was intense, but the candidate did not have the necessary prerequisites; Kerr refused and explains his rationale.

In an unusual twist for a memoir, Kerr asked four former colleagues to write some comments about their relationships. They are included in chapter 7 and add colorful perspective. Then Kerr adds his own views of the "CIA in Decline," seen from retirement and resulting in part from consequences of the creation of the ODNI. (111)

Life in retirement was not cocktails, tennis, and golf, though there may have been some of that. Kerr tells of his first trip to Russia, his work with the media, consulting with CIA^a and corporate boards, and his membership on a four-member commission in Northern Ireland monitoring the Good Friday Agreement. Then there was the meeting in Dubrovnik, Croatia with retired intelligence officers, including Markus Wolf, former head of the East German

foreign intelligence service—the HVA, not the Stasi—Dick Stolz (former deputy director for operations) and others from various countries. A book of their papers was published.^b

At several points in the book Kerr mentions his wife, Jan, and her skillful home management during his frequent absences. All the more impressive because she also had CIA duties and helped raise their four children.

Dick Kerr ends his story with some thoughts on the state of world affairs and the CIA. (148) He is concerned about the future of democracies and the threat of authoritarianism, problems he urges the CIA to address. (149)

UNCLASSIFIED, not by declaration but by example, refutes a time-worn wisdom that says success at the CIA goes to the Ivy Leaguers or graduates of a handful of top universities. A really worthwhile contribution to the intelligence literature.

History

All Blood Runs Red: The Legendary Life of Eugene Bullard—Boxer, Pilot, Soldier; Spy, by Phil Keith with Tom Clavin. (Hanover Square Press, 2020) 350 pages, footnotes, photos, index.

On December 16, 1959, as *Today Show* host Dave Garroway entered the elevator in Rockefeller Center in New York City, he greeted Gene Bullard, the friendly operator who regularly wore several medals on his uniform. But on that day Garroway noticed an impressive new medal and asked what it was. "The Legion of Merit," Bullard replied, "France's highest decoration." (312) Eugene James Bullard, whose grandparents had been enslaved, explained it had been awarded for service in World War I, but it was only recently presented. A stunned Garroway then asked about the other medals and Bullard said it was a long story. Within a week Bullard summarized his story on the *Today Show*. (314) *All Blood Runs Red* by history writer and US Navy veteran Phil Keith (who died in 2021) and Tom Clavin fills in the details.

Eugene Bullard was born on October 9, 1895, in Columbus, Georgia, the seventh of 10 children. After two years of schooling and faced with virulent racism, he ran away, intending eventually to go to France where, his father told him, Blacks were treated the same as Whites. After a series of odd jobs and training as a jockey, he stowed away on a German ship bound for Scotland. Unable to understand the Scots, he went on to London where he performed slapstick comedy learned on the job with a touring African-American troupe. He also trained with a boxer who helped him get to Paris, where he found success as a boxer and worked in a dance hall until World War I broke out in August 1914.

Because foreigners were not allowed to join the French Army, Bullard joined the French Foreign Legion and became a machinegunner. Later the situation changed and

a. CIA engaged Kerr's consulting group to review the analytic performance of the IC on the approach to and beginning of the war against Iraq during 2003–04. The unclassified part of that report, "Collection and Analysis on Iraq: Issues for the US Intelligence Community," appeared in *Studies in Intelligence* 49, no. 3 (2005): 47–54.

b. General Todor Boyadjiev (ed.), *The Intelligence: Men of Dignity in the Game With No Rules* (Libra Scorp, 2006).

he was assigned to the 170th Infantry Regiment serving at Verdun. After his second severe wound, he was awarded the Croix de Guerre. While recuperating, a colleague suggested he transfer to the French air service and become an aerial gunner. Then he decided to become a pilot, though other friends bet he could not do it. He was accepted and received his pilot's wings in May 1917. He flew more than 20 combat missions. "All Blood Runs Red" was painted, in French, on the side of his plane.

Bullard stayed in France after the war working as a drummer in a jazz band. He later started an athletic club and eventually opened a nightclub of his own called, L'Escadrille. Josephine Baker, Langston Hughes, Louis Armstrong, and Ernest Hemmingway were frequent patrons. They were entertained by performers like Dooley Wilson, who played Sam in the film *Casablanca*.

By the time World War II started, Bullard had married, divorced, and had custody of two daughters. It was then

that he was contacted by the Deuxième Bureau, French military counterintelligence, and asked to report what the many German officers said while they dined and drank in his club. (205ff) Unfortunately, *All Blood Runs Red* does not dwell on the intelligence or the details of its acquisition. It does say that Bullard was convincing enough to fool the Germans and a local partisan who shot him for being too friendly with the hated enemy. He survived.

When the Germans invaded France, Bullard volunteered for the infantry. He was wounded for the last time at Orléans and forced to escape to Spain. Then with help of friends at the US embassy, he returned to the United States where he would remain until his death in 1961.

All Blood Runs Red tells an extraordinary story of a pathbreaking American who was posthumously recognized by the National Museum of the US Air Force.

Break in the Chain—Intelligence Ignored: Military Intelligence in Vietnam and Why the Easter Offensive Should Have Turned Out Differently, by W.R. (Bob) Baker. (Casemate: 2021) 251 pages, endnotes, bibliography, appendices, photos, index.

Bob Baker was an army brat. By the time he graduated high school in 1970, he had lived all over the United States and in Germany, and his father was completing a second tour in Vietnam. The draft was still in effect when he received a draft board notice to report for a physical. He enlisted so that he could pursue the military specialty of his choice, intelligence. After basic training he was assigned to the first class at the new intelligence center at Ft. Huachuca, Arizona, and graduated first in his class. He was sent directly to Vietnam. *Break in the Chain* tells the story of his tour as an analyst in the 571st Military Intelligence (MI) Detachment and the events surrounding the Easter Offensive of 1972 in I Corps (comprising the three provinces just below the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Vietnam).

The central argument of Baker's book is that the Easter Offensive should not have been the surprise that it was and that lives were lost unnecessarily because the warnings supplied by the 571st were ignored. In developing this position, Baker presents a broad view of the military operations in Vietnam in the early 1970s. He includes events preceding the Easter Offensive that influenced it and the intelligence briefed to the military leaders at all

levels of command from Washington to Saigon headquarters (MACV), and various field elements. Writing some 50 years after the events allowed Baker to draw on archival material to provide a broad perspective and include details he did not know when they occurred.

In some respects, Baker's narrative reads like an intelligence analyst's report. He gives order of battle (OB) details for all sides, with dates and estimates of anticipated actions, and source reliability, all in considerable detail. And while acknowledging the often conflicting reports from other military and civilian sources, he concludes, "Our reports would become the lynchpin of future efforts for 1972." (145) To illustrate this point, he quotes the 571st report of February 28, 1972, that stated the "general offensive plan of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam would go into effect on March 10, 1972" [it began in April] and consist of "four main fronts." This was contrary to the current thinking and when Baker noted it was based on four reliable human agents, it only increased official doubt. This was because, he claims, human sources were considered unreliable by most commanders. To strengthen his point, he adds, "Virtually all detailed collateral information leading up to (and for the next couple of weeks after) the Easter

Offensive of 1972 in I Corps came from the 571st MI Detachment's agent reports...and our analysis contained in these INTSUMS" [intelligence summaries]. (146.)

While Baker makes a strong argument that the 571st got it right, he does not present any hard evidence that headquarters intentionally ignored the intelligence because even he acknowledges conflicting positions existed. There could have been other factors causing the delayed

response. In the end, South Vietnam, supported by US airpower, won the Easter Offensive, so the details Baker raises are not the subject of most histories.

Break In The Chain is a well-documented account that sheds light on an important intelligence contribution to the Vietnam War and the role of intelligence at the tactical level.

Capital of Spies: Intelligence Agencies in Berlin During the Cold War, by Sven Felix Kellerhoff & Bernd Von Kostka. (Casemate, 2021) 230 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

German historians Sven Kellerhoff and Bernd Von Kostka begin their book with the assertions that Berlin was the capital of spies during the Cold War and may still be so today. To bolster the latter position they cite Hans-Georg Maaßen, the head of the BfV—the German counterespionage agency from 2012 to 2018: "In no other city are there more spies." (9) But nothing more is said about post-Cold War Berlin espionage. And while this English edition of *Capital of Spies* is a revised version of the original German edition published in 2008, the focus remains the Cold War. Kellerhoff and Kostka offer this account as an updated "introduction to the history of espionage in Berlin." (11)

Examples of the new material include the discussion of the case of Stasi agent and West German policeman Karl-Heinz Kurras based on the release of more than 30 volumes of Stasi files in 2009. Then there is the surprising discovery of the previously unknown portions of the Berlin Tunnel in 2012, segments of which are in the Washington International Spy Museum. (11)

Most of the other topics in the book are well known. These include Jeffery Carney, the US soldier who monitored East European communications and volunteered his services to the Stasi, and James Hall, who worked at

the Anglo-American listening post on Teufelsberg—the highest point in West Berlin—and who offered his services to both the East Germans and the KGB. (59) Then there is the Berlin Tunnel operation, the Allies' military liaison missions working out of Potsdam, and the use of female agents in special operations. (129–32) Finally, they include the origins of the Stasi and its takeover by Erich Mielke and some discussion of HVA (the foreign intelligence division) under Markus Wolf.

The final chapter is devoted to an operation in which the CIA acquired a "list of at least several hundred thousand" HVA secret agents, designated the Rosenholz files. (352) The authors admit the details of acquisition remain in question, and they summarize the various alternatives that have surfaced, all unofficial. Understandably, the German intelligence services wanted copies of the Rosenholz files and the authors include a photo of a CD—with "Rosenholz" misspelled on the label as "Rosnholtz"—claiming copies were returned. They also indicate some agents were identified and arrested but are uncertain as to the overall counterintelligence benefits achieved.

Capital of Spies is an interesting, well-documented overview of Cold War espionage in Berlin.^a

The Cold War Wilderness of Mirrors: Counterintelligence and the US and Soviet Military Liaison Missions, 1947–1990, by Aden C. Magee. (Casemate, 2021) 322 pages, illustrations, maps, bibliography, and index.

For more than 40 years, the United States and Soviet Union maintained Military Liaison Missions (MLMs)

in Germany, which—despite their anodyne name and origins—served as important intelligence collection

a. US Army historian Thomas Boghardt has written a history that focuses on the work of Army intelligence in Germany at the beginning of the Cold War. See, *Covert Legions: U.S. Army Intelligence in Germany, 1944–1949* (US Army Center for Military History, 2022).

platforms for each side in the Cold War. In *The Cold War Wilderness of Mirrors*, former intelligence officer Aden C. Magee tells the story of this little-known area of intelligence history. Unfortunately, his account is not as valuable as one would hope.

Magee starts promisingly enough, with a straight forward account of the formal establishment of the MLMs in 1947. Originally intended as a means through which US and Soviet military forces in occupied Germany could communicate. Because the agreement provided headquarters facilities and virtually unlimited travel rights in each other's zones, MLMs quickly assumed intelligence roles. (The British and French had MLMs of their own, but Magee's focus is on the US and Soviet missions.) Magee then provides an overview of the MLMs' operations, collection methods, and the cat-and-mouse games in which US Mission members engaged with the Soviets and East Germans as they sought to collect on the two states' military forces. This makes the first hundred pages of *The Cold War Wilderness of Mirrors* an interesting and informative history of an area of operations that most people have never heard of.

After that, however, the book becomes a subpar effort at counterintelligence history. Magee's point is that the Soviets outwitted the Americans at every turn, deploying a centralized effort that penetrated the US military in Germany to such an extent that, however successful MLM collection might have been, its efforts were

neutralized—the Soviets knew all NATO plans and capabilities, he concludes. Much of the blame, Magee believes, lies with the military's complacency and ineptitude, but he heaps blame as well on CIA and its condescension toward military intelligence. Only late in the game, in the mid-1980s, did the US military realize how badly it had been defeated and began to reform its counterintelligence efforts. By then, of course, it hardly mattered, as the Soviet Union was on its last legs.

Magee, alas, needs almost 200 pages to make these points, and his writing is convoluted, repetitive, and dull to the point where all but the most dedicated readers will give up. Magee provides no footnotes or source attributions but instead gives a brief listing of the (largely secondary) sources he has consulted. This forces the reader to take his statements on faith, which is curious for a history that claims to use declassified documents and interviews as its primary sources. Magee may be correct in his statements, but the lack of citations makes it impossible to verify the accuracy of his accounts.

Beyond telling the story of the MLMs, the value of *The Cold War Wilderness of Mirrors* is Magee's point that the United States paid a heavy price for its poor counterintelligence practices. It's a shame, however, that it is surrounded by poor writing and inadequate documentation.

The reviewer: J.E. Leonardson.

Fugitives: A History of Nazi Mercenaries during the Cold War, by Danny Orbach. (Pegasus Books, Ltd., 2022) 288 pages, notes, bibliography, photographs, index.

Seasoned intelligence professionals know well the aphorism that perception and reality are often part of the same potion. The narratives their organizations work to verify are not necessarily consistent with facts, but chasing them can have significant geopolitical implications antithetical to their state's interests. University of Jerusalem professor Danny Orbach's *Fugitives: A History of Nazi Mercenaries during the Cold War* is a useful allegory that underlines the importance of this timeworn lesson. In this case, Orbach's deep-dive research into US, German, and Israeli archives throws welcome light on the activities of lesser-known Nazi fugitives seeking new identities after Germany's collapse at the end of World War II. More importantly, it illustrates how the fever dreams of the spies arrayed against them were ultimately

more influential than the less sensational, often painfully prosaic truth.

Whatever its billing, *Fugitives* is less a page-turning nonfiction thriller than a sometimes dizzying catalogue of names and incidents culled from Orbach's research. In just over 200 pages of text, Orbach breezes through a wide spectrum of players and organizations, most of which are unfamiliar even to persons well acquainted with WWII, the Holocaust, and Cold War spy games. Reinhard Gehlen, Adolf Eichmann, Josef Mengele, Heinz Felfe, and Herberts Cukurs all feature in various sections alongside lesser lights like Hermann Baun, Franz Rademacher, Walter Rauff, and Alois Brunner. Indications are that Orbach had more information on all of the lesser-known

individuals and the work would have benefited from deeper examination of their histories, personalities, and postwar activities.

Other minor flaws deserve cursory mention: Orbach sometimes is overreliant on metaphors or clichés that dilute the meaning of key passages. He has a strange fondness for the phrase, “Hitler’s rubbish heap,” which appears about a half-dozen times. Closer editing might have also helped. Orbach says the literal translation of *Auftragstaktik* is “mission tactics,” when the closest English approximation for this hard-to-translate term is more like “assignment delegation tactic.” Confusingly for the English-language reader, he refers to Lake Constance—which borders Germany, Austria, and Switzerland—as Lake Bodensee (in German, it is simply Bodensee).

None of these, however, undermines the utility of *Fugitives* as a quick, consequential read useful for even experienced intelligence professionals. Orbach skips across various persons, organizations, and events but still maintains a unifying narrative theme. In particular, he highlights how Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND, the West German intelligence service) head Gehlen and Mossad Director Isser Harel both were victims of emotionally slanted, narrative-based thinking divorced from strong

factual support. For example, Gehlen’s fear of Soviet aggression blinded him to the risks of employing compromised, highly suspect individuals like Felfe, whose betrayal to the Soviets deeply dented the BND’s credibility and Gehlen’s legacy. Gehlen’s willingness to supply arms through ex-Nazis to Algerian revolutionaries even undermined West Germany’s careful efforts of rapprochement with France.

Similarly, Harel’s obsession with German scientists working in Egypt arose from his fear that Gamal Abdel Nasser wanted to initiate a second Holocaust against the Jewish state with nuclear missiles. This belief was completely inconsistent with the facts that CIA and his own intelligence operatives were reporting. Mossad finally retreated from this narrative but not before kidnappings, letter bombs, and bungled assassination attempts undertaken as part of Operation Damocles threatened bilateral ties with the West German government and cost Harel his job. Both cases show that *Fugitives* is a timely reminder for an evergreen lesson: even experienced professionals do well to keep a clear head and discerning eye despite the heavy undertow of emotional and cognitive biases.

The reviewer: Chris K. is a member of the Lessons Learned Program at CSI.

Honey Trapped: Sex, Betrayal and Weaponized Love, by Henry R. Schlesinger. (The History Press, 2021) 352 pages, bibliography, index.

Twenty years after his release from prison in 1972, former KGB agent John Vassall was in need of funds. At a meeting in Claridge’s Hotel in London, collector Keith Melton bought the Minox-A camera—now in the International Spy Museum—Vassall had used to photograph British secrets and pass them to the KGB. Vassall, a gay man, was recruited while serving in the British embassy in Moscow as a clerk, although not a code clerk or assistant naval attaché as Schlesinger asserts. *Honey Trapped* describes how Vassall, after being shown photographs of himself in compromising circumstances with other men, agreed to become a KGB agent—a textbook honey trap. (257–61)

Not all the cases included in *Honey Trapped* are as clear cut as Vassall’s. Discounting his references to fictional cases, some of them do not qualify at all, like famed Civil War doctor Mary Walker, Confederate scout Frank

Stringfellow, or the much-mythologized World War I spymaster Elsbeth Schragmüller, none of whom used sexual entrapment for espionage. (154–57) This ironically supports his assertion “that those outside the intelligence community usually possess only a vague understanding of how honey-trap operations work.” (15)

In several instances Schlesinger broadens the classic Vassall definition of a honey-trap operation to include instances of seduction that lack a coercive element. The Civil War cases of Rose Greenhow and Belle Boyd are examples. (80–85) Mata Hari also falls in this category. The NKVD agent who seduced Trotsky’s female assistant to gain access to him and thus allow his assassination is another. (164–65) Markus Wolf’s East German so-called Romeo spies also qualify. (301ff)

The inclusion of the Bernard Boursicot case stretches the definition even further. (268–69) Boursicot, a French diplomat in China, was seduced by a Chinese-sponsored person with whom he fell in love and claimed to have fathered a child. Confronted by Chinese security officials who threatened to break up the union, Boursicot provided secret documents. The case blew up when it was revealed

that Boursicot's lover was a man. His explanation for the charade made no sense, and he served time in a French jail.

Although *Honey Trapped* is a well written collection of interesting stories, there are no source notes and many unforced errors. Caveat lector.

Nazis on the Potomac: The Top-Secret Intelligence Operation that Helped Win World War II, by Robert K. Sutton. (Casemate, 2021) 205 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

Originally part of George Washington's Mount Vernon estate in Northern Virginia, and named after a Civil War Union general, Ft. Hunt served a unique purpose during WWII. Three secret intelligence operations were conducted there. The first, called Military Intelligence Service-X (MIS-X), specialized in developing escape and evasion methods that could help American POWs escape. The second, Military Intelligence Service-Y (MIS-Y), involved specially trained soldiers who interrogated high-value German prisoners and eavesdropped on POW conversations. The third operation, called the Military Intelligence Research Service (MIRS), translated and analyzed captured German documents. The military participants were all sworn to secrecy for life and could refer to their post only as "PO Box 1142," its mail address in nearby Alexandria, Virginia. When the records of these operations were finally declassified beginning about 20 years ago, Robert Sutton, chief historian of the National Park Service, became interested in the story, interviewed the few survivors, and wrote *Nazis on the Potomac*.

While Sutton provides historical background on Ft. Hunt and biographical data on those he interviewed, the most interesting parts of the book are examples of what these operations did. For instance, there's the case of Silvio Bedini, "the first cryptographer in the U.S. Army"—a doubtful claim but still of interest. He was assigned to the "Creamery," the building where codes for communicating with POWs were developed. There he created a system that worked well for communicating with POWs. (188)

The interrogation and eavesdropping program, MIS-Y, had mixed results. Sutton estimates the most valuable information came from the monitoring program, the rest from interrogation. But the time delay involved lessened the value of the information in both cases and no examples are provided. The document translation program had similar limitations of time and distance. Sutton gives it high marks for producing the "Red Book" containing the German Army order of battle (OB) used by the Allies. (20) This is a difficult claim to accept since the Allies had more timely OB data in the field. But MIRS was of great historical value and continued long after the war was over.

Sutton adds comments about the staffing of Ft. Hunt. Most men trained at Camp Richie, Maryland; many were German Jews who had escaped to the United States. He also discusses Ft. Hunt's role in Operation Paperclip, which dealt with German scientists brought to the United States after the war. He mentions Werner van Braun as the most famous of the group, but he does not say he spent time at Ft. Hunt, although several of his colleagues were debriefed there.

Two final points are worth remembering. First, although chapter 5 is titled "Name, Rank, and Serial Number," soldiers did not have serial numbers; they had and still have service numbers. Second, *Nazis on the Potomac* is more about German military men, not all of whom were Nazis. In any case, it is an interesting contribution to the military intelligence record.^a

The Nine: The True Story of a Band of Women Who Survived the Worst of Nazi Germany, by Gwen Strauss. (St. Martin's Press 2021) 317, endnotes, bibliography, photos, no index.

Gwen Strauss is a poet. Her great aunt Hèlené Podliasky was an engineering student at the Sorbonne, who spoke

five languages and joined the French Resistance in 1943 when she was 23 years old. Captured in Paris by the

a. See also Warren Fishbein's review of *Nazis on the Potomac* on page 47 of this issue.

Gestapo in 1944, she was sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp on the last train to leave the city before the Allies arrived. Hèlené survived the war a decorated officer but did not speak of her experiences until 2002, when Strauss interviewed her. *The Nine* tells her story and those of her fellow prisoners—five French, two Dutch, and one Spaniard.

The first chapter, titled “Hèlené,” begins with an account of how the nine escaped the Germans. Only later do we learn how they were caught in the first place, the circumstances of their imprisonment, and how Strauss learned their stories.

While not a traditional chronological accounting, it is not annoying either. Chapters are devoted to one or more of the prisoner/escapees and provide essential background. In Hèlené's case we learn how Strauss came to record her great aunt's work for the Resistance. Besides the coded communications with London, she coordinated agent and equipment drops behind German lines in northern France and held clandestine meetings with resistance leaders. It was one of these efforts gone wrong that led to her arrest and the brutal experiences of German waterboarding (9) and having her fingernails pulled out (10) that she had kept hidden for so many years.

A Spy in Plain Sight: The Inside Story of the FBI and Robert Hanssen—America's Most Damaging Russian Spy, by Lis Wiehl. (Pegasus Books, 2022) 316 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

Lawyer, federal prosecutor, law professor, journalist, and novelist, Lis Wiehl is also the daughter of an FBI agent. For reasons unstated, Wiehl came to believe “there were secrets yet to be uncovered” about the case of FBI special agent Robert Hanssen, who voluntarily spied for Moscow from 1979 to 2001. Once made public, these secrets would “further a more robust discussion of how we can assure the FBI never again cultivates” another Hanssen. (ix) *A Spy in Plain Sight* attempts that ambitious discussion, minus the secrets. Put another way, although Wiehl's interviews with former FBI and CIA participants discloses some opinions and details not reported in other accounts, nothing classified is included.

In chapter 1, *A Spy in Plain Sight* grabs the reader's attention with the story of Hanssen's first known act of espionage, the betrayal of high-value GRU (Soviet military intelligence) Maj. Gen. Dmitri Polyakov (TOPHAT to the Bureau), an agent jointly run by the FBI and CIA. Wiehl

Hèlené's interview was not Strauss's only source. Suzanne Maudet (Zaza), whom Hèlené had known in high school and was one of the nine, wrote a book right after the war about her resistance experiences. Although not published until 2004, it supported much of Hèlené's account. In telling Zaza's story, Strauss includes vivid descriptions of life in Ravensbruck and its auxiliary camps, where Hèlené managed to sabotage the manufacture of the weapons she was assigned to produce. (47)

Succeeding chapters are devoted to the other members of the nine with details of their personalities and how they adjusted to concentration camp life. Their strength of character and determination to remain together when sent on a forced march to the east near the end of the war is impressive. It also made possible their successful escape to contact US soldiers in Colditz, Germany.

The final chapter tells how the nine lived after the war. Several had difficulty adjusting, some never did. They did not stay in contact and waited 60 years before having a reunion. *The Nine* tells a remarkable story of brave women serving the Resistance during WWII.

quotes CIA analyst Sandy Grimes to say he was “the best source that any intelligence service has ever had,” though no examples of what he provided are included. (4) Wiehl concludes her account by describing Polyakov's demise at the hands of the KGB: “He's lying naked on a metal tabletop, still alive after his torturers have extracted every last secret they can from him. As the video rolls, the tabletop is slowly elevated at one end until TOPHAT slides off the lower end into a roaring fire.” (6) As with other accounts of this more than likely apocryphal form of execution, no sources are provided.

Sourcing is a problem throughout the book, though Wiehl often cites the major books and official reports concerning cases. In so doing, she also reveals that most of what she writes has been told elsewhere. This includes her coverage of Hanssen's childhood, education, marriage, and religion, as well as his nerdy, even weird, personality, and his meandering path to the FBI. More importantly, it does not say

anything new about how he managed to make contact with the Soviets and avoid detection for 20 years while betraying their agents and other secrets to the KGB.

There are some incidents where two versions of the circumstances exist and she presents both, leaving final judgment to the reader. For example, Hanssen's wife, Bonnie, tells her brother Mark (an FBI agent) about \$5,000 cash she found in Robert's dresser. Mark says he reported the suspicious event to his supervisor. His supervisor tells a different story. (119ff) Nothing is done, and Hanssen continues his espionage for years.

As to new material, some concerns Brian Kelley, the CIA officer suspected by the FBI as the long-sought penetration. In chapter 18, Kelley's wife, lawyer Patricia McCarthy, gives her account of how Brian and his family dealt with the stress of constant FBI surveillance for two years. She also reveals the circumstances of Kelley's untimely death of a heart attack at age 68.

In a chapter titled "The Mind of a Spy," Wiehl speculates on why spies spy. In particular she includes the innovative though unorthodox recommendations of Dr. David Charney, a psychiatrist who interviewed Hanssen at length. These are followed by some practical assessments from former senior CIA officer Michael Sulick who outlines the range of often conflicting ambiguities that molehunters must take into account. Wiehl also reviews comments made by Jack Hoschouer, Hanssen's lifelong friend, but they offer nothing substantive.

In conclusion, after describing the perfunctory FBI apology made to Brian Kelley, *A Spy in Plain Sight* expresses some thoughts on the prospects of another Hanssen—very likely—but only covers the same old ground. If you have not read about the Hanssen case, *A Spy in Plain Sight* provides a thorough review.

Intelligence Abroad

Head of the Mossad: In Pursuit of a Safe and Secure Israel, by Shabtai Shavit. (Notre Dame University Press, 2020) 388 pages, endnotes, photos, index.

After service in the Israeli Navy and the special forces of the Israeli Defense Force's (IDF), Shabtai Shavit joined the Mossad. Twenty-five years later he was appointed its director. *Head of the Mossad* is an account of his career and his views on the role intelligence plays in Israel's survival.

Shavit says little about his life before government service. He does mention his wife and children and that his wife had served an operational tour with him in Iran but offers no details. He also reveals he studied at Harvard (1985–86) and was there when Jonathan Pollard was arrested as an Israeli spy. He quickly adds, "I, of course, had no idea who he was and what he had done." (41)

He is equally reticent when it comes to intelligence operations. Although the first three chapters have "intelligence" in the title, their content seldom mentions the subject, and when it does, it is just to describe functions. Only in the final chapter, "Wars," does Shavit discuss the intelligence failure that led to a "Pearl Harbor" surprise and the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, long before he became director. After faulting the IDF/Military Intelligence more than

the Mossad, he concentrates on the political fallout and the high-level resignations that resulted.

When he mentions more recent Israeli operations, for example, the destruction of the Iraqi nuclear site at Osirak, he says nothing about how it was accomplished. And while including a reference to the cyberattack on Iran's nuclear facilities "through the Stuxnet computer worm," (56) he only hints at Mossad participation. What does *Head of the Mossad* say?

Shavit provides an assessment of the threats facing Israel, the organizations charged with dealing with them, and the professional principles to be applied. When bureaucratic conflicts occur among the three intelligence services—IDF/MI, Mossad, and Shin Bet (internal security)—he discusses the solutions but not much about how they were realized. The issue of who performs analysis and research of information collected is an example. The IDF, as the senior service, retained that responsibility for some years. Shavit explains how the Mossad was authorized to develop its own capability over the objections of the IDF.

Other topics of interest include Mossad's relationship with foreign intelligence services and, in cases like Jordan, establishing contacts before diplomatic recognition. And while Shavit clarifies his views on security, media, censorship, Israel's strategic issues, he asserts intelligence plays a vital role but does not explain how.

Chapter 3, "Intelligence and the International Arena," reviews classical and modern terrorist organizations—including ISIS, al-Qa'ida, and Iran's Revolutionary Guard—and the principal Islamic beliefs driving their behavior. It notes in passing the "individual suicide

bomber, assuming that he complies with the basic rules of clandestine activity, can fly under the radar of intelligence and achieve the element of surprise," but Shavit does not discuss the operations undertaken to deal with the problem. (70)

Although Shavit maintains that he comes "from the world of practice and not from the world of thought," (206) his memoir suggests otherwise, taking as it does too much of a political science and historical approach at the expense of practice. Only of general interest.

Spies and Sparrows: ASIO and the Cold War, by Phillip Deery. (Melbourne University Press, 2022) 364 pages, endnotes, bibliography, index.

Phillip Deery is emeritus professor of history at Victoria University, Australia, where he specializes in the study of communism, anticommunism, and espionage. *Spies and Sparrows* examines the origins and development of the Australian Security and Intelligence Organization (ASIO) in the Cold War era.

In contrast to the Russian intelligence services, which apply the term "sparrow" to a female officer engaged in a honey trap or seduction for official purposes, ASIO employs the term to refer to its active agents. Operation Sparrow was ASIO's effort to insert an agent into every branch of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). By 1972, ASIO employed some "five hundred sparrows in 120 branches" of the CPA. (10)

To illustrate how ASIO worked to accomplish its security mission, *Spies and Sparrows* presents case studies of eight individuals—some communists, some suspected communists, and some anticommunists. Professor Deery supplements his discussion of each case with organizational and political details that affected ASIO's creation, development, and operational capabilities. A complicating factor was British and US distrust engendered by evidence of NKVD penetration revealed in the VENONA decrypts, which were initially kept from ASIO. Deery describes how ASIO gradually regained their trust.

Some of the cases fell victim to Cold War anticommunism of the early postwar era. For example, the nuclear scientist Tom Kaiser, Dr. Paul Janes, and migrant Jimmy

Anastassiou were procommunist but loyal Australians, a distinction ASIO could not grasp. Labeled subversives, their careers were ruined. At the other end of the political spectrum, Anne Neill, a housewife and the third sparrow ASIO ever recruited, became a card-carrying communist and penetrated the CPA for eight years. Initially a highly valued agent, she helped ASIO establish a detailed database of the CPA and its front groups in the region where she worked. But Deery raises some questions about the quality of her later reporting on subversives in the peace movement. (140)

Perhaps the most surprising chapter in *Spies and Sparrows* is the one about Maria Anna Allyson, better known as Evdokia Petrov, wife of Vladimir Petrov. The Petrovs were both KGB officers and they defected to ASIO in 1954, an act that earned the respect of Australia's intelligence service allies. They told their story in the book *Empire of Fear*.^a Professor Deery summarizes their recruitment, adding the little known fact that Vladimir defected "sixteen days before she did without telling her." (147) This complicated her defection, with ASIO's help, after she was put on a plane to Moscow escorted by KGB officers. Deery makes a strong case that, to ASIO's surprise, Evdokia was the more important of the two, since she had been a cipher clerk for the KGB and had operational experience in the field with both the KGB and GRU.

The remaining years in Australia were stressful for Evdokia. Vladimir became an alcoholic and mistreated her, a situation she discussed with GRU defector Igor

a. Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov, *Empire of Fear* (Praeger, 1956).

Gouzenko. She was also worried that the Soviets would penalize her family in Russia for her actions. This did not happen in her case, and her sister was allowed to join her. Deery speculates that the KGB didn't view her as having defected voluntarily. ASIO provided continuing support

after Vladimir died in 1991. This included employment and a dinner with KGB defector Anatoli Golitsyn. (162) *Spies & Sparrows* provides a lucid look at ASIO in its formative years while adding new material about the Petrovs and other less-well-known cases.

Rediscovered

HHhH, by Laurent Binet (translation by Sam Taylor). (Vintage, 2013), 327 pages. Published in French by Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 2009.

A first-time novelist produces a book of historical fiction that, as much as telling a story, inserts himself into the text to recount his struggles with the literary-philosophical questions of how to balance narrative, accuracy, and interpretation. This is not exactly calculated to attract American readers, but Laurent Binet's *HHhH* turns out to be a captivating book.

Binet's subject is Operation Anthropoid, the British-Czech mission in late May 1942 to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazi ruler of Bohemia and Moravia.^a The title refers to Heydrich's nickname in Nazi circles, *Himmler Hirn heist Heydrich*, or "Himmler's brain is called Heydrich." An exhaustive researcher, Binet sticks to the facts of Anthropoid as he creates a richly detailed and compelling story while delving into the minds and motivations of the characters, both Czech and German.

His reflections on how to do this, how much license an author has to put words and thoughts into his characters, and the morality of an assassination certain to result in savage reprisals (including the destruction of the entire town of Lidice and the murder of thousands of Czechs) create a parallel narrative that gives intelligence readers a lot to consider for their own work.

Favorably reviewed when it was published in French in 2010 (winning the Prix Goncourt du Premier Roman) and English in 2012, and adapted for the film *The Man With an Iron Heart* in 2019, *HHhH* did not find a large US audience and was not reviewed in *Studies*. But it is not too late to rediscover Binet's book; it is well worth the intelligence practitioner's time.

The reviewer: J. E. Leonardson.

Naples, '44: An Intelligence Officer in the Italian Labyrinth, by Norman Lewis. (First edition, Williams Collins, 1978; reprint by Eland Books, 1983, subtitled *A World War II Diary of Occupied Italy*), 187 pages.

In October 1943, when the Allies captured Naples, the densely packed city and vital transportation node on Italy's Mediterranean coast, they entered a city ruined by war. Allied bombers and naval gunners had killed tens of thousands of civilians, destroyed lines of communication, idled the vital fishing fleet, and shattered essential services like electricity and water. What the Allies had not destroyed—Lewis called it Gen. Mark Clark's Guernica—the retreating German Wehrmacht sabotaged, poisoned, and booby-trapped. Into this hellscape arrives Norman Lewis, a British intelligence officer assigned to the British Field Security Service.

In diary form, *Naples '44* opens with a wry tone that seems more akin to Evelyn Waugh's *Men at Arms* than John Hersey's *Hiroshima*. Lewis finds himself attached to the US Fifth Army, which wants little to do with him. He tramps ashore with the invasion force at Salerno armed only with a Webley revolver and five rounds of ammunition. Lewis observes that few of his comrades had ever fired a gun, and they spend a few days admiring the Roman temples at Paestum, reading poetry, and dodging the occasional desultory strafing runs by the Luftwaffe.

a. See R.C. Jagers, "The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich," *Studies in Intelligence* 4, no. 1 (1960). Released in full September 22, 1993.

Such idyll was short lived. When Lewis makes his way to his office, established in a grand palazzo as victors are wont, he sets about trying to sort friend from enemy. It is no small task. Lewis finds a city battered physically and psychologically, first by Mussolini's fascists, then the Germans, and finally the Allied invasion.

As in every theater, the US military arrived flush with riches unfathomable to most Napolitani. A mishmash of partisans, communists, chancers, and criminals jockeyed for largesse with the new masters, who incredibly had appointed the Italian-American gangster Vito Genovese to oversee logistics. Genovese quickly set up a massive blackmarket operation, and corruption fueled every manner of vice. Lewis recounts child beggars shooed away by restaurant patrons wearing coats made from US Army blankets and GIs trading rations for sex with destitute women. Lewis does not linger on such scenes of despair; his quick brushstrokes are more powerful than detailed sketches.

Lewis busies himself sorting out *denunzie* (complaints) filed by neighbors looking to settle scores or chasing down rumors of spies and saboteurs. After receiving reports of nighttime flashes of lights in one village, Lewis's team swoops in under cover of darkness, only to find a

man with a flashlight making his way to the single out-house in the village. Countless hours are spent in the bureaucratic labyrinth vetting fascist functionaries whose services are needed to run the city; prefiguring the Allies advance across Western Europe after D-Day or conquest of Imperial Japan, dubious alliances are made.^a

When his tour ends abruptly after a year, Lewis ruefully observes that the weary Napolitani very much just want the Allies to leave. "A year ago we liberated them from the Fascist Monster, and they still sit doing their best to smile politely at us, as hungry as ever, more disease-ridden than ever before, in the ruins of their beautiful city where law and order have ceased to exist." (169)

Naples '44 was adapted for a documentary in 2016, directed by Francesco Patierno and narrated by Benedict Cumberbatch and Adriano Gianni. Notable for its use of rarely seen archival footage of wartime Naples along with recreations and postwar movie clips, the film is a fine companion to Lewis's portrait of an intelligence officer in wartime Naples.

The reviewer: Joseph Gartin.

Streaming

All the Old Knives (Prime Video, 2022)

The best that can be said about this slickly produced yet ultimately forgettable film is that it plays a good hand poorly. All the right cards are surely there. Henry Pelham (Chris Pine) and Celia Harrison (Thandiwe Newton) are the impossibly photogenic pair of CIA case officers whose love affair was shattered by tragedy. Gloomy spy-filled Vienna, sunny coastal California, generic Islamist hijackers, *Bourne Identity*-style assassins, and predictably villainous CIA spymasters Vick Wallinger and Bill Compton (played with gusto by veteran actors Laurence Fishburne and Jonathan Pryce, respectively) tick the various boxes of the modern spy drama.

The predictable plot devices are not improved by director Janus Metz's lethargic pacing, which makes Tomas Alfredson's glacial adaptation of John LeCarré's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (2011) seem positively brisk. The first

15 minutes unfold so slowly you think time is moving backward, an effect amplified by Metz's reliance on flashbacks to explain why everyone seems so tormented. Metz is no stranger to effectively jumping location and time, as he did deftly codirecting the superb narco-trafficking series *ZeroZeroZero* (2019–20), another Prime Video release, but here it grows tiresome. At least *All the Old Knives* is on streaming, so you can make a cup of coffee or take the dog out, then rewind it to see if you missed anything. (Spoiler: you probably didn't.)

As usual, the intelligence practitioner will marvel at Hollywood's portrayal of espionage. This extends from the superficial—those spacious and elegant offices in the station would be unrecognizable to anyone who has worked overseas—to the existential. Wallinger dispatches Pelham to identify, and kill, the mole who leaked

a. See the review of *Fugitives* on page 58.

information that resulted in the deaths of all the hijacking victims eight years prior.

It does not reveal too much to say that Pelham is not alone in this task. In the film's denouement (cue more flashbacks), this operationally dubious and legally fraught solution seems to involve a few dozen conspirators. Did no one suggest turning the investigation over to the FBI,

filing a congressional notification, and handing out exceptional performance awards to the counterintelligence team instead? The price of greater verisimilitude might be less time travel and fewer sultry glances, but it would have been nice had the director tried.

The reviewer: Joseph Gartin.

