STUDIES

IN INTELLIGENCE

GUIDE
FOR
AUTHORS

AUGUST 2025

SPECIAL EDITION

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Writing for Studies

Studies in Intelligence is a journal for and by intelligence practitioners, educators, students, and the well-informed public. Sustaining any journal for seven decades is no small feat, and *Studies* has been able to do that because of a devoted cadre of writers wanting to contribute to the "elevated debate" envisioned by CIA trailblazer Sherman Kent. Many of these write for the journal one time on an issue or event important to them; a much smaller number of authors join a cadre of regular contributors exploring the theory, history, practice, and future of intelligence. However you envision your role, we hope this guide to writing for the journal will encourage you to make your own mark in the literature of intelligence.

— John Charles, Chair, *Studies in Intelligence* Editorial Board, and Director, Center for the Study of Intelligence

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STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE

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Author's Guide (August 2025)

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Covers of the first three editions of Studies in Intelligence.

Writing for *Studies in Intelligence*

A Guide for Authors

Joseph Gartin and Andres Vaart

The authors are the managing and production editors, respectively, of *Studies in Intelligence*.

In June 1955, intelligence trailblazer Sherman Kent made his case to CIA leaders for a journal that would contribute to the theory and practice of intelligence. The first issue of *Studies in Intelligence*, containing only Kent's essay, "The Need for an Intelligence Literature," would go to print a few months later.[a] By 1957, *Studies in Intelligence* would become a full-fledged journal, and it has been in continuous publication ever since. Kent correctly anticipated that there would be contributors and readers eager to explore the history, present, and future of our vital profession. Today, the intelligence-journal field is crowded (and global) compared to Kent's singular effort of the 1950s, but *Studies in Intelligence* still occupies a unique place as an interagency publication written by and for the American intelligence professional.

a. https://cia.gov/resources/csi/static/Need-for-Intelligence-Literature.pdf

Writing Articles

This special edition contains examples of the kinds of articles published in *Studies in Intelligence*. The journal's audience includes practitioners, scholars, and others seeking insights into the history, practice, theory, successes, and challenges of intelligence. These insights can take many forms, as the exemplars in this collection suggest: first-person narratives, historical inquiries, and strategic perspectives. This list is not exhaustive, and we take an expansive approach to the topics that *Studies* covers. If it is of professional interest to intelligence officers, it is probably suitable for *Studies in Intelligence*.[a]

Our readers look to the journal for original, thoughtful, and objective scholarship and perspectives that contribute to what Kent famously called an "elevated debate" among experts to improve the craft of intelligence. *Studies in Intelligence* is not a current-intelligence or political-opinion publication. There are many other platforms, classified and unclassified, for discussing ongoing world events or offering advice to decisionmakers.

You have decided to write an article for the journal—what comes next? We encourage potential contributors to reach out early to the editorial staff and to review the substantial holdings available on CIA's public website (see the cover verso for a guide) and classified websites before they begin writing. A clear thesis statement and a survey of the literature are the starting points for every successful author. We seek to create new knowledge, not to repackage existing works.

Articles are generally 5,000–6,000 words; longer is possible if the topic warrants, and shorter is appreciated by busy readers. Submissions should be in a plain Microsoft Word document, Calibri 11, double-spaced. Avoid pull quotes, watermarks, colored fonts, and other creative formating. Our primary guides for usage, grammar, and spelling are the *Chicago Manual of Style*, *Webster's New College Dictionary*, and the CIA/Directorate of Analysis *Style Guide*. Footnotes and endnotes should adhere to *Chicago* guidelines.

The Editorial Board's Role

Submissions are accepted for consideration as they are received. After review by the editorial team, they are delivered to the editorial board in time for quarterly meetings. The board, comprising about a dozen current and former Intelligence Community officials, meets in March, June, September, and December; as needed, drafts can be reviewed out of cycle. Board deliberations cover the gamut: accuracy, clarity, argumentation, originality, and scholarship. Members strive, consistent with readability and economy of language, to give authors considerable latitude in the expression of their messages.

As it has since its inception, the editorial board has sole decisionmaking authority. Members may approve, remand with needed changes, or reject articles. Most often, articles are approved with suggestions for improvement; the editorial team will then work with authors to respond to the feedback.

Once a draft is ready for formal editing, the editors work with the authors on high-level edits (e.g., structure and clarity) and detailed style and formatting changes. This is an iterative process; authors will have multiple opportunities to revise and review before an edition is finalized.

Writing Media Reviews

Book reviews (and broadly, media of all types) are an integral part of the *Studies* mission. We publish several dozen a year, a mix of short- and long-form reviews. Walter Pforzheimer helped cement the importance of brief reviews, now known as the Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf penned by Hayden

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a. See Nicholas Dujmovic, "Building an Intelligence Literature: Fifty Years of *Studies in Intelligence*," *Studies in Intelligence* 49, No. 4 (December 2025).

Peake and others. Short reviews focus on a single book and generally run about 500 words. Long reviews give contributors the space to go deeper or, often, to review more than one book on a topic. These review essays run to 1,500–2,500 words.

How do you write a media review? First, of course, is read the book, watch the movie, listen to the podcast series, and so forth. Consuming media for a review is different than doing so for pleasure. Take notes, observe critically, and organize your thoughts.

We have a general formula for reviews that serves both the reviewer and reader. You need not adhere slavishly to it, but veering too far off course will bring heartache. We're using a book review as an example, but this applies generally to other forms of media.

- What's the book about? Orient the reader quickly and clearly.

- Who's the author? Tell the reader about the author. What have they written before, what's their specialty, are there any biases we need to know about?

- Why read it? This middle section is the longest, most important, and often the hardest to craft. You need to hit the key points of the book, not reprise every chapter.

- What's it missing? Here you can insert your own voice. Does the author live up to the book's promise? What might have made it better?

- Bottom line: do you recommend it?

Book and media reviews are typically unclassified, so don't introduce classified content. If you are reviewing works of fiction (and we encourage this), focus on elements like the storytelling, plot, and character development. Avoid the "well, actually…" rejoinder unless it's absolutely vital. Similarly, if you're reviewing movies, podcasts, graphic novels, and other forms of media, the reader is looking for your insights into the artwork, cinematography, direction, production quality, music, etc. Do not include spoilers.

Be aware of writing your own article rather than a book review. This is a particular temptation with the longer form. As James Parker, a reviewer for the *New York Times*, wrote, "There is an art to book reviewing. Or a craft, I should say—because if the reviewer tries to be artistic, if he once abandons the secondary zone of criticism for the primary zone of creation, he's sunk."[a]

Another option is to review an important academic article or a collection of related articles. This kind of review is a service to the busy intelligence practitioner who might not be able to stay abreast of intelligence scholarship.[b]

Frequently Asked Questions

How often is Studies published?

Studies in Intelligence is published in March, June, September, and December, in hard copy and digitally on CIALink and Intelink. Since 1992, we have regularly produced unclassified editions; today, these are published quarterly as *Extracts* and are available on www.cia.gov/resources/csi. Included with this package are recent exemplars, two articles, a stand-alone media review, and a handfull of short "Bookshelf" reviews. Browse our websites for many more examples.

How do I contact the editors?

Contact links can be found on the CSI page on CIALink (*Contact*) and Intelink (*Feedback*), and on the main page of CIA's public website www.cia.gov (*Contact*).

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a. James Parker and Anna Holmes, "Is Book Reviewing a Public Service or an Art?" *New York Times*, February 8, 2015.
b. See Joseph Gartin, review of "Collective Discussion: Toward Critical Approaches to Intelligence as a Social Phenomenon," *International Political Sociology* 14, (2020), 323–44, by Hager Ben Jaffel, et al., *Studies in Intelligence* 66, No. 3 (September 2022).

May I use visuals?

We welcome graphics, charts, and images, and we can assist authors in creating or acquiring them. Visuals must be high-resolution files in standard formats (.jpg, .jpeg, etc.). We adhere to copyright restrictions. We will not publish graphically disturbing images (such as dead or severely injured people or animals, violent or sexual content, or depictions of extreme fear or dread). (See the artificial intelligence FAQ below.)

May I use artificial intelligence?

AI is rapidly becoming ubiquitous, and authors may be using AI (e.g., in internet searches) without even realizing it. AI editing tools are helpful to create outlines and to improve grammar and readability, and AI can rapidly create visual elements. The most powerful AI tools can create content that mimics human writing or artistic styles with remarkable verisimilitude. At the same time, AI remains prone to "hallucinating," including the creation of fake citations and data, and to generating sexualized or stereotyped images of people. Authors should be transparent in their use of AI when it extends beyond basic editing, and they are responsible for ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of quotations, references, data, and visuals.

Who is responsible for prepublication classification review?

For unclassified articles and reviews that will be published in the *Extracts*, authors with prepublication classification review requirements must follow their employer's guidance. Editors may request documentation that an article is approved for public release. For classified manuscripts, authors must obtain any permissions needed to downgrade material to non-restricted handling levels.

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Every item in the journal carries this disclaimer: "The views, opinions, and findings of the author expressed in the journal should not be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations or representing the official positions of any component of the US government."

Do I need to clear my article with my employer?

Separate from prepublication classification review, which is mandatory for some individuals, authors should exercise good judgment in informing relevant components, peers, or supervisors and in considering corporate equities. Although no content in *Studies in Intelligence* represents the views of any US government agency, authors should be aware that some readers may perceive otherwise.

May I use a pen name?

Yes, authors may use pen names that are approved by the editors. We strongly recommend that authors who aspire to be regular contributors are consistent in their use of pen names.

May I cite leaked intelligence in an unclassified article?

The short answer is generally no. *Studies in Intelligence* adheres to IC policy that unauthorized disclosures remain classified absent a formal determination by a classification authority. There are times, however, when authors will be unable to recognize if information they have uncovered in open-source material has been "leaked" or been declassified and released. We therefore encourage writers to meticulously provide sources for their findings; such sourcing will also help classification reviewers reach appropriate decisions.∎

A view of the Kremlin in summer calls to mind fictional spymaster George Smiley's quip, "It would be beautiful in another context."

Beautiful in Another Context: A Counterintelligence Assessment of GTPROLOGUE

Alexander Orleans

Alexander Orleans is a cyber threat intelligence analyst and former US government contractor.

In the 1980s, the Soviet Union's Committee for State Security (KGB) launched a concentrated disinformation campaign as part of an effort to safeguard the identity of their CIA penetration agent, Aldrich Ames. Part of that campaign involved Aleksandr Vasilyevich "Sasha" Zhomov, dispatched as a dangle-type double agent by the KGB in May 1987 targeting CIA's Moscow Station and its Soviet and Eastern European (SE) Division. CIA assigned Zhomov the cryptonym GTPROLOGUE and accepted him as a source; he subsequently became a key disinformation and deception channel for the KGB. In a broader historical context, GTPROLOGUE exemplifies CIA's troubled experience with hostile double agents during the 1980s, when a few select services—particularly the Soviets, East Germans, and Cubans—badly burned the agency. (This article originally appeared in *Studies* in June 2025.)

Both the KGB's dispatch of Zhomov and CIA's handling of him as GTPROLOGUE are instructive. The former provides insight into the crafting of offensive counterintelligence operations, particularly underscoring how proper tailoring of a controlled source operation can manipulate a targeted service's attempts at asset validation and thus extend the lifespans of operations. The latter is a cautionary tale of counterintelligence flags that, when methodically inspected, could improve the likelihood of successfully unmasking future provocations.

This assessment is based entirely on publicly available material. To the author's knowledge, the primary source documents associated with this case remain classified, as do illuminating details they might contain. Also, the publicly available facts of the GTPROLOGUE case are rather disparate and occasionally contradictory. In attempting to reconcile such instances of contradiction, the author has preferred to use information that is supported by a preponderance of available research. With both of these qualifications in mind, what follows is an endeavor to present the first public, comprehensive, and contextual accounting of the case as well as its implications for running double-agent operations and conducting asset validation.

Contemporaneous KGB Perspective

On June 13, 1985, Aldrich Ames used his position as a counterintelligence officer in CIA's elite Soviet and Eastern European (SE) Division to sell the identities of more than a dozen Soviet agents—including military and intelligence officers—secretly working for the United States to the KGB for $2 million in an escrow account.[1] The losses resulting from Ames's betrayal played out over the rest of 1985 and 1986. CIA learned of them in sporadic bursts during that two-year period, finding itself by 1987 operating at a marked disadvantage. The '85–86 losses, as they became colloquially known within CIA, also signaled the need for a major KGB undertaking to deceive CIA as to the real reason for these losses. A multichannel KGB disinformation campaign, which operated from at least 1986, was launched to convince SE Division that its losses were the result of anything but a penetration.[2]

Two narratives were included in this campaign. The first was that the KGB had managed to secure a technical penetration of CIA's Moscow Station in the US Embassy. The second, which this author terms the "SCD [Second Chief Directorate] omniscience narrative," was that the operational brilliance and ingenuity of the KGB's SCD, abetted by poor CIA tradecraft, had exposed CIA

sources in Moscow that in reality had been betrayed by Ames.

To make this campaign as effective as possible, the KGB relied on its traditional approach to counterintelligence operations. A guiding principle was a certain aggressiveness that emphasized seizing the initiative from the enemy and staying on the offensive.[3] For the Soviet Union, counterintelligence—both foreign and domestic—was the principal raison d'etre of its intelligence efforts both as a revolutionary movement prior to October 1917 and later as a government. Harry Rositzke, the first chief of CIA's original Soviet Division, summarized this legacy:

> … there is an intangible quality of Soviet intelligence that is perhaps its greatest strength. It is the natural product of the origins and character of Soviet society, what I choose to call the clandestine mentality, the psychological tendency and ability to think and act in secret.… The clandestine mentality is rooted in a conspiratorial view of the world: the world is an unsafe place, for someone out there is plotting against me.… Since the world is a threatening place, only secret counter-action can guarantee survival.[4]

The emphasis on counterintelligence, and an offensive conception of it, was deeply ingrained in the institutional and operational culture of the KGB. According

to the official KGB dictionaries of intelligence and counterintelligence terminologies, the three guiding principles of KGB operational culture were "clandestinity," "vigilance," and "aggressiveness."[5] Of the three, it was aggressiveness that was meant to suffuse the KGB officer's attitude toward operational action:

> [The style] *of counter-intelligence (intelligence) activity which is proactive and full of initiative, ensuring maximum success in the struggle against the enemy. It is a guiding principle which the intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies seek to follow in their work. In accordance with this, the side which takes the offensive will, all things being equal, achieve the best results.*[6]

The same terminologies defined "counter-intelligence" as:

> [The] *fight against the subversive activity of capitalist intelligence services, the organizations and individuals which they use and hostile elements within the country.… It is characterized by active measures designed to take the offensive against the enemy and to obtain information about his secret plans, intentions, and aspirations. This makes it possible to take steps in advance to forestall enemy subversive actions.*[7]

In attempting to forestall such adversary activity, the KGB "reflexively" favored the use of controlled source operations and mounted many dangle operations.[8] As the Cold War progressed, the KGB became known for extensively using double agents and dangles, most often for tactical counterintelligence (as opposed to strategic deception) purposes.[9] The use of dangles and double agents was considered to be valuable not only as a way to gain windows into an adversary services' motives and methods, but also to plant disinformation and tie down adversary personnel and resources in useless activity. This reflected a long-held preference to use disinformation to conceal real sources.[10]

By the 1980s, that norm of aggressiveness was tempered by two fears: potential punishment for over-disclosure of information during double-agent operations, and the risk that certain dangles would jump ship if given information significant enough to warrant substantial rewards from Western services. It was apparently "strict KGB doctrine that certain types of people and certain types of information would never be shared with CIA in double-agent operations."[11]

Within the KGB, the Soviet preoccupation with secrecy fostered an institutional bias against release of the sort of valid feed typically required to establish the credibility of a deception channel.[12] Stoking this bias among KGB officers running double-agent operations was the fear that someone higher up in the chain of command could decide later that passed information was in fact too sensitive to have been used as bait and then punish the officers involved. Ames himself said after his arrest:

> *Even if a document were of no real value, no one in the Soviet military was willing to sign off on releasing it, knowing that it was going to be passed to the West. They were afraid that a few months later, they would be called before some Stalinlike tribunal and be shot for treason.*[13]

As the pool of information available for use as valid feed was limited, so was the pool of available candidates for its delivery. The KGB feared using staff officers, who, given their rank and position, would have access to detailed knowledge of the KGB's internal workings—and should they defect would be worth their weight in gold to a Western counterintelligence service. Therefore, provocations dispatched by the KGB who actually worked inside the KGB typically presented themselves as having "peripheral or infrequent access" to information of particular interest to target services.[14] The KGB was still operating under both of these constraining policies when the decision was made to mount a disinformation campaign to conceal Ames's treachery. However, opportunities for innovation were provided by Ames himself.

Ames's initial betrayal to the KGB had been the identities of several sources whom CIA had accurately identified as KGB dangles but had chosen to run in order to monitor their production in an effort to ascertain KGB goals. Ames had chosen to expose these sources specifically because he convinced himself it was a moral way to make a quick buck, given that CIA was only receiving false information from them and that the KGB would not punish agents it truly controlled.[15] Yet, by revealing to the KGB which sources CIA knew to be dangles, he also was offering it vital details on how to craft future dangles in a way that would avoid detection.

At some point later in his career as a Soviet spy, Ames eventually provided explicit coaching to his KGB handlers on how to improve their dangle techniques and may have done so well that least a few subsequent dangles were taken by CIA as genuine.[16] This coaching likely included revealing the prevailing theories in the SE Division about how the Soviets ran double agents (discussed below).[17] It is possible that the nontraditional risks taken during the Zhomov case described below were, at least in part, a result of Ames explicitly providing such guidance. Similar guidance also may have been available to SCD via Edward Lee Howard, the former CIA officer who had previously betrayed CIA assets to the KGB and defected to the Soviet Union in 1985.[18]

Dispatching Zhomov

Sometime in 1986, Valentin Klimenko, chief of the SCD's First Department, was directed by either his immediate superior—legendary SCD chief Rem Krasilnikov—or KGB Chairman Viktor Mikhailovich Chebrikov to dispatch a dangle against CIA's Moscow Station with the apparent intent of feeding the SCD omniscience narrative to CIA.[19] On December 22, 1986, Klimenko allegedly met with Aleksandr Zhomov in private, off of official KGB property, and directed him to develop a "plan for something special for our American special service boys" within one month.[20] Zhomov, 32, broke the mold of previous dangles run by the KGB in several ways, all of which were designed to make Zhomov appear as legitimate as possible in the eyes of CIA.[21] These aberrations included several aspects.

Rank and standing

Zhomov was a staff officer in the First Department of the SCD, which was responsible for counterintelligence against Americans in Moscow, and he had served in the KGB for 10 years.

Responsibility

Zhomov was the direct supervisor for all surveillance teams tasked to follow CIA officers in Moscow on a day-to-day basis; he also later described himself as Klimenko's executive assistant. Both descriptions suggest he worked with the First Department's Second Section—the unit responsible for countering intelligence operations emanating from the US Embassy—and either duty would provide him access to a veritable gold mine of intelligence of value to Western services, particularly CIA.[22]

Training

Zhomov spoke English with near-native fluency, indicating a significant investment in him by the KGB, especially given the fact that he was a domestic counterintelligence officer, as opposed to a foreign operations officer.

To be selected as a provocation, an officer like Zhomov must have had Klimenko's absolute confidence and, given that Klimenko claimed he was directly tasked with running the operation, Klimenko must have had Cherbikov's absolute confidence as well.

Running the Provocation

Zhomov's primary mission appears to have been to convince the Americans that the '85–86 losses were a result of the SCD's skills in following CIA officers, combined with poor tradecraft on the parts of US case officers and sources.[23] That SCD omniscience narrative provided benign explanations for the losses that, if believed, would both have a demoralizing effect on

the CIA and deter it from looking inward for a mole.

Coincidentally, the narrative played into a growing paranoia in Moscow Station that the SCD had developed unshakable, "ultradiscreet surveillance" capabilities that CIA could not evade.[24] This paranoia was born of both the '85–86 losses and internal investigations, initiated on the basis of earlier KGB disinformation, that were in the process of ruling against the possibility of a technical penetration of Moscow Station. Available open sources do not indicate whether or not Ames shared those views with his KGB handlers prior to the development of the chosen deception narrative.

The entire operation was crafted to reinforce the SCD omniscience narrative, including the contact procedures Zhomov was to use and the feed he provided US intelligence. Zhomov's posting was to be his cover to contact CIA's chief of station (COS) in Moscow, Jack Downing. First, he would add to his portfolio the personal responsibility for monitoring Downing. This would ostensibly allow him to penetrate the tight KGB surveillance bubble around Downing and pass documents providing initial bona fides, a note outlining motivations for an offer of service to CIA, and instructions for future contact. This is precisely what happened one night in May 1987 in the last car of the *Red Arrow* overnight train between Moscow

and Leningrad, which Downing was known to take on a regular basis.[25] Zhomov reportedly introduced himself as "Edwin" in his initial note to Downing.[26]

This first batch of documents included recent surveillance photos of Downing and his wife, along with a very long note by Zhomov. This note had three parts.[27] First was an accurate outline of Zhomov's position and responsibilities in the SCD, but without his name or a pseudonym. Second was an explanation of his purported motives: a mixture of growing frustration with the Soviet system and a failing marriage combining into a desire to leave for America, and thus an offer to spy for CIA to secure its good graces. Third was instructions for a communications plan ("commo plan") dictated by Zhomov: future contact was to be impersonal and at Zhomov's discretion but would utilize his role as Downing's surveillance officer.[28] Ironically, Zhomov's immediate and explicit willingness to spy for CIA, along with the offer of a thoroughly preconceived commo plan, would have been considered tell-tale signs of a dangle in the eyes of the SCD's foreign operations colleagues in the KGB's First Chief Directorate.[29]

This commo plan was designed by the SCD so it could control all aspects of Zhomov's contact with CIA personnel to the point of domination. In a double-agent

operation, the concept of "control" can best be understood as:

> … *the capacity of a case officer (and his service) to generate, alter, or halt agent behavior by using or indicating his capacity to use physical or psychological means of leverage.… The degree to which an agent's communications can be controlled runs closely parallel with the degree to which he is physically controlled. Communications control, at least partial is essential: the agent himself is controlled to a considerable extent if his communications are controlled.* [30]

By that definition, the details of the commo plan ensured maximal SCD control over both the physical movements of, and communications between, Zhomov and Downing. Downing was to park his car at one of several restaurants or movie theaters listed in the note on each Friday night, leave his car unlocked, and go inside to the chosen establishment for a meal or film. Zhomov would enter Downing's car under the pretext of rifling Downing's briefcase for recently arrived diplomatic mail and deposit new documents in the briefcase. Should Downing wish to communicate with Zhomov, he was to include a specially marked envelope in his briefcase that Zhomov would know to take with him, effectively turning Downing's briefcase into a letter drop that was to be the primary channel of communication and contact. Brush

passes on the *Red Arrow* would be secondary, but still possible given Zhomov's knowledge of Downing's movements.

These restrictive contact methods not only played into Zhomov's role as chief of surveillance on Downing, but also eliminated any chance for Downing to carefully interrogate Zhomov in person. The denied-area operational environment presented by Moscow—a key element of how the SCD intended to ensure control over the entire operation—inherently precluded face-to-face meetings with sources exceeding about four to seven minutes. Also, any request Downing made for such a meeting elsewhere in Russia could be refused by Zhomov on the grounds that he, of all people, could not be expected to escape the surveillance at which he claimed the SCD so excelled, especially given that they were his people and would notice his absence. Zhomov's posting also precluded a meeting outside the USSR, as SCD officers had lacked occupational excuses for travel abroad. Through these measures, the KGB also reinforced its own defensive counterintelligence position: the risk of Zhomov actually attempting to defect was considerably mitigated through the SCD's control over the operating environment and subsequently the tempo and nature of contact.

Construction of the "bodyguard of truth"[31] designed to safeguard Zhomov against intense CIA

scrutiny continued with his second batch of documents, delivered via the planned letter drop procedures one Friday in June 1987. These documents, meant to attest to Zhomov's access, described an upcoming offensive counterintelligence campaign by the KGB. In the coming months, the SCD was planning to dispatch a number of provocations against Moscow Station, specially selected for their attractiveness to US intelligence interests, in order to keep CIA so busy vetting false volunteers that it would be unable to make time for real sources that may volunteer.[32]

Beginning in July and continuing over four more months, the KGB dutifully ran dangles matching descriptions provided in Zhomov's production.[33] Zhomov thus was seen by CIA as having provided valid, valuable information along a plausible line of access. (It is unknown what tradecraft Moscow Station employed in handling these dangles, but it was likely low-level tradecraft that SE Division had reason to believe was previously exposed or could risk exposure.) Having thus established his bona fides via production, Zhomov finally passed along the lie of the SCD omniscience narrative. During another letter drop in June, Zhomov turned over a complete and accurate list of all CIA sources arrested by the KGB in 1985 and 1986, as well their fates, but attributing all losses to the SCD omniscience narrative.[34] Internal KGB assessments

of Downing and his predecessor as Moscow COS were included as well.[35] Both pieces of information fit rationally into Zhomov's demonstrated access.

Contemporaneous CIA Perspective

At the time Zhomov appeared on CIA's radar, there was immense concern over determining the cause of the '85–86 losses. Beginning in January 1986, steps were taken within the SE Division to increase compartmentalization and to make inquiries, through offensive counterintelligence operations, into possible causes for the losses.[36] Those offensive operations returned only negatives, indicating that there had not been a penetration of the communication lines between the SE Division at headquarters and stations abroad.[37]

During 1986, two cases occupied much of the counterintelligence efforts regarding the '85–86 losses. First was Mister X, a self-declared—but anonymous—KGB officer who sent six letters to a CIA officer in Bonn between March and October 1986.[38] In these letters, Mister X claimed that a recently lost CIA source had been compromised by a technical penetration of Moscow Station. Mister X was later concluded to be fictional and his claims to be KGB were disinformation.[39] Second was Clayton Lonetree, a Marine Corps guard at the US Embassy in Moscow, who was caught in a

honeypot by the KGB in 1985.[40] However, Lonetree knew little of use to the KGB and turned himself in to the CIA station chief in Vienna in 1986. SE Division closely followed the Naval Investigative Service case against Lonetree and, following his court martial in August 1987, debriefed him extensively before determining that he did not facilitate a KGB technical penetration of Moscow Station.[41]

All of these efforts occurred in the context of CIA's decades-long recovery from the tenure of James Angleton as chief of counterintelligence. Beginning in the early 1960s and continuing until his forced retirement in 1974, Angleton formed and operated under an intricate set of hypotheses in which the KGB was nearly omnipotent, all Soviet volunteers and defectors were likely provocations, and the KGB had a highly placed penetration in CIA. This state of affairs and its effects at CIA were summed up by one of its former chiefs of counterintelligence, Paul Redmond, in 2010:

> *Because there was a belief that the Soviets had penetrated the CIA during the 1960s and the early 1970s,* [Angleton's Counterintelligence Staff] *reigned supreme, paralyzing operations against the Warsaw Pact by assuming that the KGB knew of and controlled all operations. During the tenure of* [Director of Central Intelligence] *William Colby in the mid-1970s, there was a reaction*

> *to this mindset that destroyed CI at the CIA and* [led] *to spies in the Agency going undetected and the flowering of opposition-controlled cases.[42]*

It was in this environment that, in July 1971, CIA case officer Burton Gerber published a study of sources and volunteers that had been condemned as provocations by Angleton; Gerber correctly determined that most of them had likely been genuine and not under opposition control.[43, 44] His study was part of an ongoing and fierce internal debate within CIA over the validity of Angleton's theories. Following Angleton's departure, Gerber's paper found strong support and became quite influential, contributing to a renewed willingness by the SE Division to engage the Soviet human intelligence target, and—as explored below—eventually contributed to the asset-validation philosophy of the SE Division as it related to the KGB.[45]

The ill effects of the post-Angleton period extended to asset validation practices within CIA and, according to Redmond, included a "refusal of officers to believe their cases could be a fabricator or controlled by the opposition, particularly when promotions were involved," often in cases involving Warsaw Pact and Soviet sources.[46] This hindered asset validation efforts and increased the likelihood that dispatched double agents could go undetected or that legitimate ones could be tripled and returned

to Soviet control. At the same time, CIA was grappling with the challenges of asset validation within denied areas. Again, Redmond is instructive:

> *Asset validation is a very difficult task, particularly when the source is handled in a "denied area" and there are few, if any, other sources of "collateral" information on which to rely for comparison.… In the absence of any sources of its own within the opposition service to warn them, Western services running cases in denied areas have had to rely on the value of the intelligence provided, corroboration of its validity by other sources, if available, and the operational circumstances surrounding the case—particularly how it started.[47]*

The author believes that this statement can be taken as indicative of CIA's philosophy on asset validation in denied areas. While that philosophy is sound, it labors under constraints that are both self-evident and significant. Therefore, officers working denied area cases must be intimately familiar with the tradecraft, preferences, and foibles of the particular opposition service they are laboring to operate against. These tailored insights supplement the four methods of asset validation possible in denied-area cases—identified by Redmond as penetration of the opposition, value of intelligence produced by the source, corroboration of said intelligence by other sources, and analysis of the

case's origins—by making officers better able to detect patterns that could help determine whether or not a given source is under opposition control.

A relevant example of such a pattern in the case of GTPROLOGUE was foreshadowed by a key aspect of Gerber's 1971 study. One of the study's conclusions was that in none of the surveyed cases had the KGB dangled a staff officer, out of concern over the possibility of a real defection; as time went on, this conclusion became something akin to an operational rule of thumb within SE Division: the KGB did not dangle staff officers.[48] (Evidence also indicates that FBI agents during the Cold War separately arrived at, and also generally held, the view that the KGB "would never send a staff officer" as a dangle because of the risks involved if the officer chose to genuinely switch sides.[49])

By the time Zhomov's operation was conceived and launched by the KGB, the "staff officer theory" was apparently accepted, albeit informal, doctrine within much of SE Division. (However, it should be noted that nothing in open sources indicates that, in his 1971 study, Gerber ever suggested that the fact that the KGB had not previously dangled a staff officer could be treated as a guarantor of similar behavior in the future.) Given Ames's numerous postings within SE Division and his explicit coaching of the KGB on improving its

provocation techniques, it is probable that he informed the KGB of the staff officer theory.

Shortly after Zhomov approached Downing for the first time in May 1987, the then-unidentified SCD officer was assigned the cryptonym GTPROLOGUE by SE Division.[50] Debate ensued over the new source's legitimacy that same month among SE Division's leaders at CIA Headquarters, mirroring similar debates probably taking place within Moscow Station. Despite the prevalence of the staff officer theory, some viewed GTPROLOGUE as unsettlingly well-timed and well-placed, particularly in light of CIA's desire for inside knowledge of the '85-86 losses.[51] The decision to run GTPROLOGUE and see where he took CIA was made by Gerber, who had been chief of SE Division since summer 1984, and his counterintelligence-minded deputy Redmond on the following explicit premise: if GTPROLOGUE were a legitimate volunteer, he would be a valuable source; conversely, should CIA determine him to be a dangle, his reporting would help indicate topics about which the KGB hoped to mislead CIA.[52]

CIA acquiesced to GTPROLOGUE's requested commo plan. In an effort to reduce the potential for compromise while maximizing opportunities for contact, Downing limited his trips on the *Red Arrow* to once every three months, and spent every Friday

night at one of GTPROLOGUE's designated sites. While these logistics meant primary contact with GTPROLOGUE occurred through the letter drop, Downing discovered that GTPROLOGUE would make contact only about once a month, and that the Friday chosen for contact was unpredictable.[53] Available evidence indicates that no additional methods of contact ever were used between GTPROLOGUE and CIA.

When the SCD dangle campaign foretold by GTPROLOGUE's reporting came to pass, the SE Division's leadership directed Moscow Station to run the provocations, despite knowing their true allegiances. This decision was based on a desire to protect GTPROLOGUE: should the provocations be rejected, suspicion in the SCD could fall on him.[54] Soon, the running of these dangles occupied a majority of the station's resources, officers, and time—all with CIA knowledge that no reliable intelligence was being produced. This situation continued even though one instance of particularly sloppy tradecraft by the KGB blatantly revealed that two of the dangles were, in fact, provocations.[55] Had the KGB been taking those provocations seriously, rather than viewing them as ancillary aspects of the larger Zhomov operation, it should have taken steps to firm up the apparent legitimacy of the dangles in question in the aftermath of the error. However, there are no indications that the KGB made any

such efforts, and available information indicates that CIA continued to run both dangles involved, rather than dropping them as could have been justified by the information exposed through the KGB's error in tradecraft.

"Shopping lists" of desired intelligence and questions aimed to test GTPROLOGUE's legitimacy were passed via the letter drops, and apparently no long debriefings allowing for face-to-face assessment of the source ever occurred. After his initial production about the SCD dangle campaign and the SCD omniscience account of the '85–86 losses, GTPROLOGUE never again delivered intelligence that could be described as "certain to hurt [the KGB]."[56] For his efforts, CIA evidently paid GTPROLOGUE "a good deal of money," although there is no clear indication of how or how much.[57] Assertions that he was given upward of $1 million as part of a joint CIA-FBI program aimed at tempting KGB officers to provide intelligence on the '85–86 losses are unproven, and have been made on the basis of what could be interpreted as a post hoc fallacy.[58]

In light of GTPROLOGUE's material attributing the '85–86 losses to the SCD omniscience narrative, SE Division counterintelligence officers working on the losses began to push for questions to be passed to GTPROLOGUE that were designed specifically to test his legitimacy as a penetration. But it appears that the idea of putting such questions to GTPROLOGUE was resisted by elements of SE Division's leadership, which raised a concern common to sensitive cases that questioning the asset too sharply would "make him mad."[59] The questions that eventually were put to GTPROLOGUE were met with answers the wary counterintelligence officers found to be "vague or improbable."[60] Whenever a "hard question" testing his legitimacy did get put to GTPROLOGUE, he would demur and claim that he was holding out on providing his most sensitive intelligence until after CIA had safely extracted him from Russia.[61] However, at no point did he ever request a timeline or express an immediate desire for extraction—a significant red flag.

Uncovering GTPROLOGUE

Eventually, CIA learned GTPROLOGUE's identity through the debriefing of Sergey Papushin, a former SCD officer who defected to the FBI in New Jersey in November 1989.[62] Papushin, who had been acquainted with Zhomov during the former's KGB days, identified a photo of GTPROLOGUE as his former colleague during questioning by CIA, although he did not indicate an awareness of Zhomov's role as a double agent. But Papushin's knowledge of Zhomov did not gel with GTPROLOGUE's reporting about himself: while GTPROLOGUE claimed his marriage had essentially failed, and that this failure had contributed to his desire to defect, Papushin claimed that Zhomov was in fact happily married and doted upon his daughter.[63]

Over time, a combination of the drop-off in the quality GTPROLOGUE's production, poor answers to operational testing questions, and the discrepancies raised by Papushin's reporting all stoked the ongoing debate within SE Division (and the station) as to GTPROLOGUE's legitimacy as a bona fide volunteer versus a double agent. By April 1990, the five people on the GTPROLOGUE operational bigot list at CIA Headquarters were taking informal internal straw polls as to his true allegiance after each exchange between GTPROLOGUE and the new Moscow COS, Mike Cline. In these straw polls, a majority only declared GTPROLOGUE legitimate about 50 percent of the time.[64] Eventually, SE Division decided to deploy a "no exit" approach to determine GTPROLOGUE's legitimacy: attempting a mutually agreed exfiltration operation of Zhomov in July 1990.[65] On April 5, 1990, the final decision to go through with an exfiltration was made by Deputy Director for Operations Richard Stolz, supported by the recommendation of then–SE Division Chief Milt Bearden.[66]

Failure and Extraction

Before the April 5 decision, SE Division developed an exfiltration operation to take GTPROLOGUE out of Russia by having him travel to Estonia and pass from there to Helsinki by ferry on a US passport altered by CIA Technical Services.[67] Several weeks before, extraction had been floated to GTPROLOGUE along with a request for photos to be used in the passport. GTPROLOGUE agreed, provided the requested photos, and later was passed the passport via a dead drop in Moscow.[68]

GTPROLOGUE now was supposed to leave Russia for Estonia on July 10, 1990, but by July 14 he still had not arrived in Helsinki.[69] On July 14, Cline was asked to take the *Red Arrow* with his wife to Leningrad, on the off chance that GTPROLOGUE would attempt a brush pass to explain why he had not followed through on the exfiltration.[70]

A man, possibly GTPROLOGUE, did conduct a brush pass to Cline's wife that night aboard the *Red Arrow*. The passed note expressed "exasperation and rage," decrying the identity provided for the exfiltration as too risky to use and telling CIA that the writer was going to have to lie low and would initiate future contact when he felt it was safe.[71] After the *Red Arrow* arrived in Leningrad, the Clines found themselves under especially heavy surveillance and quickly noticed that GTPROLOGUE was blatantly part of their usual KGB surveillance team. Combined with the contents of the final passed note, these events led SE Division's leadership to conclude that GTPROLOGUE had been under KGB control for his entire operational life as a CIA asset, and effectively ended CIA's dealings with him.[72]

Ames' connections to GTPROLOGUE provide, at most, odd postscripts to the case. In 1989, some of GTPROLOGUE's reporting on dangles apparently led CIA to discard the reporting of a Russian volunteer (Sergey Fedorenko, a former academic who had been permitted to leave the Soviet Union) as possibly under KGB control, when in fact he was not.[73] Ironically, Ames was one of the few individuals in CIA at the time who disputed the applicability of GTPROLOGUE's intelligence to the defector.[74] Ames, acting as an unwitting playback mechanism for the SCD, later would pass information to the KGB throughout 1990 warning it of GTPROLOGUE's existence, but was apparently reassured by his handler that GTPROLOGUE would not betray Ames to CIA.[75] Ames's reporting on GTPROLOGUE may also have been viewed as something of a test of Ames by his handlers in Line KR of the KGB's First Chief Directorate (FCD). Knowing the true nature of GTPROLOGUE's activity, the KGB could compare operational details from SCD to material passed to FCD by Ames; discrepancies or alignments between these two data sets could be used to gauge Ames' access and continued willingness to (or not to) share information.

Missed Warning Signs

In hindsight, the GTPROLOGUE case presented a number of counterintelligence flags to CIA before he was offered exfiltration and its aftermath. Those flags, taken in sum and relation to one another, make the case useful as a cautionary tale. They also exemplify the complexity of asset validation, never a simple task even in the most straightforward of situations: a flag that is truly a cause for concern in one case may also appear in the case of a bona fide asset as well. And in the case of GTPROLOGUE, efforts to discern the truth behind such flags were complicated by a denied area operational environment, Zhomov's potential as a high-value counterintelligence asset, and contradictory data. The primary flags were:

Limited Production

Zhomov exhibited a continuing evasiveness regarding requests for certain information commensurate with his access. Despite the use of some valid feed and Zhomov's position as a staff officer, CIA counterintelligence officers would note later that Zhomov still had claimed the kind of limited reporting ability

that had characterized past KGB-controlled dangles. Namely, that he claimed to only have peripheral or infrequent access to information that should have been easily available given his rank and posting.[76]

Impeded Validation Efforts

CIA's efforts aimed at validating the case were substantially impeded and, at best, met with mixed results. These included Zhomov's poor responses to vetting questions and his limited production. This situation was compounded by the fact that CIA's ability to engage in a continuous and ongoing program of operational testing was severely limited in two ways. First, the impersonal commo plan dictated by Zhomov limited contact only to brush passes and letter drops. Second, the entire case took place within Soviet Russia (primarily Moscow), a denied area that presented all of the obstacles outlined by Redmond above, and also inherently precluded debriefings or long meetings. The fact that the denied area setting generally maximized the KGB's ability to contain the risks it faced in running the operation cannot be understated.

Lack of Operational Control

Zhomov insisted on controlling the initiation and tempo of all contact, which of course was to be run through the impersonal commo plan and already was constrained by the denied-area conditions of the environment. A key to running

agents successfully is fostering emotional dependence on their handlers and for handlers to maintain sufficient capacity to exercise physical or psychological means of leverage over the agents.[77] But in this case, it was GTPROLOGUE's CIA handlers who were dependent on him; none of those handlers had any leverage over him except threats of compromise or noncooperation, neither of which had much utility.

Weakness of Alleged Motives

Zhomov appeared to lack a coherent account for the powerful motive necessary to cross the major psychological line of engaging in espionage against his own service. The defector Papushin's independent reporting directly contradicted Zhomov's own reporting on his home life, and thus undermined the credibility of Zhomov's alleged motive for spying. Also, while claiming both a desire to leave the USSR and to be saving information of further interest to CIA for his eventual debriefing in the United States, Zhomov never requested a timeline for his exfiltration.[78]

Topicality of Assignment and Production

That the SCD officer whom CIA would perhaps most have liked to run as a defector-in-place—not too high up in rank, with plausible access to intelligence of immediate interest, able to get close to CIA personnel without arousing suspicion—volunteered as a source was

perceived by some as too good to be true. While "too good" and "true" are not by any means mutually exclusive characteristics of an asset, the former always heightens scrutiny to ensure the latter.

Errors in Opposition Tradecraft

As discussed above, a particular error in the KGB's handling of the SCD dangles that GTPROLOGUE "compromised" to CIA led to the blatant exposure of two of the dangles as under hostile control. If the KGB were taking its new dangle campaign as seriously as GTPROLOGUE claimed, that error should have further aroused CIA's skepticism. Instead, it seems that Moscow Station attributed the error to endemically poor SCD tradecraft, which should have appeared inconsistent with GTPROLOGUE's reporting of the SCD omniscience narrative that claimed that the SCD of recent years was at the top of its game.

To CIA's credit, neither the SCD omniscience narrative nor Zhomov's legitimacy were taken as de facto truths by its officers. But while the omniscience narrative was not taken as fact at any time by any member of the SE Division—at most, it was taken as an avenue of investigation worthy of attention as a possible explanation for the '85–86 losses—it still certainly reinforced how the operational risks of Moscow presented a possible explanation. Available accounts also clearly indicate that SE Division's

leadership harbored varying levels of suspicion toward Zhomov throughout the case and the division's counterintelligence staff regularly expressed their growing concerns.[79] At the onset of the case, then-SE Division chief Gerber and his deputy Redmond were suspicious of GTPROLOGUE, and as the case went on those suspicions never abated. When Gerber left his post as chief of the SE Division in 1989, he was still skeptical of GTPROLOGUE. By that time, SE Division counterintelligence officers also had begun to develop their own apprehensions about the case. While those counterintelligence officers' views were resisted by Gerber's successor, Bearden, even he and his senior staff clearly harbored their own concerns regarding Zhomov's true allegiances.

A potential reason for an apparent lack of harsher scrutiny of GTPROLOGUE is "the hunger": that driving desire of case officers for success in the form of a spectacular intelligence coup. That is, it is possible that there may have been a desire on the part of the case officers and managers to make the best of as potentially valuable a case as GTPROLOGUE, despite concerns over the source's legitimacy. According to a former Directorate of Operations division chief, this practice certainly is not unheard of.[80] (A possible parallel may be drawn with FBI cases where high-level criminals being run as confidential informants take advantage of the trust of their handlers in

order to facilitate criminal agendas.[81]) As mentioned above, there also were indications during the latter stages of the case that the SE Division's leadership apparently felt that Zhomov was such a highly placed source that questioning him sharply could have risked withdrawal of his cooperation.

Offensive Resourcefulness

In the running of Zhomov, the KGB displayed significant resourcefulness by breaking from traditional constraints that CIA had detected in earlier Soviet operations—particularly using a staff officer as a dangle and using highly sensitive valid feed material—and the resulting provocation operation was exceptional. The operation was tailored to fill a gap in CIA knowledge that the KGB knew to be of pressing interest to its adversary. Zhomov was presented as having plausible access to relevant vital information, and his rank and posting played on the SE Division's internal preconceptions about volunteering KGB officers. That the KGB chose Zhomov in particular, given his rank and posting, was essential to the operation's success. Access to the sort of intelligence he provided would have seemed highly improbable otherwise, and such information coming from a less-qualified source likely would have been treated with greater suspicion. All of these elements fulfilled traditional key requirements for a successful dangle operation.[82]

The KGB effectively established the "bodyguard of truth" around the lie of Zhomov's true allegiance, by serving up an entire SCD dangle campaign to validate GTPROLOGUE's reporting. While costly, in a single stroke that campaign validated GTPROLOGUE to CIA and deftly tied down Moscow Station. Also, the operation was launched at a time when CIA was recovering from severe setbacks in its competition with the KGB, and thus was more likely to be susceptible to a well-crafted dangle.[83] Finally, the KGB ran Zhomov at CIA for several years, giving the operation plenty of time to bear fruit.

By the standards of former chief of CIA counterintelligence James Olson, Zhomov netted at least six types of positive results that a double agent operation can produce for a controlling service.[84] He was able to reveal CIA denied area tradecraft (including an exfiltration route); assess CIA personnel (particularly chiefs of station); serve as a deception channel regarding the causes of the '85–86 losses; expose CIA collection requirements; tie up Moscow Station resources through the futile activity of running dangles, including himself; and, more than likely, take CIA money.[85] The operation also presented the SCD with potential opportunities to arrest CIA officers or cast doubt on the validity and information of genuine volunteers through Zhomov's reporting. Conversely, during his time as GTPROLOGUE,

Zhomov's reporting was almost entirely unproductive for CIA, with two qualified exceptions: he did produce an accurate list of the assets CIA had lost during 1985 and 1986 (although that list was presented in the context of the SCD omniscience narrative), and he forewarned upcoming dangles in Moscow (that still resulted in a drain on CIA resources).

In its success as a counterintelligence effects-based operation, the dangling of GTPROLOGUE was also a textbook deception operation when measured against the standards of strategic deception operations mounted by the Allies during World War II.[86] The operation was ostensibly aimed at making CIA *do* something (i.e., not look inward for the source of the losses), rather than simply *believe* something. It was not mounted simply because the KGB had the resources to do so, but was part of a concentrated disinformation campaign with a simple unitary objective: dissuade, or at least distract, CIA from engaging in a mole hunt.

As noted, Zhomov claimed a limited reporting ability to his CIA handlers despite his rank and position within SCD.[87] In hindsight this is not terribly surprising. The KGB was taking a significant risk in dangling a staff officer, and apparently pursued every available means to mitigate that risk over the course of the operation. It is likely the KGB only felt comfortable engaging in such a gambit because

it knew the SCD would have home field advantage in the denied area that was Russia, allowing the SCD to maximize its control over both the operation and Zhomov personally. That it supplemented such a safeguard by having Zhomov follow reporting habits that helped justify limited reporting, to avoid giving away more valid feed than absolutely necessary, makes sense. Perhaps the only glaring weaknesses in the operation from the perspective of the KGB's tradecraft was Zhomov's flimsy motives as GTPROLOGUE and the apparent lack of reinforcement of those motives through GTPROLOGUE's reporting to CIA.

Conditional KGB Success

Dangling Zhomov was largely a success for the KGB as an offensive counterintelligence operation. It clearly fulfilled its potential against CIA as an effects-based operation at the operational and tactical levels, and there is evidence, although ambiguous, that it fulfilled a strategic objective as well. Operationally, Zhomov's "revelation" of a dangle program cleverly tied up some CIA resources in Moscow while simultaneously contributing to both his bona fides and (indirectly) the credibility of the SCD omniscience narrative. Tactically, the impersonal commo plan allowed the KGB to introduce a degree of physical control over the movements of GTPROLOGUE's CIA handlers. In a broader sense, the

counterintelligence benefits of running such a successful dangle helped increase KGB knowledge of CIA, as noted above.

At the strategic level, Zhomov's feed about the '85–86 losses and SCD omniscience was meant to serve as part of the bodyguard of lies the KGB was constructing around the truth of Ames's betrayal. There is no evidence to support the conclusion that Zhomov's reporting convinced CIA to seriously consider the SCD omniscience narrative as a more viable cause than a human penetration. But an argument could be made that the KGB's primary strategic aim was just to buy time by temporarily diverting counterintelligence attention from an active asset through presentation of an alternate narrative. If this was in fact the KGB's actual intention, then the operation would more properly be considered a strategic counterintelligence success, as opposed to a strategic deception. (In this case, a useful way to conceive of the difference between achievements in strategic counterintelligence and in strategic deception would be that the former amounts to more of an "operational deception" than the latter, which is closer in equivalency to a "national deception."[88])

As a matter of historical record, CIA counterintelligence did not begin to focus on Ames until November 1989, when he was still

one of several individuals under examination; a more exclusive concentration on him only developed in spring 1991.[89] The Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), the post-Soviet successor to the KGB FCD, continued to run Ames until his arrest in 1994, the result of an intensive mole hunt by CIA and the FBI.

The two principal SCD officers involved in the GTPROLOGUE case went on to have long and successful careers within the Federal Security Service (FSB), the post-Soviet successor to SCD. Valentin Klimenko served in a variety of senior roles, rising to the rank of at least lieutenant general while in FSB-CIA liaison roles in Moscow and serving as the FSB representative in Israel in approximately 2003.[90] After retiring, he published in 2018 an autobiography titled *Notes of a Counterintelligence Officer*, which discussed the Zhomov case in some detail.[91]

Zhomov would become a prolific figure within the FSB and something of a perennial nemesis for CIA. He continued to serve in SCD's First Department through its transition into the FSB's American Department and its current incarnation as the elite Department of Counterintelligence Operations (DKRO) within the FSB's Counterintelligence (First)

Service.[92] During this time, some of his known exploits include the arrest of Alexander Zaporozhsky (an SVR counterintelligence officer who helped CIA identify Ames as a penetration), serving as the FSB's liaison to CIA in Moscow, and playing a significant role in the 2010 Vienna spy swap between the United States and Russia.[93] For an undetermined period of time between approximately 2010 and at least 2019, Zhomov was the chief of DKRO; he eventually reached the rank of Colonel-General.[94]

In a broader historical context, GTPROLOGUE is an example of CIA's troubled experience with hostile double agents during the 1980s, when a few select services—particularly the Soviets, East Germans, and Cubans—badly burned the agency. As a result of earlier cases, in 1987 CIA had already begun to "[develop] a formalized counterintelligence review process, known as the Agent Validation System" to ensure thorough testing of sources for hostile control;[95] the AVS was formally introduced to the Directorate of Operations in 1991.[96]

Conclusions

Zhomov as GTPROLOGUE exemplifies an effective dangle. From operational setting to asset credentials to contact methods to feed, each aspect of the KGB's operation was structured with an innovativeness worthy of emulation.

To quote John le Carré's fictional spymaster George Smiley, "It would be beautiful in another context."[97] The KGB successfully structured the operation to seize and withhold the initiative from CIA (within the context of the case), while still working to maximize Zhomov's attractiveness as a source. The operation also demonstrated the historical truth that if you can tell an adversary something it desperately wishes to know more about, it will listen even if it suspects you are lying. All of these elements are the clearest signs that Ames's reporting on CIA knowledge of past KGB double agents may have informed the planning of the Zhomov operation. The weakest aspects of the KGB's running of Zhomov were his alleged motives; more thoroughly backstopping those could have potentially further strengthened GTPROLOGUE's apparent legitimacy.

However, this case does not simply provide insight into the mounting of effective dangles. It also drives home the difficulty of asset validation. In particular, efforts to validate GTPROLOGUE grappled with the added complications of conducting the process in a denied area and conducting it when examining a potential high-value counterintelligence asset. The flags discussed above arose from, or were exacerbated by, these added layers of complexity. Operational and practical constraints created an inability to engage in preferred methods and amounts of testing. And particularly

in counterintelligence operations where the collection target is an aware and hostile actor, as much operational testing as possible is desirable to address doubts that may arise over time.[98]

Because a highly placed penetration poses a potentially significant weapon against the running service if doubled (as controlled at the outset of a case or later in the future), no single metric can be considered to excuse a CI asset from close scrutiny; production alone should not be taken as a solid indication of bona fides. All six traditional methods of asset validation—corroborating production through other sources; specific taskings and operational testing; collecting intelligence on the asset in question; polygraphing the asset; penetrating the local service to uncover potential information on the asset in question; and surveillance of the asset—should

be considered carefully and pursued as necessary to return the strongest possible judgment as to an asset's reliability. That judgment then should be reevaluated constantly and actively, as it can never be taken for granted what has or has not happened to sources since they last established bona fides, with the intention of carrying out the sort of programmatic approach to evaluation tempered by officers' instincts meant to be realized by the AVS. In the case of Zhomov, the KGB wisely conducted the operation in the denied area it controlled, resulting in a blanket impediment to all avenues of asset validation.

All intelligence professionals always must be ready to accept something entirely new, including in the tradecraft of adversaries, because everything happens once for the first time. This logic never should be far from a counterintelligence

officer's mind. Detection of such critical anomalies in operations often arises as the result of spirited internal debates on delicate aspects of cases, including the reliability of assets. Concerns raised during these debates should be taken seriously by all parties involved. Discounting potential issues about a source's bona fides, whether from a fear of irking the source with additional operational testing or from a desire to believe in an asset's potentially high-value reporting; letting the hunger, no matter how well intentioned, override the necessary skepticism intrinsic to human intelligence operations may very well backfire. Such considerations should not be seen as valid reasons for reluctance to subject an asset to operational testing that is as vigorous as possible. ∎

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49.   David Wise, "When the FBI Spent Decades Hunting for a Soviet Spy on Its Staff," *Smithsonian Magazine* (October 2013). http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/when-the-fbi-spent-decades-hunting-for-a-soviet-spy-on-its-staff-15561/.
50.   Bearden and Risen, 296.
51.   Ibid., 296–97.
52.   Ibid., 297.
53.   Ibid., 298.
54.   Ibid., 298–99.
55.   Ibid., 299.
56.   Ibid., 422.
57.   Grimes and Vertefeuille, 119.
58.   Benjamin B. Fischer, "Spy Dust and Ghost Surveillance: How the KGB Spooked the CIA and Hid Aldrich Ames in Plain Sight," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 24, No. 2 (2011), 287, 294; Fischer, "Doubles Troubles: The CIA and Double Agents," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 29, No. 1 (2016), 51–52; Earley, *Confessions*, 259, 294.

59. Grimes and Vertefeuille, 118.
60. Ibid., 119.
61. Bearden and Risen, 423.
62. Ibid., 421, 395; Grimes and Vertefeuille, 118–9
63. Grimes and Vertefeuille, 118–9.
64. Bearden and Risen, 422.
65. Ibid., 422.
66. Ibid., 424.
67. Ibid., 435.
68. Ibid., 422, 435.
69. Ibid., 435.
70. Ibid..
71. Ibid., 436.
72. Ibid., 437.
73. Grimes and Vertefeuille, 123–24.
74. Ibid., 124; Earley, *Confessions*, 272.
75. Earley, *Confessions*, 276–77, 287; Wise, 191.
76. Grimes and Vertefeuille, 21, 24; Heuer, 36–40.
77. Begoum, 65.
78. Bearden and Risen, 423.
79. Grimes and Vertefeuille, 118–19; Bearden and Risen, 296–97, 422–23.
80. Author interviews with former CIA executive; spring 2014.
81. Author interview with Dr. John Fox, FBI historian; April 7, 2014.
82. Johnson, 106, 109, 113, 128, 197.
83. Holt, 58.
84. James M. Olson, *Fair Play: the Moral Dilemmas of Spying* (Potomac Books, 2006), 234n13.
85. According to a former CIA case officer with extensive Soviet operations experience, "Money paid is not money lost. It is money invested, even with a dangle. It sends a message to those witting back in the mother ship of KGB headquarters that the CIA is good to its word: they pay and they follow through—all attributes a volunteer wants to see before taking the step off the cliff." Author interview with former CIA operations officer, spring 2018.
86. Holt, 50–51, 53, 58, 71, 72.
87. Grimes and Vertefeuille, 21, 24; Heuer, 36–40.
88. Begoum, 62.
89. Grimes and Vertefeuille, 120–21, 125–26, 129–30, 142–43.
90. Bearden and Risen, 522; Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, "US and Russian Intelligence Cooperation during the Yeltsin Years" (February 11, 2011). https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/us-and-russian-intelligence-cooperation-during-yeltsin-years.
91. Filip Kovacevic (@chekistmonitor), "Valentin Klimenko was a top-ranking #KGB CI officer in the 1980s; in charge of the 1st Sec. of the 1st Dept. of the SCD, focusing on the U.S. Embassy & CIA station in Moscow.", Twitter/X, May 10, 2023, 11:00 AM, <https://x.com/ChekistMonitor/status/1656313194359709700>; Valentin Klimenko, Notes of a Counterintelligence Officer (International Relations, 2018). http://loveread.ec/view_global.php?id=85044. Klimenko's account of the Zhomov case contradicts available English-language sources in a number of critical aspects that are not corroborated by any other sources; for this reason, as well as Klimenko's affiliation and implied associated agenda, his statements regarding the case must be viewed with skepticism and were not treated as a reliable source of data for this analysis.
92. Joe Parkinson and Drew Hinshaw, "Inside the Secretive Russian Security Force That Targets Americans", *Wall Street Journal* (July 7, 2023). https://www.wsj.com/articles/fsb-evan-gershkovich-russia-security-force-dkro-e9cf9a49.
93. Gordon Corera, *Russians Among Us* (HarperCollins, 2020), 51–59, 114–16, 285–86, 297–98.
94. Kevin P. Riehle, *The Russian FSB: A Concise History of the Federal Security Service* (Georgetown University Press, 2024), 32; Soldatov.
95. Olson, 253n25.
96. Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial and Deception: An Insider's View of the CIA* (Nation Books, 2006), 231–32.
97. John le Carré, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (Pocket Books, 2002), 332–33.
98. Beogum, 71. ∎

Cambodia's Role in Shipping Arms to Communist Forces in South Vietnam, 1966–70: Competing CIA and US Military Estimates

Richard A. Mobley

From the Introduction to ER IM 70-188, December 1970.

In September1970, this Agency [CIA] *published ER IM* [Economic Research Intelligence Memorandum] *70-126,* New Evidence On Military Deliveries to Cambodia: December 1966 – April 1969, *which presented our preliminary analysis of documentary evidence on the flow of military supplies to VC/NVA forces via the port of Kompong Som (Sihanoukville). Since the publication of IM 70-126, CIA has received and made available to the community more than 12,000 pages of additional documentation providing detailed and highly reliable data on the scope and nature of the Communists' logistic activities carried out through Cambodia to support VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam.*

A special task force set up to exploit these documents has completed its validation and analysis of the new evidence, and this memorandum is the first product resulting from that effort. This memorandum presents revisions of the estimates made in IM 70-126 of the volume of military supplies delivered via Sihanoukville from December 1966 to April 1969 as well as new data on some overland deliveries via Laos.[1] (This article originally appeared in Studies *in June 2024.)*

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With that extraordinary introduction to its revised estimates, CIA essentially signaled that it had finally lost its extended debate with the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) and other military commands about the quantities and delivery routes of ordnance shipped through Cambodia to North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC) units in South Vietnam. It was a consequential dispute, the outcome of which had the potential to influence US decisions to widen the Vietnam War to Cambodia and alter or end bombing campaigns in Laos.

At cost to CIA's credibility with the Nixon administration, its analysts had misinterpreted the importance of the People's Republic of China's shipments into Cambodia's relatively new port, Sihanoukville, and underestimated the amount of ordnance being transported from there to communist forces in South Vietnam.

Vietnam-based military intelligence, in contrast, had consistently offered higher and—in hindsight— more accurate figures about tonnage reaching the communists through Cambodia. Gen. Bruce Palmer, a deputy commander of US Army forces in South Vietnam (1966–67), wrote in his 1984 assessment in this journal of the IC's performance during the Vietnam War that the

failure was "one of the very few times CIA and the Washington-based IC made a major misjudgment with respect to the Vietnam War."[2] This essay uses declassified CIA and military records to account for the failure while attempting to assess why MACV's estimates were closer to the mark.

The Beginning of the Unraveling of CIA's Position

As the introduction to ER IM 70-188 tacitly noted, CIA's failure became apparent after improvements in human intelligence (HUMINT) reporting begun by 1968 on the so-called Sihanoukville Route led to the acquisition of more than 12,000 pages of manifests and shipping documents of Chinese merchant ships offloading arms in Sihanoukville. This material provided extraordinarily detailed and reliable evidence about the magnitude of the Sino-Cambodian transshipment effort.[3]

The evidence provided a new, reliable baseline for assessing the validity of MACV and CIA estimates on the flow of munitions into South Vietnam. The shipping manifests and other documents supported the conclusion that CIA analysts had repeatedly underestimated the extent of PRC arms deliveries to Sihanoukville, its relative importance, and the quantity of weapons and ammunition transshipped from there to enemy forces in South Vietnam.

For example, even in mid-1970, CIA judged that only 7,100 tons of ordnance (part of a total of 11,200 tons of all military supplies) had been delivered via Sihanoukville; MACV, by contrast, had estimated 17,800 tons of ordnance alone.[4][5] With the

publication of ER IM 70-188 and a followup unclassified memorandum in February 1971, CIA revised its estimate to state more than 21,000 tons of munitions actually had been delivered along the Sihanoukville Route. (See bar graph below.)[6]

As we will see in this article, the divergences in CIA and MACV assessments reflected differences in how both organizations used evidence to answer key intelligence questions about the Sihanoukville Route. The questions pertained to the amount, composition, and ultimate destination for unidentified cargo delivered during at least nine port visits of PRC-flagged ships to Sihanoukville following a military agreement signed between Cambodia and China in October 1966. Subsidiary questions included the role of the alternative delivery route overland down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the amount of non-military cargo included in the Chinese deliveries, and the split in deliveries between the Cambodian

military and the NVA/VC. MACV would argue that most of the cargo was arms and ammunition intended for transshipment to enemy forces in much of South Vietnam. CIA argued that the tonnage of munitions being delivered could not be reliably estimated from the available sources, but it was likely to be much less than the amounts MACV estimated.

The Problem of Sources and Analytic Rigor

The multi-year debate between CIA (and other elements of the IC) and MACV shows that understanding the Sihanoukville issue was *not* straightforward, given major intelligence gaps and troves of human intelligence reports of questionable provenance. The suspect nature of the available evidence helps explain why a top-notch team of seasoned logistics analysts at CIA fared so poorly in assessing a critical line of communication while counterparts in MACV

CHINESE COMMUNIST DELIVERIES OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO SIHANOUKVILLE FOR VC/NVA FORCES
In Tons
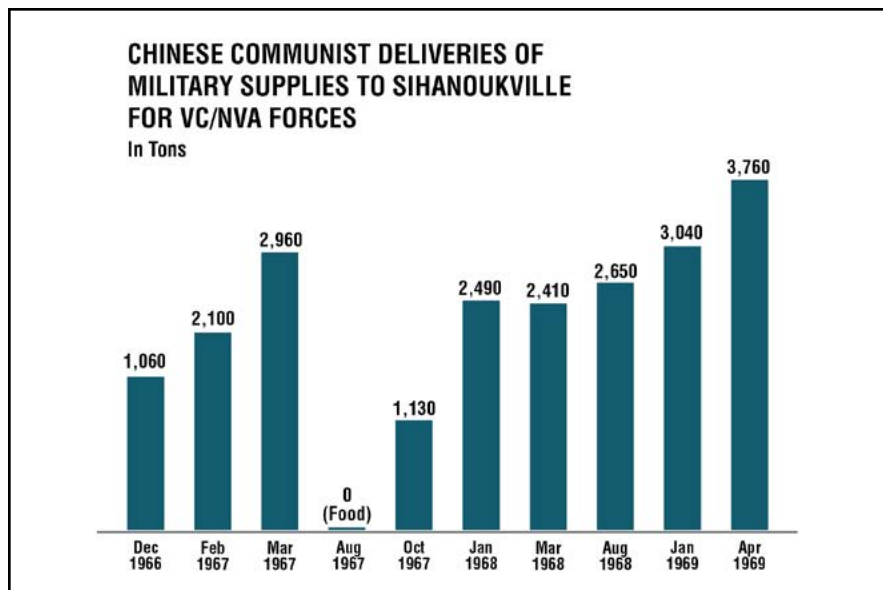
This bar graph contained in the February 5, 1971, memorandum shows the 21,600 tons of total volume of PRC military supply shipments (ordnance [21,000] and non-ordnance) aboard 10 freighters unloaded in Sihanoukville from December 1966 through April 1969.

J-2 devised far more accurate tonnage estimates.

The CIA Point of View

The logistics experts in the CIA's Office of Economic Research (OER) were respected for their earlier work in analyzing the effects of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign.[7] They had also had a long record of evaluating the economic aspects of threats posed by the Soviet Union. According to a heavily redacted, declassified study of the Sihanoukville case by contract CIA historian Thomas Ahern in 2004,[8, a] OER analysts displayed great trust in their technically more rigorous conceptual models and their judgment of all-source reporting than did their counterparts in military intelligence. Analysts in OER also conducted periodic internal reviews that challenged the methodologies and conclusions of their previous analyses, according to Ahern.[9] Unfortunately, the results also revealed flawed assumptions about transportation facilities through Cambodia and about projected VC logistic requirements, according to Ahern's treatment of the subject in his recently published memoir.[10]

The CIA team was most vexed by the challenge of finding HUMINT sources which were deemed reliable but also offering sufficiently broad perspective for national-level finished intelligence reporting. CIA official documents and oral histories reveal the agency's high standards of analytic tradecraft for using HUMINT

a. Ahern's monograph, *Good Questions, Wrong Answers* provides a superb baseline for understanding the CIA-MACV debate. The book informed some of my conclusions here. Most of the raw reporting Ahern used has not been declassified so could not be weighed independently.

CIA Views on Reliability of Evidence

The following characterizations—relying on Ahern's study, declassified contemporaneous analytic products, and memoirs and biographies of CIA officials—reveal how fraught was the process of evaluating Sihanoukville HUMINT, particularly when trying to judge reporting from theater-controlled collection assets. Describing the difficulty of the process, Ahern wrote, "the Sihanoukville traffic required interpretation of each report, source authenticity and reliability, the access of both primary and subsources, and the inherent plausibility of content." He summarized: "Even the best reporting, up to the spring of 1969, was low-level and incomplete."[a] Additional observations include the following.

Sihanoukville as an analytical problem arose in a welter of raw reports, some of them alleging an arms traffic that did not exist for a full two years after the first claims for it.

Fanciful early allegations of deliveries through Sihanoukville inevitably and, to a point, legitimately discredited agent reporting. When knowledgeable CIA sources began producing better information, some of it as early as 1967, it was at first fragmentary and always subject to inconsistencies and even contradictions.

The modest flow of well-sourced, plausible information tended to be obscured by a flood of less credible material.[b]

Retired CIA Deputy Director for Intelligence R. Jack Smith would write of the challenges his analysts faced in his memoir:

Unfortunately, the intelligence reports they had to work with were of poor quality, full of hearsay from third- or fourth-hand sources. Exploiting the shoddy material to the maximum, and guided to a degree by the judgment that the flow down the Ho Chi Minh Trail was in itself almost sizeable enough to account for enemy materiel in South Vietnam, the DI analysts arrived at a figure for tonnage through South Vietnam that was approximately half of MACV's estimate.[c]

An October 1969 briefing paper on reporting and CIA analysis on the subject of Sihanoukville's relative importance noted:

In recent months there has accumulated a large body of clandestine reporting that points to Cambodia as an important route for such supplies which, as it is argued, arrive by sea at the port of Sihanoukville and are transported surreptitiously . . . to the South Vietnamese border."[d]

A January 1970 memo addressed to Secretary of Defense Laird observed:

Our knowledge of supply movements through Cambodia has improved markedly over the past several months. . . Nonetheless, we are not able to quantify the "Cambodian flow" with precision to permit meaningful arithmetic comparison with the Laotian flow."[e]

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a. Thomas L Ahern, Jr., *Good Questions, Wrong Answers,* 18, 41.
b. All quotes are from *Good Questions, Wrong Answers*, vii, 48 and 9, respectively.
c. R. Jack Smith, *The Unknown CIA: My Three Decades with the Agency* (Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, Inc., 1989), 34–35.
d. CIA report, "An Evaluation of Recent Clandestine Reporting on Cambodia," October 1969, iii, in [3] CIA-RDP78T02095R000200090001-8).
e. DCI Richard Helms to Secretary of Defense Laird, January 28, 1970, forwarding blind memo "Logistics Flow to the Enemy in South Vietnam," in [5] CIA-RDP78T02095R000600200001-1).

MACV admitted that many of its sources were low level but wrote that it had access to more reliable ones. Describing ordnance shipments through Sihanoukville, the Combined Intelligence Center wrote in May 1968 that they used "mostly low-level sources, many of which are unconfirmed, laced with ambiguity, and even in some cases fabricated."

reports and skepticism about many of the reports coming in about the Sihanoukville Route. Summaries of the reporting reveal that few sources thought to be reliable were evident during much of the route's existence. Even by late 1968, CIA reporting suggested only modest improvements in sources, although OER analysts concluded they had sufficient evidence to show complicity by elements of the Cambodian government in shipping military supplies to Vietnam.[11]

That modest judgment, as we have seen in the late 1970 and early 1971 memorandums cited above, turned into the view that Cambodia had "acquired significance" as an arms supply channel in the last two or so years, although the alternative route through Laos continued to be the "predominant" supply channel.[12] The Sihanoukville Route by then carried as much as half of the military supplies destined for Communist forces in the southern part of South Vietnam, according to the revised CIA estimate.[13]

The MACV Point of View

In contrast, MACV and subordinate commands judged they had good sources by 1968, notwithstanding the IC's reservations and the suspicion that theater analysts were accepting sources and reporting with unwarranted credulity. Oral histories suggested that leaders in theater had better faith in some of the sources

than their CIA counterparts, although MACV did divide some of the reports into "probable" and "possible" categories. Additionally, CIA and MACV in some instances may have been referring to the same higher-quality sources that had begun to appear in 1968.

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Under Adm. Elmo Zumwalt (Commander, Naval Forces Vietnam (CNFV)) and his deputy for intelligence, Capt. Rex Rectanus, MACV and CNFV made inroads against the Sihanoukville target in 1968. Gen. Phillip Davidson, the MACV J-2, lauded CNFV's success in his oral history:

They had some agents working in Sihanoukville. They began to

put this stuff together, and they came up one day, and we had a big briefing and talk, and I said, "Well, it sounds really good, but I don't think we have enough to really go public with it at this time. Let's just keep watching it." And we did, and they were very convincing, I thought.[17]

Admiral Zumwalt also praised the theater intelligence effort in his autobiography: "He (Rectanus) had a very good network of agents in Cambodia, and he had a good network within the South Vietnamese. We were getting, generally, very good intelligence."[18] Zumwalt continued, saying that Rectanus

had completed an analysis of the entire VC logistics system that proved to be more accurate than anything either CIA or DIA had. He was the first person to conclude that Cambodia had become the major logistics depot for the VC delta operations and that this depot was being reinforced by Communist shipping into Sihanoukville and then by truck to the Cambodia border.[19]

Even with what he considered to be good sources during his 1968–69 tour, Rectanus subsequently recalled that convincing national-level intelligence analysts of Cambodia's logistics role in the conflict was problematic:

The analysts that they (CIA and State) sent out there on numerous occasions just couldn't be budged. Now (I don't know) whether it's because the analysts themselves really didn't believe us, didn't believe that our analysis was good as it was (although we went over everything with

them ad nauseam), or whether they were told by Washington.[20]

MACV's precise methodology in using each individual report is not available in the declassified documents, but the command seemed to have taken more of a statistical approach than national production centers in compiling its estimates. Implicit in some of the theater estimates seemed to be the concept that the more reports stating an event had occurred—however tactical they might be—the more probable it was. Reading the summaries from the command today almost seems like reviewing an early form of crowd-sourcing.

MACV several times referred to the number of reports as probable evidence of the reliability of an estimate. MACV Commander Gen. Creighton Abrams, for example, repeatedly used this technique in a "personal for" message transmitted to the chairman of JCS, in December 1968.[21] He sprinkled reporting statistics throughout the message. Building a case for the complicity of the Cambodian army (known as the FARK, from the French *Forces Armées Royales Khmères*), he wrote that 29 reports of varying reliability had described enemy personnel in the act of unloading ordnance from Cambodian army vehicles. Continuing to build the argument, Abrams observed that since October 10, 1968, nine reports from fairly reliable sources had implicated senior FARK officers as active participants in the growing arms traffic. Another 33 reports depicted the delivery of ordnance to border areas in II, III, and to a lesser extent in IV Corps.[22] This theme of conferring validity based on reporting volume appeared in other MACV estimates.

Map showing the four Corps Tactical Zones or Military Regions of the Vietnam War period. Source: *Studies in Intelligence* special edition, "Intelligence and the Vietnam War," (1984).

In-Country Meetings to Resolve the Dispute Inconclusive

Senior CIA officials— including DDI Jack Smith, George Carver, and James Graham (Office of National Estimates)—and analysts visited MACV several times between 1966 and 1970 in fruitless attempts to establish common ground on the Sihanoukville question. A summary of a single case illustrates the recurring dynamics of the debate throughout the period. A well-documented exchange between IC analysts led by James Graham and MACV personnel

held in Saigon during November–December 1968 illustrated how issues of sourcing and estimates provided divergent answers to the questions of Sihanoukville's importance. In this instance, James Graham and members of CIA, DIA, and State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research visited the Commander in Chief/Pacific in Hawaii and major commands in Saigon to address the dispute.[23]

They were fully briefed in-country on collection and analysis on

arms shipments via Cambodia. They examined MACV's intelligence holdings, reviewed the methodology used to estimate munitions imports into Sihanoukville, and discussed problems relating to evaluation of intelligence reporting.[24] The exchanges revealed convergence on the issue of FARK complicity in the Sihanoukville Route and confirmed that CIA had access to all theater intelligence reports on Sihanoukville. At the same time, the documentation shows the gaps between their positions. The following illustrates elements of the debate.

In Graham's report of the meeting, he wrote that "essential differences" remained between the two commands:

- quantities of arms moving via Sihanoukville to Vietnam,

- the relationship between arms deliveries to Sihanoukville and Cambodian military requirements, and

- the extent to which Communist forces were denied access to other supply routes, notably the overland route through Laos.[25]

The differences had also been addressed at about the same time in 1968, when reconsideration of US bombing strategy prompted General Abrams to send a cable to Washington strongly denouncing proposals to end US bombing. The Abrams cable led to a flurry of CIA responses, both doubting the utility of the bombing campaign and MACV judgments about the role of Cambodia as a arms supply route, for example:

General Creighton W. Abrams, Commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, from 1968 until 1972, was a key proponent of the military's argument that the quantity of arms flows through Sihanoukville to southern South Vietnam was far higher than CIA acknowledged. Abrams appeared three times on the covers of the weekly between 1961 and 1971. © Collection Serge Mouraret/Alamy Stock Photo.

In our view, MAC-V is considerably overstating Cambodia's present role in the VC/NVA logistical system. We believe their long-standing north-south overland supply routes from North Vietnam through Laos, South Vietnam and border areas of Cambodia are still the principal supply channel for Communist forces in South Vietnam. These routes not only remain capable of meeting Communist needs despite allied air strikes but actual truck traffic detected moving to southern Laos indicates that the volume being moved southward is sufficient to meet the external needs of Communist forces in adjacent and more southerly areas of South Vietnam.[26]

What's more, a formal CIA/DI Intelligence Memorandum directly challenged Abrams' assertion that a halt to bombing would drastically increase the flow of equipment to communists. In effect, the then closely held memorandum said the bombing had been making no difference:

The experience of over three and one-half years of observing the impact of the Rolling Thun-

der bombing programs shows little direct relationship between the level and nature of given interdiction campaigns and the movement of supplies from North to South Vietnam. The level of logistics activity is more directly related to the size of the enemy forces in South Vietnam, the level of combat, and enemy intentions. Hanoi seems fully capable of delivering to South Vietnam the level of men and supplies it deems necessary, even though the bombings affect the ease, speed, and cost of delivery.[27]

Perhaps confidence in the effects of the Rolling Thunder campaign might explain MACV's propensity at the time to see, as George Carver would explain in 1970, Sihanoukville as a "major factor" since October 1966.[28] He elaborated that the IC felt there was little hard evidence for serious or significant use of the Cambodia channel before mid-1968.[29] General Abrams summarized MACV's position by writing,

The Cambodia option remains as the enemy's logical if not his only choice. . . . Cambodia is the primary line of communication for arms and ammunition reaching enemy forces in II, III, and IV Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ).[30]

Accordingly, MACV offered sharply higher estimates for ordnance being delivered to Sihanoukville than those prepared by the IC, while CIA publicly argued that it could not estimate the tonnage reliably given the available numbers, attacked MACV's methodology, and privately developed far lower estimates. General

> **General Abrams summarized MACV's position by writing, "The Cambodia option remains as the enemy's logical if not his only choice. . . . Cambodia is the primary line of communication for arms and ammunition reaching enemy forces in II, III, and IV Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ)."**

Abrams wrote in December 1968 that 11 probable arms shipments had delivered more than 13,000 tons of materiel to Sihanoukville.[31] Abrams continued that, during the past year, approximately 10,668 tons of suspected ordnance had been delivered to Sihanoukville and 10,035 tons of ordnance had been delivered to NVA/VC camps along the Cambodian border.[32]

Washington analysts instead argued that no one knew for certain how many tons of arms entered Sihanoukville or what the consumption, equipping and stockpile requirements of the FARK might be.[33] They saw a "considerably smaller volume" of confirmed deliveries than MACV."[34] Another CIA memorandum complained, "MACV classed all the military deliveries to Sihanoukville as arms and ammunition and failed to distinguish between arms and other military supplies."[35] George Carver later wrote in 1970 that some military supplies were not manifested as such and others were mixed with ordnance consignment assigned to FARK. His note concluded, "The spongy nature of much of this evidence has not permitted precise quantification of the supplies via this route."[36]

Despite CIA's official position that the tonnage delivered could not be reliably calculated, CIA internal studies suggested a minimum figure of only 1,600 to 1,700 tons of arms and ammunition had been delivered during the same 21-month period for which

MACV previously cited imports over 13,000 tons.[37] The note added that the CIA figure was "almost certainly low, with "possible" tonnages added, it might reach 7,000 to 8,000 tons.[38]

In his December 31, 1968, report on the visit to Vietnam noted above, senior team member Graham, citing CIA positions, admitted that in theory the tonnage of ordnance delivered to the NVA/VC might be calculated by establishing amounts off-loaded in port and subtracting Cambodian military requirements. The CIA position was, however, that there was insufficient reliable reporting to do this.[39] Agency analysts noted that MACV was convinced that it had sufficient intelligence to perform these calculations and to reach "firm conclusions."[40] MACV's position had been that the "bulk of these shipments" went directly to the NVA/VC.[41] CIA implied that MACV's estimate that FARK required 350 tons of ordnance annually was low but did not offer an alternative.[42]

The argument over the role of a southern extension of the Ho Chi Minh Trail overland to Cambodia was almost as fierce as the fight over Sihanoukville, since the trails were linked in the eyes of the debaters. The overland route extended overland from North Vietnam through Laos, the tri-border area, and southward on a network of trails and road segments along the Cambodian border to the III Corps. The CIA position was that the evidence for the use of the extension was more substantial than evidence

Abrams in December 1968 argued, "The contention that enemy forces in III CTZ are receiving the majority of their ordnance via the Laotian overland route still fails to be substantiated by the facts."

of Sihanoukville's importance and, in effect, proved that the North Vietnamese relied "primarily on the overland route."[43]

Hanoi would not need both trail systems to support its forces in southern South Vietnam since each alone had the capacity to provide this support. So, the debate focused over which system was actually being used *more* and (from CIA's perspective) which was *more salient* to Hanoi. The debate again entailed attacks on each other's evidence, but before 1970, CIA used indirect evidence, some of it based on an unproven assumption, to buttress its case.[44][45][46]

CIA also argued that all the evidence—efforts to improve roads and trails, shipments south to the tri-border area, a few reports of logistic activity along the trails, and use of the trails for personnel movements—sufficed to indicate that the overland route was the "basic channel" for arms and ammunition to communist forces in I, II, and III Corps.[47] Agency analysts repeatedly argued that Hanoi would not abandon the proven overland trail for the Sihanoukville connection, a route it did not control, and which the Cambodian government could deny or obstruct without much warning—a judgment questioned in later investigations.[48]

In contrast, Abrams in December 1968 argued, "The contention that enemy forces in III CTZ are receiving the majority of their ordnance via the

Laotian overland route still fails to be substantiated by the facts," continuing that in Laos "below BA 610 there has been no change in the meager traffic flow recorded since December 1967."[a][49] He reported that an average of 8 tons per day was moving south of BA 610 toward the Cambodian border, and MACV judged that those shipments were primarily destined for enemy forces in southern I CTZ and local support forces in southern Laos.[50]

Stalemate Continued

The result of the November–December 1968 IC-MACV meetings was a stalemate with little movement on fundamental analytic issues, although some agreement on the issue of FARK complicity was reached. CIA leadership, according to a formerly classified biography of then CIA Director Richard Helms, concluded that OER's tonnage estimate was the best that could be established from inferior materials.[51] Their judgments reflected their confidence in the high quality of the CIA's logistics analysis in the past and their recognition of "the penchant for the military arriving at 'worst case' judgments," according to the biography.[52]

Ground Truth on Sihanoukville Route Finally Established in 1970

The major CIA intelligence breakthrough of 1970 finally answered the hotly contested questions, particularly

about the relative importance of the two trails, ordnance deliveries to Sihanoukville, long-term throughput on each trail, tonnage going to FARK, and quantities of ordnance finally reaching NVA/VC base camps along the border. According to Ahern, then assigned to CIA's Phnom Penh Station, a Cambodian officer named Les Kosem, who had been responsible for managing the flow of supplies from China to the NVA, volunteered to give CIA the records of all Chinese munitions and supplies sent to the Vietnamese Communists through Cambodia.[b] CIA headquarters sent its most knowledgeable analyst to work with Kosem's officer to exploit the 12,000 pages of data he provided. The insights became the foundation of CIA's reevaluations of its earlier estimates published in 1970 and excerpted above.[53]

To establish its new baseline, CIA that December forwarded the ER IM 70-188, *Communist Deliveries to Cambodia for the VC/NVA Forces in South Vietnam, December 1966–April 1969*, December 1970, along with an attached CIA history of the Sihanoukville Route to national-level decisionmakers and theater commanders. The memo noted, "We believe the documents constitute a virtually complete set of Cambodia's records on the supplies and materials furnished the Communists with the cooperation of the Cambodian government."[54] Characterizing the 12,000 pages of evidence, it explained, "The circumstances of acquisition were such as to establish the authenticity of the material."[55] The documents offered "the most conclusive available

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a. The general's comment suggest that BA 610 was located 350 kilometers north of the Cambodian border.
b. At this point, Prince Sihanouk had been ousted and shipping of Chinese weaponry to Cambodia had ended.

Approved For Release 2007/10/23: CIA-RDP78T02095R000200050001-1

CHINESE COMMUNIST MILITARY DELIVERIES TO VC/NVA
FORCES VIA SIHANOUKVILLE, 1966-1970

Note: Information on border deliveries is incomplete. For this reason tonnages delivered to border areas are not identical with tonnages delivered to Sihanoukville.

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Table 5

Ordnance Deliveries
to Border Areas, by Province

	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970 (Tons)
Mondolkiri	20	3,090	850	380	300
Svay Rieng	--	900	2,160	700	100
Kompong Cham	70	1,480	1,120	270	90
Kratie	--	410	1,660	600	260
Ratanakiri	--	980	260	--	--
Kampot	20	440	260	200	240
Prey Veng/ Kandal/Takeo	--	260	--	200	610
Other	--	160	80	--	--
Total	110	7,740	6,390	2,360	1,600

Note: Information on border deliveries is incomplete. For this reason total tonnages delivered above do not exactly agree with tonnages delivered to Sihanoukville.

evidence of the critical importance of the Sihanoukville supply route."[56]

ER IM 70-188 pointed out that Cambodia in early 1966 had participated in PRC programs to provide mostly non-military supplies to Communists in the II, III, and IV Corps regions in South Vietnam. By December,1966, however, the Sihanoukville Route opened with the arrival of a PRC-flag arms carrier to Sihanoukville with arms bound for South Vietnam; the route became an "elaborate and sophisticated" network.[57]

Chinese merchant ships delivered 21,600 tons of military supplies to Sihanoukville from December 1966 through April 1969 as shown in the bar graph on page 24, according to the December 1970 intelligence memorandum.[58] Overall military deliveries included weapons, ammunition and explosives, radios, and engineering equipment, which were detailed in a separate memorandum summarizing some of this information in February 1971. The memo began by noting that all the figures were approximate, but were believed accurate within 10 percent.[59, a, 60]

The Sihanoukville Route was efficient because Cambodian officials rapidly unloaded Chinese arms carriers. Under FARK supervision, truck convoys then moved the ordnance to a storage depot at Kompong Speu for transshipment to Communist forces.[61] The FARK received a "cut" of supplies ranging as high as 10 percent

a. From July 1968 through May 1969, four Soviet arms carriers delivered ordnance to Cambodia under the Soviet-Cambodian military aid agreement of February 1968. CIA analysts assessed that the cargo was consigned to FARK.

Sihanoukville reinforced "the negative impression of the quality of CIA analysis held by members of the Nixon administration."

of all deliveries entering the pipeline, or about 459 tons in addition to 822 tons of legitimate military aid.[62] Ultimately, CIA traced 18,000 tons—85 percent of military deliveries—to NVA/VC base camps in Cambodia arrayed from the far northeast to the southern border.[63] These are shown in the map and table (facing page) that were included in the memorandum.

North Vietnam also occasionally used the overland route through Laos to funnel supplies directly into South Vietnam, according to the new study, but less than 4 percent of ordnance traffic to southern South Vietnam moved this way compared to the Sihanoukville Route.[64] The Vietnamese trucked ordnance down Route 110 in Laos to the Tonle Kong River where it was placed on boats and moved south to Stun Treng. There, they loaded it on trucks and delivered directly to Communist base camps along the Cambodian border as far south as Snoul and Mimot. Deliveries to Cambodia via this route totaled only about 850 tons in four shipments occurring between 1966 and 1968, according to the December 1970 memorandum.[65]

Impact and Investigations

Use of the Sihanoukville Route did not alter the war's outcome, but it provided the enemy a way of conveniently shipping large volumes of arms to South Vietnam without having to take the much longer, tortuous route down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. In the judgment of CIA analysts, North Vietnam had shipped "extremely large quantities" of ordnance via

Sihanoukville, in their estimation enough to equip on a one-time basis over 600 NVA/VC infantry battalions; the number of crew-served weapons would have equipped slightly more than 200 battalions. The deliveries included 222,000 individual weapons, more than 16,000 crew served-weapons, 173 million rounds for rifles and light machine guns, almost 11 million rounds for crew-served weapons, and over one-half million mines and hand grenades, according to the history accompanying the new baseline memorandum.[66][67]

Misjudging the Sihanoukville Route's role further damaged the agency's reputation in the Nixon White House. Within two years of the autumn 1968 meetings, CIA and its masters, including Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, viewed the flawed analysis as a major intelligence failure demanding formal reviews. Richard Helms stated the failure "was an acutely embarrassing moment for Directorate of Intelligence analysts, and even more so for the Director of Central Intelligence."[68] Sihanoukville reinforced "the negative impression of the quality of CIA analysis held by members of the Nixon administration," according to his formerly classified biography.[69] In the eyes of the new administration, CIA was again taking a negative, anti-war line. Its delay in recognizing Sihanoukville's importance followed its "opposition to MACV's order of battle figures and its pessimistic assessment of the Rolling Thunder bombing program," according to the biography.[70]

For example, in a meeting with his Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board in mid-1970, President Nixon wondered, "If such mistakes could be made on a fairly straightforward issue such as this, how should we judge CIA's assessments of more important developments such as Chinese communist military capabilities?"[71]

He went on to order the board to investigate the "entire background" to the IC's "misreading of the importance of Sihanoukville."[72] He closed that session by calling for the board to give "very close attention to the case," which represented "one of the worst records ever compiled by the intelligence community."[73] Adding, that he

> *simply cannot put up with people lying to the President of the United States about intelligence. If intelligence is inadequate or if the intelligence depicts a bad situation, he wants to know it and he will not stand being served warped evaluations.*[74]

Kissinger subsequently cited methodological problems as being at the heart of the failure, during a staff meeting in February 1971.[75] He said that Sihanoukville was "one of our greatest intelligence failures," and added, "After all, it isn't Outer Mongolia."[76] Kissinger wrote to Nixon that he was working with DCI Richard Helms on "appropriate personnel changes in the Agency."[77] Nixon responded, "I want a real shakeup in CIA, not just symbolism."[78]

Helms, however, backed his team, and CIA avoided a personnel purge, and rather than punish his analysts he would praise them for their forthrightness in revisiting their analysis

with the acquisition of reliable data.[79] But the damage to CIA's relationship with the Nixon administration had been done. George Carver commented that Helms was "vulnerable because in any future major controversy where he really held the line, he would have been vulnerable to: 'Yes, but that's what you said about Sihanoukville.'"[80]

The CIA itself and the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board both completed investigations, the details of which remain largely classified. The CIA teams working on the Sihanoukville connection were criticized for failing to fully adjust their model of arms transfers to reflect the wealth of evidence beginning to arrive to support the Sihanoukville assessment. They also were criticized for being insensitive to the lack of direct reporting proving that the overland routes through Laos to Cambodia were actively and currently being used to transport ordnance into southern South Vietnam.

To provide perspective on the postmortems, historian Tom Ahern concluded that there were "substantial flaws" in CIA analysis of the Sihanoukville Route, which emerged as a failure "only after the bulk of the empirical evidence, gradually increasing in volume and improving in source authenticity, began contradicting Agency estimates." Ahern concluded the problem in part was a "failure to modify conventional wisdom." CIA analysts failed to recognize they were applying a double standard as they attempted to compare the usage and relative importance of the Sihanoukville Route against the Laos overland trail. Instead, the analysts were more rigorous in attacking evidence that might

A CIA internal review of its finished intelligence reporting published in 1972 also questioned an underlying assumption that biased analysts against the Sihanoukville Route.

support the Sihanoukville Route hypothesis; Ahern noted, "Even the best agent reporting on quantities of munitions through Sihanoukville had inconsistencies and gaps that the orthodox school invoked to justify skepticism about the maritime route."[81]

In contrast, the same rigor was never applied to estimates of ordnance asserted to be coming overland south from the Laotian triborder area, about which there was little if any reporting. The lack of human sources below the triborder area allowed continuing faith in the overland thesis, but faith is what it was, according to Ahern. He concluded, "When the overland intelligence vacuum persisted as evidence for Sihanoukville grew, faith required rationalization to survive."[82]

A CIA internal review of its finished intelligence reporting published in 1972 also questioned an underlying assumption that biased analysts against the Sihanoukville Route—the premise that Hanoi would be unwilling to risk relying heavily on a trail not under its control, even if it had an entirely reliable trail system as a fallback. The Office of National Estimates wrote that Sihanoukville did not "surface in all its vigor" until 1968, but two Special National Intelligence Estimates published in 1967 had a "clearly conservative view" of Cambodia's role—current and potential—as a funnel for arms to NVA/VC forces in South Vietnam.[83] The study questioned the reasoning in the January 1967 estimate that "it seems unlikely that they [the

Vietnamese communists] would rely in any major way on such an important and indirect source [as the Sihanoukville Route]."[84]

George Carver judged in November 1970 that the CIA had been led astray by "capability judgments which became controlling assumptions that took conscious or unconscious precedence over judgments regarding intentions or actual performance." He elaborated that those conclusions probably caused OER's analysts "to be a shade more critically rigorous in weighing evidence that contravened these assumptions than evidence which tended to support them."[85] He also noted that a CIA analytic model of Sihanoukville's cargo-handling capacity was "ingenious and logically impeccable," but "it bore little relationship to concrete reality."[86]

In 1984, General Palmer summarized the CIA key judgments of the post-mortem, which concluded that the fact that Hanoi could service all its needs via the overland route did not necessarily mean that the regime would actually rely on the overland route. The low estimates on ordnance transshipment via Sihanoukville, coupled with the valid capability estimate on the overland route, "resulted in a mindset that led CIA astray in its judgments as to what North Vietnam was actually doing."[87]

The Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board delivered the results of the second inquiry to the President by January 1971.[88] The report may have used harsh language because Deputy

Commenting on one of CIA's internal postmortems on the failure, CIA's George Carver wrote in November 1970 that one such document was "not entirely free of a defensive tone or the subliminal imputation that it is better to have been wrong for the right reasons than right for the wrong reasons."

Director for Intelligence Jack Smith recalled that none of its "members seemed to find our accounting convincing."[89] Kissinger summarized the board's report in a memorandum written in January 1971, telling Nixon that the IC's failure to properly assess the flow of enemy material through Sihanoukville resulted from "deficiencies in both intelligence collection and analysis."[90] Kissinger concluded that CIA was primarily responsible for the failure.[91]

In fairness to CIA's analysts, they had drawn attention to what they perceived as Sihanoukville's growing significance, and estimated that it could be carrying nearly half of the ordnance bound for enemy forces in southern South Vietnam.[92] Additionally, Ahern rightly implied that the case supporting the Sihanoukville Route was not a 'slam-dunk' case even when better sourcing became available in early 1970. He refused to argue that "the DI should have assigned to Sihanoukville with the same degree of confidence—the importance that it had earlier attributed to the overland route. There were, after all, powerful circumstantial arguments against it. And if agent reporting had now proved a substantial flow of arms through Sihanoukville, exact quantification still eluded the analysts."[93]

Closing Observations

CIA analysts attempted to apply rigorous tradecraft to analyzing the North Vietnamese logistics flow related to Sihanoukville from 1966 through 1970, but they underestimated the port's overarching importance as an arms/ammunition conduit to enemy forces in southern South Vietnam as well as the quantity of tonnage shipped through the port. It simultaneously overestimated the importance and activity over the competing overland route, but for different reasons. The analytic failure reflected intelligence gaps, the agency's determination to set a high bar for using HUMINT reporting, and adherence to an inaccurate, alternative theory of North Vietnamese logistics routes feeding into southern South Vietnam.[94]

MACV estimates were closer to the truth, but they were also flawed in several ways. If the final tranche of shipping documents is indeed an accurate baseline, then MACV also made mistakes in reporting on individual arms deliveries, including mis-identifying grain shipments as arms deliveries, over- and underestimating the amount of ordnance in individual deliveries, and ascribing arms deliveries bound entirely for the FARK as arms deliveries as ones destined for South Vietnam. Nevertheless, the number of reports they decided to use got them closer to the truth than CIA.

The CIA-MACV debate ultimately hinged on determinations about which sources and raw reports could be reliably used to build their cases in Washington and Saigon.[95] Ironically, CIA's use of more rigorous tradecraft than its military counterparts in handling suspect HUMINT sources contributed to its significantly lower assessments. Commenting on one of CIA's internal postmortems on the failure, CIA's George Carver wrote in November 1970 that one such document was "not entirely free of a defensive tone or the subliminal imputation that it is better to have been wrong for the right reasons than right for the wrong reasons."[96]

Lessons

What do we know about what CIA took to be the lessons of this experience to be applied in the future? Late in the Helms tenure as DCI, CIA had been under pressure to examine more effective alternative analytic techniques than those employed during the lengthy debate discussed above. Fragmented and heavily redacted archival material refers to the loss of analytic consensus within CIA (and even individual offices) on this topic by 1968. CIA offices routinely conducted periodic internal reviews that challenged the methodologies and conclusions of previous analyses. CIA did produce a lengthy scrub of clandestine reporting on the topic, and OER even attempted a version of a Team A/Team B exercise to inform the debate, though it failed to change the minds of proponents of the established analytical line.[97]

Thus, despite these efforts, CIA analysis remained undermined by underlying, flawed assumptions that were only reluctantly abandoned despite a steady increase of countervailing reporting, according to Ahern. CIA continued to judge that

Hanoi would be unwilling to rely on the Sihanoukville Route because it would be vulnerable to closure by the neutralist Prince Sihanouk. In fact, there was little cost in relying heavily on the route, which offered an easier way of shipping munitions to southern South Vietnam than did use of the overland route through Laos. When Sihanouk was ousted in March 1970 and Cambodia's arrangement with China ended, North Vietnam readily returned to the overland route to transport ordnance to South Vietnam, according to Ahern's account, which he focused on "a failure to modify conventional wisdom."[98]

Such shortfalls called for CIA to deploy more rigorous alternative analytic techniques, such as the implementation of the "challenge mechanism" that DCI William Colby attempted to create after the intelligence surprise of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Although the declassified record simply does not reveal what reforms—if any—were implemented following the Sihanoukville failure, contemporary records reveal that CIA was considering such techniques as early as during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, when in 1966 it produced a report on the Vietnamese communist will to persist that employed a red team approach, according to James Marchio's recent study on devil's advocacy in IC analysis.[99] Analysts had used "solid alternative analysis techniques (red team, devil's advocate, and competing hypotheses),"

according to a CIA history of the Directorate of Intelligence.[100]

The CIA's experiments with alternative analysis continued during the Nixon administration, despite the stormy relationship between the Nixon and CIA. By 1970, CIA had drafted alternative analysis on Soviet strategic weapons programs for the White House, according to Marchio. The effort demonstrated a tentative interest in alternative analysis, which ultimately became institutionalized in so-called "Structured Analytical Techniques" as discussed by Heuer and others and addressed in a monograph, *A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis,* published by CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence in March 2009.[101]

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Endnotes

All released documents can be found in CIA.GOV's Freedom of Information Act Reading Room ((https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/search/site/) by inserting the complete released document number in the search field at the top of the search page. For example the intelligence memorandum cited in endnote 1 below would be searched by inserting "CIA-RDP78T02095R000200050001-1" into the search field. (N.b. Do not include the bracketed numbers found below in front of document numbers. Those are intended for ease of reference in the following bibliography.) In most cases, each released item contains more than one document, along with transmittal slips and memos. The documents contained in the released packages are listed, along with release information, in the bibliography following these notes. The URLs for all documents available in CIA.GOV are shown in the bibliography.

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Document number	**Description of key contents**
[1] CIA-RDP78T02095R000200030001-4 COMMUNIST SUPPLY SHIPMENTS THROUGH CAMBODIA AND LAOS APR-MAY 1969; Released 2006/01/03; 50 pages.	CIA memorandum from Chief of Trade and Aid Branch, "Possibility of Communist Military Deliveries to Sihanoukville Destined for the Cambodian Armed Forces," 9 May 1969. (https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/search/site/CIA-RDP78T02095R000200030001-4).
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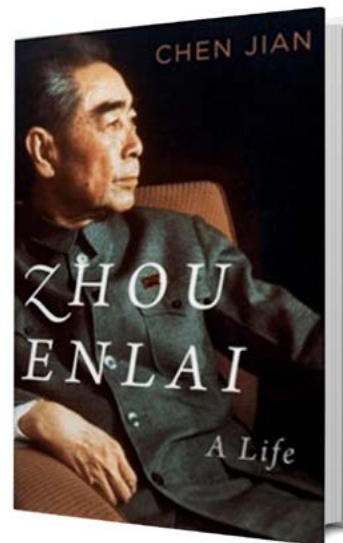
Zhou Enlai: A Life

Author: *Chen Jian*

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Reviewer: *Matthew J.*
The reviewer is a CIA analyst. He previously taught and researched East and Southeast Asian politics and PRC foreign policy. (This review originally appeared in *Studies* in September 2024.)

In seeking to fulfill his ambition to remake the global order, People's Republic of China (PRC) President Xi Jinping often looks to Foreign Minister Wang Yi to help implement that grand vision. In his role, Wang is one of the most front-facing individuals of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) outside of Xi. Early in his tenure, Wang said that Zhou Enlai, the creator and first head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1949–58), would "always be a model for diplomats"[a] and recounted Zhou's view that PRC emissaries must tackle their duties in the same way the People's Liberation Army did. Another PRC diplomat recounted that within the Foreign Ministry one "can criticize Mao Zedong, but you cannot criticize Zhou Enlai."[b] These comments should come as no surprise, as Wang's father-in-law served as an aide to Zhou, but today's consistent mentions of the late premier reflect the reality that Zhou's shadow continues to loom large over Beijing's rise as a global power.

In *Zhou Enlai: A Life*, Cornell University historian Chen Jian traces Zhou's life from humble beginnings in Jiangsu Province to a top CCP leader and China's point figure in international relations. Chen, who was born in China and earned his first college degree in a Chinese university and still teaches in Chinese institutions, is well

a. Peter Martin, *China's Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 199.
b. Ibid., 16.

placed to tell this story, having previously published well-received books on Beijing's decision to enter the Korean War and PRC foreign policy under Mao.[a] Chen is extraordinarily adept in utilizing Chinese sources, a skill on ample display in this, the most deeply researched and comprehensive English-language biography ever written on Zhou. His sources included material found in the Chinese Central Archive, the Foreign Ministry Archive, several provincial archives, numerous diplomatic papers of key CCP leaders, as well as selected Chinese-language works on Zhou, even including a compendium of his poetry. [b]

Zhou Enlai, A Life is told chronologically in four parts: Zhou's early life; the Chinese Communist revolution; the early PRC; and the years, including the Cultural Revolution, leading up to Zhou's death in 1976. In judging Zhou's legacy, Chen finds a middle ground, somewhere between the CCP's official record that hails him as an exalted individual and scholarship that holds Zhou responsible for supporting the worst excesses of the Mao era. (5–7) In sum, Chen provides a nuanced treatment of Zhou.

Beginning with Zhou's early life in Huai'an, Chen positions Zhou in a traditional Chinese class in which classical education was expected of male children who would compete for official government positions. Zhou's mother and aunt instilled in him an appreciation for knowledge and Chinese traditions, and Chen writes that there was "always a place reserved in his mind for the teachings of the ancient Chinese sages that he learned in his childhood, even once he seemed to have wholeheartedly embraced Communist ideologies and revolutionary philosophies." (17)

In 1910, at the age of 13, and one year before the fall of the Qing Dynasty, Zhou went to live with an uncle in Northeast China. He never returned to Huai'an, spending the next decade studying and working in different parts of China before traveling to Japan and Europe. Living in Paris in the immediate aftermath of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution made an impact on

Zhou, and it was there in 1922 that he wrote: "We should believe in the theory of Communism as well as the principles of class revolution and proletarian dictatorship." (59) Chen notes that Zhou's commitment to communism stemmed from his genuine feeling of shame over "China's backwardness" and his belief that national liberation was only achievable through revolution. Chen also notes that Zhou thought the "country's salvation should be associated with greater meanings and purposes," than those of capitalist and imperialist states. (60)

Zhou returned to China in 1924, meeting Mao for the first time and subsequently leading the CCP's clandestine operations in Shanghai from 1927 to 1931. There he earned the respect of party leaders as an individual who could run day-to-day intelligence operations. Of Zhou's time in Shanghai, Chen writes that "Zhou's control over the administrative power and intelligence network of the party, and then the party-state, would endure," and "although Zhou never became the paramount leader of the party, he consistently stood at the center of the party's operational network." (110) By 1943, Zhou made clear where he stood on Mao's leadership, publicly proclaiming that "Comrade Mao Zedong's direction is the direction of the Chinese Communist Party." (217) For Chen, Zhou's sincerity was unclear, but his statement supporting Mao "formed the basis on which Zhou was to work with Mao in the decades to come."

Following the CCP's victory in 1949 over Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang forces, Zhou became both the PRC's premier and foreign minister, occupying a key role in Mao's inner-circle in leading the government and China's diplomacy—Zhou was central in negotiations with the Soviet Union in 1950 which secured $300 million in loans for Beijing along with territorial concessions in Northeast China. (298). He and his wife, Deng Yingchao, moved into the Zhongnanhai leadership complex in Beijing along with Mao and other CCP leaders.

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a. *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (Columbia University Press, 1995) and *Mao's China and the Cold War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
b. Others who have used Chinese archival material as well include Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order*; Julian Gewitz, *Never Turn Back: China and the Forbidden History of the 1980s*; Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*. Gregg Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry During the Cold War*.

Richard Nixon Library, February 21, 1972

was critical the Vietminh accept the deal, noting that an expanded conflict, like the one just stopped in Korea, served no one's purpose. Ho ultimately accepted Zhou's reasoning. (372) Zhou became a staunch advocate of supporting revolutions in Africa and Latin America. (492) With respect to Taiwan, Chen argues that Zhou played a role in softening Beijing's tone following a series of clashes in the mid-1950s. (418) However, a crisis in 1958, instigated by Mao, demonstrated just how much salience the issue had for CCP leaders.

Regarding domestic issues, which also fell into Zhou's sprawling portfolio, Chen paints Zhou as having a pragmatic side, while recognizing his need to stay in Mao's good graces. When Mao decided to rush Chinese economic development during the mid-1950s, Zhou initially cautioned against a "rash advance," drawing the chairman's ire. At a CCP National Congress in 1958, Mao chastised Zhou for "failing to get the bigger picture" and accused him of stoking divisions within the party. Sensing his political standing was faltering, Zhou took responsibility for his mistake of opposing a "rash advance," stating publicly that "as proven by China's revolution and reconstruction, Chairman Mao has represented the truth." (414) Within a year of this speech, Mao launched the disastrous Great Leap Forward. Chen credits Zhou's political sense for helping him navigate the tumultuous years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), when Mao sought to reinvigorate his control over the CCP by turning loose mobs of young party members (Red Guards) to attack individuals who had putatively lost their way and slipped back into capitalist and counterrevolutionary behavior. In Chen's view, Zhou understood the chaos Mao had unleashed and did what he could, at times, to protect colleagues and maintain "administrative and executive power" in the country. (574)

The last chapters of the book detail one of the most important periods of Zhou's career—managing détente with the United States in the 1970s. Zhou held secret meetings with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in Beijing to lay the groundwork for President Richard Nixon's visit in February 1972 and succinctly set out the PRC's position on the most vexing question in the bilateral relationship: the status of Taiwan. In Chen's view, Zhou was shrewd and adept at taking

In chapter 16, one of the book's most insightful, Chen meticulously recounts PRC diplomacy and strategy during the Korean War. Zhou oversaw China's involvement in Korea, meeting several times with Kim Il Sung and engaging with Moscow and Pyongyang as the conflict unfolded. Zhou also handled PRC diplomacy toward Vietnamese communists and their leader, Ho Chi Minh. After attending the Geneva Conference in 1954, it fell on Zhou's shoulders to convince Vietnamese communists to accept a negotiated settlement to end their war against the French. At a key meeting in Liuzhou, China, not far from the Vietnam border, Zhou delivered a detailed assessment of why it

on Mao's directives for what the PRC wanted to accomplish in any new relationship and articulating that vision to Kissinger. He could be pragmatic in one meeting with Kissinger and fiercely ideological in the next. Ultimately, Zhou and Mao were pleased with Washington's willingness to recognize "only one China and that Taiwan was part of China." (635) When President Nixon arrived in Beijing, Zhou's hand was the first he shook after disembarking Air Force One.

Zhou Enlai's approach to global affairs was based on a view that post-1949 China needed to act assertively to remedy a "century of humiliation" at the hands of Western powers. For those familiar with Beijing's current thinking, that should sound familiar. While Zhou could be a shrewd and pragmatic diplomat, he was also a committed revolutionary whose ideology and sense of historical determinism influenced his foreign policymaking. For intelligence professionals, recognition of the CCP's complicated past and historical trajectory, from victors in the Chinese Civil War to rising power, is essential to understanding how Beijing approaches its place in the world today. Ultimately, Chen's book is as much a story of the CCP's rise and its influence on the Cold War and beyond as it is a profound biography of one of the PRC's founding leaders and most important diplomat. ∎

intelligence officer's bookshelf

Short reviews by Hayden Peake and other contributors (These reviews originally appeared in Studies in September 2024.)

Biography

Agent Link: The Spy Erased from History
by Raymond J. Batvinis
(Roman & Littlefield, 2024), 325 pages.

Sometime in 1934, William Weisband, a clerk working for the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York was recruited by the KGB and given the codename LINK. Fifteen years later another KGB agent he turned him in to the FBI. Although his codename appeared in the VENONA traffic, he never spent a day in jail for his spying. Espionage historian and retired FBI special agent Raymond Batvinis tells this unusual counterintelligence story in *Agent Link*.

That Weisband was a KGB agent during World War II is not a revelation, but many details of his life and espionage operations have not been reported because his FBI, NSA, US Army, and KGB files were unavailable until recently. Some remain classified, but Batvinis acquired enough new material to provide a more thorough, although still incomplete, account of Weisman's life.

The files say he was born Wolfe Weisband in Alexandria, Egypt, on August 28, 1908, although later in life he would say he was born in Russia. His parents had emigrated to the United States to escape persecution there. In 1925, the family moved to New York City, where Wolfe soon became William. He would quickly become enamored of a libertine lifestyle in the city. Trying to support what became expensive habits, he took a series of clerical jobs in hotels. Batvinis estimates that during his six-year stint at the Waldorf Astoria, he began to work for the KGB, but exactly when and under what circumstances remains classified (or lost) in Russian files. Although Moscow's new agent had no technical expertise, Batvinis suggests he was just right for service as a courier. In any case, his immediate financial problems were solved.

Agent Link follows Weisband's courier and later agent-handling career in the 1930s and early 1940s, when he moved to California and began running agents, including Jones Orin York, who would betray him to the FBI after the war. Batvinis also describes Weisband's military career, which began when he was drafted into the US Army on September 1, 1942. Mainly because of his linguistic skills, he was eventually commissioned, sent to signal school at Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey, and then served overseas, all the while still serving as a KGB agent. Returning to the States in late 1944, he was assigned to Arlington Hall Station, where Army Signal Corps code-breaking was headquartered. It was there that he would do the most damage, translating what came to be called the VENONA messages and, of course, informing the KGB that its messages were being decoded. Batvinis stresses that Weisband didn't know to whom the traffic referred, since codenames were used. That revelation was provided by Kim Philby. Thus, Batvinis concludes, by 1949, "there was nothing that American code breakers were doing that Moscow didn't know." (253)

On February 2, 1948, after Meredith Gardner, the VENONA codebreaker, discovered that a KGB spy codenamed NEEDLE was Jones Orin York, Weisband's days were numbered. Batvinis describes what happened after York identified LINK and why Weisban eventually served a year in jail for contempt of court. Once free, he had periodic, troubled contacts with the FBI and NSA as he tried to support his family. He died on May 14, 1967, with his wife Mabel and their children at his side.

Agent Link features an unusual literary style that gives the reader a broad view, not only of Weisband, but of the many intelligence officers and agents with whom he had direct and indirect contact. For example, in addressing the defection of GRU code clerk Igor Gouzenko, Batvinis provides a short

biography of Gouzenko before addressing his impact on LINK. Likewise with Philby, Eliza-beth Bentley, Anatoli

Golitsyn, Alexander Feklisov, and many FBI special agents.

Intelligence

In the Labyrinth of the KGB: Ukraine's Intelligentsia in the 1960s–1970s
by Olga Bertelsen
(Lexington Books, 2022) 370 pages.

After practicing medicine and dental surgery in Ukraine, Dr. Olga Bertelsen earned a PhD at the University of Nottingham—where she focused on Soviet/Russian history and intelligence. She went on to teach and study at several US universities. She is currently an associate professor of global security and intelligence at Tiffin University in Ohio.

In the Labyrinth of the KGB is the story of the Kharkiv intelligentsia, multiethnic writers who after Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech revealing the true Stalin, explored the limits of free expression. Bertelsen uses the "labyrinth" to refer to the many paths of expression writers attempted to pursue only to be blocked by the KGB in the 1960s and 1970s.

This opposition to free expression was not new. As Bertelsen shows, attempts to eradicate Ukrainian nationalism and Zionism, its two major targets, had a long history under Stalin. Ukrainians took what came to be called the "Khrushchev Thaw" after de-Stalinization as an opportunity to revive their national culture and consciousness, but the Soviets viewed this as a threat to national identity. By the second half of 1958, the crippling reality of re-Stalinization had set in.

Bertelsen gives examples, as told by the Kharkiv writers themselves, about how they were forced to comply with KGB rules that left no space for artistic or creative expression on particular matters. The topic of the *Holodomor*, the Stalin enforced famine in Ukraine during 1932–33, is a good illustration. Official opposition to treatment of this topic was well known and yet the authors found ways of mentioning it. Among other responses, the KGB resorted to what Bertelsen calls "memorycide" and "burning approximately 600,000 volumes of ancient prints, rare books, and manuscripts." (204)

Most of the time, Bertelsen uses the term "local" KGB or just KGB to identify those trying to enforce policies, but she notes that in July 1967,

The KGB created special counterintelligence departments to combat the ideological sabotage…. The Fifth Directorate and its subordinate departments were charged with the mission to conduct surveillance of the most active dissidents or individuals who attracted the KGB's attention by their nonconformist behavior. Each Fifth Chief Directorate operative used seven to 10 informers who methodically listened to the writers' conversations in cultural institutions, the Writers' Union, and its literary sections, conveying their content to their handlers. (30)

In the Labyrinth of the KGB is based largely on interviews with surviving authors and KGB operational documents found in the central (Kyiv) Security Services archives (former KGB archives) in Ukraine. They document the story of Kharkiv writers who endured the policies and penalties implemented by an authoritarian regime and forecast what is likely to occur if the current Russian government is successful in Ukraine. ∎

The Russian FSB: A Concise History of the Federal Security Service
by Kevin Riehle
(Georgetown Univ. Press, 2024), 197 pages.

The acronym "KGB" was consigned to history with the demise of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991. The security and intelligence functions it performed were not. Retired US intelligence analyst Kevin Riehle, a lecturer in intelligence and security studies at Brunel University in London, has written an excellent account of the struggles of the Russian Federation to create intelligence successor organizations.

The Russian FSB begins with a capsule history of Russian security elements and their frequently changed names from tsarist times to the present. Some missions changed over time, but one did not: protect the "tsar." (7)

In the early 1990s, a number of new security organizations were created, each quickly succeeded by variants until the reorganization in 1995 when the Federal Security Service (FSB) officially founded. At first glance, it resembled the old KGB because it absorbed three of the KGB's four main directorates. Only the KGB's First Chief Directorate, responsible for foreign intelligence

remained independent of the FSB; that was the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).

In practice much had changed. The FSB was given expanded responsibilities in law enforcement, intelligence collection—including HUMINT—covert action, and border security in Russia, along with the authority to operate in the former Soviet republics, especially for counterterrorism liaison purposes. Riehle concludes that this makes the FSB Russia's "primary clandestine service within the former Soviet space." (2) FSB authority increased further in 2003 and 2004, when the SIGINT elements and border guards directorate were subordinated to the FSB. Since then, the FSB has been Russia's foremost security and intelligence service.

Riehle describes the new organization, its functions and leadership, especially its dependence on President Putin. He suggests the FSB was at least partially respon-sible for an erroneous assessment that a quick victory could be achieved in Ukraine—a conclusion that took a toll on the leadership and trust. (157) Although less is known about personnel issues, training, assassinations, and digital warfare elements, Riehle mentions them while acknowledging source limitations. His main Russian sources—Agentura.ru and the Dossier Center—are posted by Russians living in the West. He does rely on Russian media for information on FSB corruption, which has gotten ample attention.

The FSB has made many enemies within the Russian ruling elite and society. The former from current practices discussed in the book, the latter from the fearful burden of the KGB's second chief directorate, whose legacy of domestic counterintelligence and the gulag is not forgotten. *The Russian FSB* sees little hope for improvement in the Putin era. A valuable contribution to the intelligence literature. ■