



**IT'S A CULTURAL THING:  
THOUGHTS ON A TROUBLED CIA, PART TWO**

**by Garrett Jones**

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**DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE**

Not invented here and not used either: What is intelligence after 9/11 and who gets it?

During the Cold War, the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence (DI) produced a limited number of finished intelligence products. The average DI analyst knew exactly who his consumers were and in what information they were interested. Consumers were usually policymakers at the Department of State, the Pentagon and the White House. Occasionally, the Departments of Commerce and Treasury were involved in certain economic reporting, but the audience for finished reporting was small.

Since 9/11, intelligence consumers run the gamut from policymakers to local police chiefs, combat commanders at the unit level to FBI agents trying to get a search warrant. Some of the consumers want masses of data sifted through, while others insist on receiving a real-time flow of the raw data. A DI analyst may no longer be able even to identify his consumers, much less grasp their individual needs for intelligence. The DI has met this new challenge by largely ignoring its existence. Finished intelligence products are delivered to consumers in more or less the same format and by more or less the same methods as they did during the Cold War, and they address more or less the same questions.

This is not good enough. For a start, the DI needs to identify all of its consumers and find out who needs what information and in what format. A second step might be to find out what other parts of the U.S. government have already amassed large amounts of raw information that could benefit DI consumers. The Drug Enforcement Agency, for instance, has an enormous amount of raw information on the operational details of drug cartels. Do the operations of drug cartels mirror in any way the operations of terrorist cells? Does the multiyear hunt for drug lord Pablo Escobar have any lesson that could aid in the hunt for Osama bin Laden?

Besides identifying its audience and addressing their needs, analysis no longer means just pulling together written documents of various pedigrees and condensing their meaning. There is no public indication that the DI is researching recent developments in computer data-mining of both classified and open-source databases looking for counterintuitive or nonlinear relationships. (An example of a nonlinear or counterintuitive relationship would be women's dress hemlines and the U.S. stock market, which rise and fall with each other. No one knows why, but the relationship seems real and predictive over time.)

Another new challenge not yet addressed by the DI is that the intelligence analysis function can change over time, even for the same consumer. While policymakers may require the traditional "secret information"—i.e., plans, intentions, and capabilities—to define an emerging situation, their needs can change once an initial policy has been formed. Determining that a chemical weapon plant exists is an example of the traditional "secret stealing"; finding out who is being bribed to sell illicit equipment and by means of what bank accounts is new to the Agency, which has not even explored how to do something covert to effectively end the bribery. Historically, the default is to go to the diplomats and see if a strongly worded demarche can achieve anything; if a diplomatic resolution is not possible, then it's "send in the Marines." There has to be something in between—perhaps compromising the existence of secret international bank accounts, starting civil suits against the various players through deniable fronts, mounting direct-action missions against material in transit, or rerouting shipments by compromising computer systems. The information, or "intelligence analysis," needed to carry out any of these nontraditional efforts in no way resembles traditional intelligence analysis. Shipping schedules are rarely classified, and Swiss bankers may fear public disclosure more than covert action. While those who carry out these nontraditional activities, whether collection or

covert action, require intelligence analysis, are the collectors going to do the analysis, analysts working with the collectors, a new branch of the DI? We are not in the Cold War world anymore.

#### **Liaison Services 101: None are Friendly and Many are Not Competent**

There have been repeated calls in the media and Congress for the CIA to increase its cooperation with "friendly" liaison services to obtain better reporting on terrorism and other vital intelligence targets. This could be valuable, but there are a few features of liaison services to bear in mind. First, there are no "friendly" liaison services, not even among those allies who are historically, philosophically, and economically closest to us. There are several liaison services whose own national interests often coincide with U.S. interests and with whom we often cooperate to some degree. But they are not on our side, they are on their own side. They report to their own governments, and what is good for their governments is not always good for the U.S. The intelligence the CIA receives from a foreign service may be reliable, partly accurate, or completely false, depending on how that service sees its own national interest on a particular subject.

A second factor to consider in understanding liaison reporting is whether the service is any good at reporting on the foreign intelligence subject in question. Besides the CIA, perhaps two or three other national intelligence services are worldwide in scope. There are then perhaps a baker's dozen of good regional services, which can accurately report on their neighbors or some specific part of the world. The rest, including a number of wealthy and sophisticated countries, would be better served by subscribing to the New York Times for foreign intelligence reporting.

However, the liaison services' internal reporting abilities are often outstanding. Inside their own borders, most liaison services have an excellent grasp on what is going on and who is involved. Their powers normally exceed anything the FBI can do, and if they are willing to share the information, it is usually more accurate and detailed than anything the CIA can hope to obtain unilaterally.

All these factors must be considered in evaluating liaison service reporting. As the Iraqi WMD fiasco demonstrates, this is not being done. As of this writing, the CIA's Counterintelligence Center (CIC) is the primary component that does a regular evaluation of the foreign liaison services. CIC is chiefly focused on evaluating how much of a counterintelligence threat the liaison service might pose to U.S. interests. Evaluating the service's foreign intelligence reporting creditability is outside their scope. Logically, the Reports Officers (RO)--also known as Collection Management Officers (CMO)--could pick up the slack, but they have not done so. As noted in Part 1 of this article, the RO role at the CIA appears to be completely broken.

Whoever is finally drafted to take on this task is going to have to tell the intelligence consumer a few things upfront when disseminating a liaison service's intelligence report. Does the service have credibility as a foreign intelligence reporter? Has the service reported on this intelligence subject in the past? What percentage of its reports were correct? They will also need to inform the consumer about the liaison service's own agenda. Are their own internal politics such that they will tell us everything they know, some of what they know, or will they embellish what information they might have in order to influence U.S. policy? All of these evaluations will have to be updated over time and customized depending on the particular subjects involved. Doing so will be a full-time job, not something that can be done some slow afternoon. Too much is at stake.

#### **DIRECTORATE OF OPERATIONS**

##### **Management versus Leadership**

Never in senior officers' entire careers within the DO will they be evaluated on their leadership ability. There is no leadership training. The Agency's position is that it evaluates and trains its senior officers in management ability, but there is a substantial difference between the two concepts: leadership requires inspiring people, while management involves stewardship of resources. The U.S. military observes this distinction: their doctrine is that one leads people and manages non-human resources. Managing, instead of leading, people is to treat people as commodities.

Case officers are often called upon to do dangerous and difficult things in dangerous and unpleasant places. The senior officer who wrote a particularly effective memo on reducing the costs associated with the use of rental cars may be a wonderful person, but he may not be the person to call the shots when officers' lives are endangered in some far-off place among hostile people.

Leadership can be taught. The military academies do it every year with 18-year-olds. Leadership can be objectively evaluated, the easiest way being to look back and see if anyone is following you. Intelligence work in the field demands extraordinary things in difficult circumstances. Those performing this work need to be led by senior officers who know the difference between leadership and management. The Agency's senior officers should be evaluated on their leadership abilities before they are promoted.

##### **Jointness: On Being Purple**

Squabbles over resource allocations began as soon as the U.S. military services were founded. After World War II, Congress attempted to force the various services to adopt the concept of "jointness," where the needs of all the services are placed before the individual needs of each service. (In the military services, jointness is known as "being purple," purple being the color one ostensibly gets when one mixes all the uniform colors of the various services.) Congress was largely unsuccessful. Finally, in 1986, a frustrated Congress mandated that no officer could be promoted to general officer unless he/she had served in a "joint tour of duty," loosely defined as two years working with other services, in which role you are not to represent your

own service's parochial interests. The effort worked. Faced with career-ending restrictions, the U.S. professional officer corps embraced the jointness concept and translated the concept into the superb military machine that now dominates the world military scene.

Since 9/11, Congress and the Executive branch have attempted to promote the concept of jointness within the Intelligence Community (IC), but with little success. The bureaucratic inertia and foot-dragging they have encountered mirror the resistance of the military services when they were first confronted with the idea of jointness. If Congress and the president want jointness to be implemented in the IC, they are going to have to force the issue. They could begin by mandating that no one within the IC can advance beyond the level of GS-14 (about equivalent to the Lt. Colonel) without serving in a "joint tour" within the IC. The IC may not embrace the jointness concept, but it will have to give it attention.

#### Retirees and Contractors

When I first joined the Agency in the late 1970s, I noticed a few older folks in the halls sporting green badges instead of the normal staff badge. When I asked about them I was told that they were retired staffers who had come back to work on contract to help with liaison visits, temporary workforce shortages, or because they had unusual language or area skills. At the time, I thought this was a good system, Experienced, cleared people could help when there was a workload surge or temporarily plug the gaps until things could be sorted out permanently. Over the years this practice expanded as the Agency's workload and responsibilities increased. By the early 1990s it was largely out of control, with the contracting process in effect being used to fill the gap left by the lower number of employees authorized by Congress. The Agency could not hire new employees at the rate it needed, but it could bring back retirees.

After 9/11, the practice of contracting retirees exploded. Today, the DO would grind to a halt if the retirees were removed. "Rumint" (rumor intelligence) has it that about 30 percent of DO employees are retirees. DO employees can retire, join a firm that is contracting with the Agency, and resume their old job within weeks, with a 25-percent increase in salary. This practice could be justified as a short-term measure and a "necessary evil," but in the war on terror, there are adverse long-term effects.

Apart from the usual abuse that can come from having this kind of money sloshing around, widespread retiree contracting distorts the workforce by siphoning off workers to early retirement. Contract retirees are not in the DO chain of command. As more experienced employees are enticed into retirement, the pool of experience is reduced at the command levels. The practice also tends to separate core functions and skills from staff employees. Several components within the DO are for all intents and purposes completely staffed by retirees, with one staff employee in the front office. The practice creates two workforces, paid significantly different amounts to do the same work. This is becoming a morale problem for staff employees.

This is not to criticize the retired employee contractors, who more than earn their salary and do an excellent job in the process. But Agency management has to assess the long-term impact of the contracting process and how it impacts the hiring and training of tomorrow's leaders.

#### AGENCY-WIDE

##### You Could Always Ask Them

New CIA Director Porter Goss may want to survey employees on what they perceive to be problems within the Agency. This sort of survey has been done before at the Agency; a particularly large-scale survey was conducted under Director Casey in the late 1980s, but the results were never released to the employees or the public. Rumint has it that the results of these inquiries are so embarrassing, Agency leadership has refused to release the results. Agency employees have in fact consistently pointed to the same problems over the years. Director Goss may find this to be the right moment to conduct a survey, and one with some degree of transparency for employees.

#### Staff Relations

Not unlike government, the military, and the private sector, there has been a long-standing tradition at the CIA of senior officials engaging in sexual relations with newly hired and/or junior officers who work for them. In the early 1980s, the practice became so disruptive at the Agency's main training facility, The Farm, that it was made a firing offense. The perception of favoritism as a result of such relationships, especially in promotions and assignments, is extremely corrosive to employee morale. Director Goss needs to take a position on the problem for his senior staff: if you get caught doing it, you are fired.

#### "Palsied by Lawyers"

While I do not always agree with Michael Scheuer,[1] he certainly got it right with that phrase. Having your own lawyer has become as necessary as having top-secret clearances at anything above the lowest level of CIA management. Each level of management has its own lawyer, fundamentally tasked with keeping that level of management out of trouble. Getting something done comes in a distant second priority. This is not an unreasonable response by CIA managers. Since the Boland Amendment in the 1980s, Congress has levied a series of formal and informal requirements on the CIA. Not even their authors agree on exactly what they mean. Couple this with ambiguous guidance from successive administrations, a "gotcha" political climate, and reluctance on the part of CIA directors to back their own people, and the various managers are left looking for cover.

In the CIA as in any other agency, things roll downhill. Starting at the top, at each level a lawyer tries to identify where the "bright line" is that either Congress or the White House does not want the CIA to cross. Having identified where s/he thinks that line is, they then subtract 5 percent to ensure a safety margin for their management level. After a dozen or so levels of management, a lethal-action order turns into a request to speak harshly in Osama bin Laden's general direction. An exaggeration, but not by much.

The lawyers should be pulled out of the unit level and put back with the Office of General Counsel at the director's level, where they belong. Then, a policy can be established of "one issue, one lawyer, and one legal opinion." You have a legal question. OGC has assigned one lawyer to that issue and as the director's lawyer; s/he tells you what the director's guidance is. One interpretation, one safety margin, and one place to go, at the highest level of the Agency, if Congress or the White House is not happy with how the policy is implemented. Rooting around at the branch level trying to hold some GS-12 accountable for interpreting guidance originating at the highest levels of the government is ridiculous. Short of malfeasance or criminal intent, the buck stops at the director's office, or at least it should.

#### Internal Affairs

The CIA has no Internal Affairs Unit or Office of Professional Responsibility to handle violations of Agency regulations or procedures. Depending on what the offense might be, an individual can be investigated for wrongdoing by any or all of the Office of Security, the Counterintelligence Center, the Office of the Inspector General, the individual's work component (for example, the DO for a case officer), and the Office of General Counsel (for determination as whether to refer the matter to the Justice Department for prosecution). Each of these has its own procedures and standards, and each reports its results to different authorities. It is entirely possible for multiple components to investigate the same set of facts at the same time and come to different results.[2] The process is so arbitrary, the "powers that be" can decide who is going to be the designated scapegoat for a particular incident and then convene an investigation to obtain evidence to support their decision.

For reasons of efficiency and fairness, this has to change. Employee investigations, other than criminal acts, need to be conducted by a single investigative office within the CIA, with uniform standards and procedures. The Office of the Inspector General has certain statutorily required duties, but perhaps this task could be added to its purview. The Office of Security might be another place to consolidate this function. Wherever the function is located, the results of these investigations should then be reported to a single place, where a consistent standard of accountability can be applied. At the moment, the employee's component chief decides what penalty, if any, is appropriate based on the various findings--that is, unless the higher-ups have become involved, and then the component chief does what they are told. The entire procedure or lack thereof serves neither the employee nor the Agency.

Shortly after 9/11, an Agency-wide investigation was instituted to hold individuals accountable for failures that may have resulted in the events of 9/11. As of today, this report has not yet been released in either a classified form for use within the CIA or an unclassified form for release to the public. If it requires nearly four years to hold someone accountable, your procedures are broken.

#### CONCLUSION

In this two-part article, I have tried to draw attention to some of the cultural artifacts at the CIA that have failed to change with the times. Whatever utility these practices may have had when they originated, they have become liabilities in the current environment. Though I have raised many subjects in different parts of the Agency that I believe need to be critically examined, the reader will have noticed a unifying theme. In each instance, there is a marked tendency on the part of senior levels of the CIA not to tolerate criticism, but instead to staunchly defend the status quo. In my experience, working-level Agency employees would welcome substantive change, not just meaningless reorganizations. Additionally, a distorted selection/promotion system has led the Agency to become top heavy with risk-averse "careerists."

Another event such as 9/11 or the Iraqi WMD fiasco could lead to the break-up of the CIA as it is currently known: the ice is that thin. That said, there are some great people working their hearts out at the CIA. With a modicum of enlightened leadership and support, there is nothing that is beyond their reach. The clock is ticking.

#### Notes

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[1] Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror* (Potomac Books, 2004).

[2] Richard Holm, *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA* (St. Ermin Press, 2004). Three different components were conducting simultaneous investigations on the same set of facts. None of the investigating components interviewed the person in charge at the time of the alleged incident.