

Defense Intelligence Gets New Blueprint

By J. MICHAEL WALLER

To win the war on terror, the national-defense community must be transformed from a Cold War mind-set to one that focuses on the art of collecting human intelligence.

If we can identify a target anywhere on Earth, we can destroy it." That's how Stephen Younger, director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), assesses the combination of U.S. intelligence and military capabilities. Intelligence enabled the U.S. military to fight and win Persian Gulf War II as no force in world history ever could have. Yet military intelligence experts say the United States can do better — much better. The United States has the best intelligence collection, processing and communications technology in the world. But our intelligence institutions suffer severely from what some insiders call second-rate leadership, third-rate intellect and a systemic failure to think strategically and plan for the long term.

Some of the nation's top intelligence professionals recently shared their concerns about defense intelligence at a conference at the Institute of World Politics in Washington. Most agreed that defense intelligence is superbly suited to operations support, as proved in the Afghan and Iraqi theaters of the world war on terrorism. But a failure to promote long-range thinking gradually has smothered strategic analysis and forecasting, thus misinforming U.S. national leaders about the intentions and plans of potential adversaries.

Such strategic misunderstanding can result in human tragedy as it denies policymakers the facts, conclusions and necessarily bold predictions needed to prevent wars and deal effectively with enemies through means short of all-out conventional warfare.

"Intelligence is the most important requirement for the future success of the military," says DTRA's Younger, whose agency is designed, according to its mission statement, to safeguard U.S. interests from enemy weapons of mass destruction and provide "quality tools and services for the warfighter."

The world war against terrorism, analysts add, will consist of 90 percent intelligence and only 10 percent combat. That's a huge challenge for the U.S. intelligence community, which has retained most of the Cold War structures and mind-sets that many consider dangerously obsolete. At present the Pentagon and uniformed services are writhing in the painful throes of a "defense-transformation" process, bringing the national-defense community out of the Cold War configurations of the Industrial Age to Space Age and Information Age designs suitable for the world war



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Action plan: Rumsfeld will pull warfighting-related intelligence collection and analysis closer to combatants.

on terrorism. These require extreme flexibility, agility, stealth and speed, as well as increasing intellect and ever-more intelligence collection, analysis and processing. The intelligence community, however, has not been keeping pace, leaving what professionals see as a dangerous gap that finds U.S. national-security needs far exceeding the capabilities of the intelligence services.

"There is little evidence of major movement in the intelligence community," notes Andrew J. Bacevich, director of the Center for International Relations at Boston University and author of *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*. "The response has been for the most part to continue the status quo. There has been no major reorganization."

While this has been true for the CIA, National Security Agency (NSA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and related institutions, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is trying to force changes in the creaky Pentagon bureaucracy. His recent creation of a new senior post, undersecretary of defense for intelligence, is intended to pull warfighting-related intelligence collection and analysis closer to the combatants and streamline relations with the CIA. But the system, intelligence veterans tell *INSIGHT*, needs much more than bureaucratic reshuffling.

The fundamental problem crying for solution is the people factor: leadership and personnel. "We see immense resources placed on acquisition of the world's best technological tools, but little emphasis on improving the vital skills of analysis, education and training," a senior administration official says. "DoD [Department of Defense] has to treat intelligence differently. It's not a weapons system. You can't just buy it." Leadership isn't only at the top levels, according to a senior intelligence officer. "It also works down through the second and third tiers of defense intelligence, where moral leadership and fortitude are in short supply."

The collection of human intelligence (HUMINT) is an art that requires intensive linguistic capabilities, social and professional interaction with counterparts in target areas and a thorough knowledge of local politics, history, mores and customs. But the intelligence community's reliance on high technology, and the nature of the personnel system and promotion practices, place relatively little value and afford few opportunities for the cultivation and recruitment of HUMINT networks

around the world. According to a Pentagon official, "The system doesn't reward HUMINT officers. It doesn't reward area specialists."

Even worse, during the last decade — for reasons ranging from political correctness imposed from above to the deteriorated state of American university education that trained the intelligence analysts from below, and on to what some see as a general lack of courage — U.S. leaders have seen a dumbing-down or corrosion of the intelligence process and its products. "Throughout the 1990s the depth of analytical skill in the intelligence agencies was eroded," according to Richard Haver, until recently a senior adviser to Rumsfeld.

As a longtime coroner of failed intelligence operations and analyses, Haver should know. He conducted damage assessments of dozens of cases. "And when you get down to the nubs, you always find the same problem — a lack of analytic rigor that didn't understand what were the missing pieces," he says.

Referring to certain events in Iraq, Haver explains, "They understood what all the pieces that they actually had were, but they didn't array the puzzle correctly. They didn't understand what was missing. That's the problem. We could go on and on and I think we'll find the same root cause."

And DTRA's Younger says, "We're doing well on tactical intelligence, but not so much on strategic intelligence. We need a transformation in strategic intelligence of heroic proportions."

Lack of intensive training and education of intelligence professionals has crippled the defense-intelligence community's ability to recognize and forecast enemy intentions before crises emerge. Defense-intelligence officers can count weapons and quantify capabilities but, without strong HUMINT and solid academic training and discipline to shape analysis, they cannot gauge the adversary's intentions. All the satellite technology in the world won't be enough to safeguard U.S. interests without the HUMINT factor. "You can't see from space into the hearts and minds of people," Younger says. Once the United States can read the hearts and minds of the targets, "then we need tools to help us influence their thinking."

One of the weakest links in the ana-

lytical chain is mastery of political warfare. Conference participants roundly lamented the defense-intelligence community's inability to understand political-warfare operations against the United States, and to produce intelligence analysis that would support U.S. influence operations against an adversary.

"Our enemies still use deception to try to make their threat to America seem ambiguous," according to Institute of World Politics Director John

and a strategic weakness of the American people is its unwillingness to look ugly foreign realities in the face and in advance." He adds, "You cannot have a strategy without goals. You cannot have goals without vision. You cannot have vision without values." Those values, which require the "moral strategic clarity" to recognize good from evil and create a consensus about what constitutes a threat, form the core of the human factor in intelligence. And they are at risk, Lenczowski argues, thanks to the "cor-



By the numbers: *The war on terror is 90 percent intelligence and 10 percent combat. Collection and analysis of intelligence will be the key to victory.*

Lenczowski. Both nation-states and terrorist groups, he says, are waging "indirect attack" on the United States in a "protracted conflict, using time as a weapon" and giving the impression that their changing tactics are instead changing strategies. "Political warfare and political-military strategy must be understood," he says.

Lenczowski continues, "The lack of such analysis is often a policy failure rather than an intelligence failure, because the policymakers are not thinking strategically, asking the right questions or properly tasking the intelligence community. Security is not a free good,

rosive moral relativism" in academia, society and the bureaucracy.

Moral relativism leads to the haunting specter of betrayal and treason. It is "a demon that will rise up and strike us," warns Dan Gallington, a former senior Pentagon intelligence official. Haver agrees. In the course of conducting intelligence damage assessments during the last 15 years, Haver says, "I have realized how seriously we have failed to protect our own secrets."

Those failures are not only from constant leaks to the news media and sloppy security, but the inability to screen enemy agents who had been recruited specifically to penetrate U.S. military intelligence. No one in the entire defense bureaucracy seemed to identify a Cuban penetration agent who not only was acting as a spy, but had raised her visibility



as an active agent of influence. Ana Belen Montes, whose Puerto Rican father served in the U.S. Army, was an ideological sympathizer of Fidel Castro. She joined the DIA in 1985 as a Nicaragua analyst during the turbulent days when the U.S.-backed resistance fighters battled the Soviet-backed communist regime. She became the DIA's top Cuba analyst, shaping top-secret intelligence assessments about the Castro regime's capabilities and intentions, briefing senators and senior congressional staff, and writing analyses that influenced U.S. policy toward the Havana regime. Her brother works for the FBI and her sister served as an FBI translator.

No one at DIA ever suspected that Montes could be a Cuban agent, even though she pushed aggressively for military cooperation with the Cuban military and brushed off counterintelligence officers' concerns that U.S. personnel might be compromised or recruited under such a program. In another case, she wrote such a watered-down estimate of Cuba's biological-weapons capabilities in 1999 that President Bill Clinton's own defense secretary, William Cohen, felt the need to beef it up.

So how did Montes go undetected for so long? Finding out what the enemy knows about one's secrets "is an admission of failure" to many in the defense bureaucracy, so there is a tendency to avoid discovering such unpleasant information, says Gallington.

Part of the problem is an ingrained, systemwide refusal to permit anyone's policy views to become a cause for suspecting them as a spy, agent of influence or terrorist agent. Compounding the effects of this is the legacy of the post-

Ways to Reform Defense Intelligence

- Integrate transformation of defense intelligence with the Pentagon's defense transformation.
- Provide defense intelligence with real leadership — at the top, in the middle and at the bottom — to inspire the services, lift morale and reward those who take risks.
- Reward human-intelligence (HUMINT) officers and institutional expertise in the military promotion system.
- Get rid of second- and third-rate analysts, and reward those who show moral courage and clarity of vision.
- Train analysts and officers to think strategically and to help civilian leaders do the same.
- Eliminate political correctness and other institutional factors that pressure analysts to censor themselves or avoid controversy.
- Create a formal, long-range planning office in the defense-intelligence community.
- Establish a Defense Clandestine Service that can run military covert operations abroad.
- With the Department of Defense holding 90 percent of U.S. government secrets, create a Defense Counterintelligence Service to safeguard national-defense assets.
- Set milestones and ensure that programs and initiatives serve their intended purposes.

—JMW

Fair warning: Experts say the United States can cope with any problem if given adequate warning, but the element of surprise still offers plenty of danger.

Watergate witch-hunts at the CIA under a committee led by the late senator Frank Church (D-Idaho). "Don't underestimate the influence of the Church committee on the U.S. intelligence structure," Gallington says. "You see its imprint everywhere."

A former chief counsel to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Gallington now heads Project Guardian: Maintaining Civil Liberties in the Information Age at the Potomac Institute in McLean, Va. He is quick to note that laws from the Church-committee period of left-wing McCarthyism against those who were fighting the intelligence war against Soviet communism remain on the books. They have crippled the collection of intelligence on U.S. citizens and foreigners with American residency, termed "U.S. persons," and with few exceptions have allowed traitors and terrorists to operate at home and around the world unmonitored and unstoppable.

Even as the Bush administration has convinced Congress to pass laws making it easier for government agencies to fight terrorism, it paradoxically has turned a blind eye toward self-appointed leaders of certain ethnic and religious groups favored by the president's political operatives. Scandalous excesses of the administration's well-intended post-9/11 Muslim outreach program, which granted White House and even presidential access to operatives for Arab terrorist groups, underscored a persistent trait among politicians of almost all stripes to ignore likely agents of influence for those supplying terrorist support when politically expedient [see "Undermining the War on Terror," March 18-31].

The United States can cope with any problem given adequate warning. The biggest danger is surprise. "Intelligence failures are rarely caused by immediate problems," says Haver. The problems are more systemic, going back years. Current intelligence failures, he argues, are the fruits of "decisions made in the middle 1990s." Just as intelligence problems take a long time to fester, they take a long time to repair. According to Haver, "It may take a decade for the public to see the results of reforms — if we do it right."

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