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Event: John Helgerson

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Location: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) headquarters, George Bush Center for Intelligence

Participants – non-Commission: John Helgerson 

Participants – Commission: Kevin Scheid, Gordon Lederman

(U) BACKGROUND.(S) He joined the CIA in 1971 and worked on African affairs. 

He was the Assistant Deputy Director of Intelligence (ADDI) from 1986-8. From 1988-9 he was Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs. From 1989-1993 he was the Deputy Director of Intelligence (DDI). From August 2001 until May 2005 he was the Chairman of the National Intelligence Council (NIC) while he confirmation as Inspector-General (IG) was delayed. In May 2002, he became the IG.

(U) WARNING.

(U) He said that he has a prejudice, that the best and most useful analysis comes from people who work the area on a day-to-day basis, even though such people have the tendency not to predict dramatic changes. He has little faith in the current structure of warning, in which there is a National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for warning. There were different structures tried over the years. As ADDI, he was chair of a warning group. The value of the group was chiefly in assembling experts and marketing their products, particularly for the military – the military's personnel turns over so quickly that the military appreciates the value of marketing to direct them to what information is important. A person put in charge of warning only knows as much as he or she is told – the real work of warning is done by the substantive expert. However, ultimately it does not matter how you organize for warning so long as you have a structure and that the

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Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the CIA take the structure seriously.

(S) He noted that the Intelligence Community (IC) failed to predict the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In contrast, the IC did predict the Six-Day War of 1967. He suggested that we look at how the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) was able to predict the 1967 war.

(S) Tactical warning is easier to define, but strategic warning is harder to define. It is unclear whether strategic warning refers to longer-term issues or rather big changes in history that are not discrete events. Warning, in effect, melds into a number of different areas. The 1990 National Intelligence Estimate on Yugoslavia "nailed the issue" and gave clear strategic warning.

(S) Regarding how tactical warning would be done, it would invariably be in a daily publication or a warning report. A formal warning report is not that useful – Charlie Allen "hollered a lot," but if you holler too much, it leads to overwarning. The best warning is from the substantive experts.

(S) There was a SEIB article [redacted] policymakers were jolted.

(S) Warning initially was about preventing another Pearl Harbor, but with so few Pearl Harbors, warning came to be about political events such as wars in the Congo. Warning was never about economic events or demographics, however.

(U) TERRORISM, ANALYSIS, AND WARNING PRIOR TO 9/11.

(S) There was no NIE on terrorism pre-9/11. The last major estimate on the global terrorist threat was in 1995 and updated in 1997. He suggested that we talk with Stu Cohen and Paul Pillar, who was the NIO for the Near East. He thought that the reason there was no major product from 1997 to 2001 was how human nature led us to interpret the terrorism threat.

(S) When Mr. Helgerson became chair of the NIC, he met with all of the NIOs. There was an NIE underway since early 2001, when the NIC was under John Gannon, regarding the global terrorist threat against the U.S. A draft of the NIE was "virtually complete" in July 2001. Paul Pillar sent comments to the Counterterrorist Center (CTC), which had drafted the NIE. The report was not published until February 2002 because CTC was distracted with post-9/11 work. Paul Pillar finished the NIE, but the main arguments did not change from the July 2001 draft – although the July 2001 draft said that terrorism was a major threat but that there was no evidence that the attack would be in the U.S.

(S) In 1989, there was an NIO who dealt with matters such as denial and deception, and there was another NIO for terrorism. Fritz Ermarth was the chair of the NIC when Judge Webster was the DCI. Mr. Ermarth would consult with NFIB principals, mainly INR and DIA. Judge Webster signed a memorandum moving the responsibility for terrorism analysis to CTC and abolishing the position of NIO for terrorism. The memorandum also

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moved responsibility for monitoring denial and deception to the Counterintelligence Center (CIC). The memorandum directed that the chiefs of CTC and CIC would report directly to the DCI. DIA and INR were unhappy because the CIC and CTC were CIA centers. The memorandum also said that the NIOs would have final responsibility for estimates – but the NIC interpreted this order as not applying to estimates for terrorism. After Judge Webster's memorandum, the various NIC products would have sections on terrorism (e.g., the NIC's product on continuity of government had a section on terrorism), but there was no overall estimate for terrorism produced by the NIC. Terrorism in NIC products was always part of a larger story.

(S) CTC's dominant culture was the CIA's Directorate of Operations (DO) and less analysis. There was no NIO to state that an estimate was needed. Fortunately, Paul Pillar was NIO for the Near East, and he was very oriented toward terrorism. Also, there were terrorist events to focus attention. Accordingly, the NIC felt that it needed to get back into the fray of terrorism analysis. However, Mr. Helgerson does not know why the 1995 estimate on terrorism was drafted.

(S) When he came to the NIC, he was told he needed NIOs for information operations, proliferation, and terrorism. The advice was right – the NIC's division of labor regarding proliferation was unsatisfactory. However, his highest priority was filling the position of NIO for East Asia. When filling that position, he told the DCI and John Moseman that the NIC needed to be shaken up, but he himself did not want to do it because he was only a temporary NIC chairman. Stu Cohen continued to press with Moseman and the DCI regarding the NIC.

(S) The purpose of the NIC is to harness the capabilities of the IC to bring the best analysis to bear on a given subject – from DIA, INR, etc. – and to recruit the best drafters. The chairs of the NIC are trusted by the IC to represent the IC. The NIC also utilizes outside experts, which the IC generally does not do. The NIOs are substantive experts and are not a staff dependent upon others. NIC products are IC assessments – although the really valuable NIC products are not the estimates but rather the other things that the NIC produces. NIC products are for consumers who want the view of the entire IC – which is generally desired by the Pentagon and the military's combatant commanders. The NIC might self-initiated, which may have been how the 1995 terrorism estimate was started.

(S) The DI writes intelligence on a very broad set of subjects and for a very well-defined audience of consumers. The DI may coordinate with other agencies to the extent that those other agencies want to play, which they generally do not want to do. As he said, "The DI's work is 99 percent DI-think."

(S) Mr. Helgerson cautioned against overstating the decline of the CTC's analytic capability. He said that CTC analysts were very good and that the community-arm of CTC was supposed to do IC papers on terrorism short of estimates (he did not elaborate on what this "community-arm" of CTC was). Mr. Scheid referenced the hard-target

survey that the DCI initiated to look at collection and analysis against particular targets – CTC was supposed to do the survey against terrorism but apparently never did it.

(U) MANAGEMENT OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.

(S) He never saw a copy of the DCI's 'declaration of war' on terrorism in 1998.

(S) Regarding what a DCI would do in general to implement a decision, Mr. Helgeson told the story of DCI Judge Webster, who made the decision to create the Crime and Narcotics Center (then known as the Counternarcotics Center)(CNC). Judge Webster did not follow-up to determine whether his will was implemented – he basically trusted people to do it. Also, Judge Webster did not know the 'nuts and bolts' of the IC and was more hands-off. CNC is the most dramatic case of a DCI wanting something done. Also, at the end of the Cold War, the DCI said that he wanted resources moved – and resources were in fact moved, but the DCI did not want to know details.

(S) The DCI can say that counterintelligence is a priority, but unless the DCI does not act like counterintelligence is a top priority, the issue "atrophy." Regarding how a DCI conveys the importance of an issue to the IC, he said that any manager who wants progress must have a limited number of priorities. DCI Casey knew the answer, he said – DCI Casey "was fanatically interested in whatever he was interested in" and was "tireless." DCI Casey once told Mr. Helgeson that "I've only got six years to change history." Mr. Helgeson said that DCI Casey was the only person he knew whose avowed mission in life was to change the course of history. The DCI needs leadership and management instincts. It is easier for a DCI to kill a program, however. Whether the U.S. has a DCI or a Director of National Intelligence (DNI) is irrelevant – what is necessary is to have the right person. DCI Vandenberg had no impact, while DCI Beedle Smith gave orders and strengthened CIA within a few weeks.

(S) Mr. Helgeson also discussed whether, in the age of transnational threats, centers are a stepping-stone to another organizational structure for CIA. He noted that, on the analytic side, there are only three regional branches needed. Those regional branches are needed because there are still geographically-based threats such as China. He thought that China was just as much of a threat as terrorism – or, at least, the question of whether China emerges as friend or foe is just as critical to U.S. security. Thus, there needs to be a China branch. Functional offices are harder to run than geographic offices. So, there needs to be a balance between centers and regional offices.

(S) He suggested that we not be misled by the notion of a "dominant culture" in a center. He said that all centers, by necessity, are operationally-oriented, and that good analysis is needed to support the operations of the center. For example, CNC is very operationally-oriented.

(S) As to whether the centers are functioning at a community level, none of the centers ever had enough IC representation as would the centers would have liked. Other agencies are unable or unwilling to provide manpower – there are many reasons why the

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other agencies do not do it. Most agencies send only a token force to the CIA's centers. As to why the DCI could not just order agencies to supply more people to the centers, he said that the DCI could do so but that agencies have a lot of competing priorities. He noted that Gen. Gordon as DDCI was notorious for agreeing to send CIA analysts to other agencies.

(S) Regarding impediments to agencies working together, there needs to be virtual connectivity between rather than physical collection of various agencies. Virtual connectivity requires different authorities but also is a physical challenge – for example, it took a long time to get imagery from National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) collectors to NIMA's headquarters. Also, the National Security Agency (NSA) has refused to give up raw transcripts of telephone conversations – which made him as a CIA analyst very upset. NSA's reason for refusing to do so was security: protection of sources and methods. Material is not sent to DoD above the SECRET level (he did not elaborate, but perhaps because of a perception that DoD generally lacks the facilities for handling material of a higher classification).

(S) Conducting lessons-learned is not a common endeavor in the IC. The IC can learn from both its successes and failures. The IC seldom does effective after-action reports.

(S) When he was in the DI, he had a product evaluation staff; he asked what has happened to it. There was an after-action report done after the Chinese embassy was accidentally bombed. He suggested that we look at that report and what it recommended. The DI office that did targeting should have been located in the CIA Office of Military Affairs. He noted that 80 percent of IG recommendations are implemented, which is as good or better than for other IGs. He also noted that the 2001 IG assessment of CTC was more positive.

#### (U) THE NOTION OF AN "INTELLIGENCE FAILURE"

(S) An "intelligence failure" is when the intelligence community did not foresee an occurrence of an event abroad that had a negative impact on U.S. interests. Failing to foresee a good thing is not as much of a problem. Regarding accountability, the IG does component inspections every five years. Congress instructed the IG to audit special activities every three years.

(S) The IG's methodology is to ask, "What is the deliverable expected out of this line of work?" It may be something that cannot easily be quantified. However, if managers cannot articulate the deliverable, that is a major problem. And, of course, the question is whether there is a deliverable – usually the IG finds [redacted]  
[redacted] There is also the question of short- versus long-term time horizons. During component inspections, the IG asks whether things are demonstrably better, worse, or the same as five years ago. And an office's efforts to position for the long-term are very important. The IG generally looks at high-level managers and may conclude that the person is not suited for the job.

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(S) There is no IG for the IC as a whole. Sen. Rockefeller and Mr. Helgerson had an exchange during Mr. Helgerson's confirmation hearing on this issue. Mr. Helgerson said that the IG does meaningful work with the IGs of other IC agencies via the IG forum for the IC, which is co-chaired by the DoD and IC IGs. There is currently a multiagency look at the NHRTC. He has been doing about six multiagency IG studies per year.

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