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Are We Prepared?

Intelligence Service Is Our First Weak Spot

This is the first of a series of articles on the state of the country's defenses. Today's article deals with the American intelligence services. Subsequent articles will be devoted to the Nation's top-level policy and planning; continental defenses; atom attack and civil defense; the armed services; the potential defense of Western Europe; national mobilization and resources; the condition of the country's land, sea and air transport; the propaganda war; and, finally, an evaluation of America's national security.

By Ogden R. Reid and Robert S. Bird

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BEHIND America's costly and belated effort to rebuild its crumbled national defense, in the wake of the Korean outbreak, lies a history of failure in one of the most essential arms of the Nation's military establishment—the intelligence services.

A country's intelligence machinery ideally ought to furnish the information on which national policy and military planning can build toward sound objectives. If the United States lacks reliable intelligence, it will flounder in the dark, dissipating its enormous power.

Korea brought home the weakness and misuse of American intelligence and demonstrated the immediate need for improving these services.

EVEN before Korea our past intelligence score shows five major failures:

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1. The fall of Czechoslovakia — We thought this would be a routine change in government, not the downfall of a free Czechoslovakia.

2. Tito's defection — We had no knowledge or forewarning of this important break in the Russian satellite alliance. The G-2 Army intelligence officer in charge of the Yugoslav desk at the time was busy analyzing Tito in terms of his being Stalin's valet.

3. The fall of the Chinese Nationalists—All our intelligence services save G-2 discounted the capabilities of the Communists to overrun China.

4. Palestine—The military abilities of the Arabs were embarrassingly overrated by the intelligence groups.

5. Bogota—Of painful memory was the intelligence fiasco at Bogota in April, 1948, when a Colombian revolution exploded without notice under the noses of the International Conference of American States and the chief United States delegate, Secretary of State George C. Marshall. It was explained later that intelligence had reported that there might be some picketing, but not shooting.

IN ALL these five intelligence breakdowns we had ample numbers of agents on the scene; we do not have the same opportunity with Russia.

The raw materials of our intelligence services flow into Washington from sources all over the globe. Some of it comes from foreign scientific journals; some from our "deep cover" agents, from military attaches, from nationals of other countries who have defected, from various missions, and other sources.

Each of the three military services and the State Department has its own intelligence machinery, and standing outside all these is the major organization—Central Intelligence Agency—supposedly the coordinating body under the direction of the National Security Council.

Separately, another intelligence office, the Joint Intelligence Group, services intelligence for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thus the American Government has the eyes and ears of six different intelligence branches to keep it informed on all the myriad activities that should be the vital concern of any world power.

IN THIS country, intelligence weaknesses begin in the field. Too many agents depend, in the first place, on a thin State Department and Army "cover," which not only is easily unmasked but incurs the risk of early departure from the foreign country when trouble starts. State Department and Army people are among the first to go when tension verges on war, just the time good intelligence is most needed.

A further serious weakness in this nuclear age is the lack of scientifically trained agents in the field; men and women who know what to look for and when to recognize a matter of scientific import to this country.

A top scientist in this country's planning councils makes the point, in this connection, that a well-trained scientist can tell from an aerial view of an atomic plant its production within 10 per cent.

LESSER faults that arouse criticism among the officials whose work is based on intelligence reports involve the extensive duplication of effort in the field. Examples are the

interrogation of persons who have information to give.

Often three or more American services will process such a person to a point where he dries up in anger or frustration. Around the fluid zone boundaries of Germany, where much of the intelligence from Russia is gathered from defectors who have fled that country, fumbling techniques of this kind become a serious matter.

When the intelligence conveyor belts from around the world converge in their respective offices in Washington, the same duplication occurs—in the examination of basic documents (CIA's office of reports and estimates examines the same documents being scrutinized by the Army's G-2, the Air Force's A-2, the Office of Naval Intelligence, and the State Department), in the monitoring of foreign radio broadcasts (both CIA and the Defense Department have large expensive monitoring setups), and in the interrogation of Americans or other nationals returning from overseas.

BUT most inexcusable of all, and most fateful for the Nation, are the muddles in intelligence evaluation and coordination, the interpretations placed on the evaluated materials, and the lack of dissemination of raw and finished intelligence to interested customers.

It is the duty of CIA, under the direction of the National Security Council, to correlate and evaluate intelligence touching national security. This has not and is not being done except in haphazard fashion.

The joint intelligence group has tried to pull together the service intelligence points of view and then cross-check their finished reports with the Joint Intelligence Committee (composed of the service intelligence chiefs), the State Department and CIA.

This has only resulted in cross-checks of finished papers but not in an initial putting together of all raw intelligence material before the papers are written.

A TOP five-man board, freed of all other duties save that of carefully collating and evaluating all material bearing on the national security, was recommended by the Hoover Commission to fill the gap. But after two years nothing has been done.

This is no small oversight, because many of the most serious failures of intelligence in recent years have not been in getting the needed information but in testing its validity and analyzing its meaning. "Eyes" and "ears" are valueless without "mind."

In March, 1948, for example, the Defense Department got intelligence from Gen. Lucius D. Clay in Germany indicating the likelihood of a Russian invasion of Europe.

The late Secretary of Defense James Forrestal summoned all intelligence chiefs to his office over a two-day period and by sheer force of personality under the threat of serious danger fused their best thinking on the subject.

They reached a majority agreement that the suspicious troop movements in Eastern Germany were not forerunners of an invasion, but a buildup for the blockade.

THIS evaluation was correct, but it was reached only after all intelligence available on the matter had been presented and reconciled, with some dissent.

Up to now the services still withhold planning and operational information from CIA. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have ruled that none

of their 2000 super-secret strategic papers that are the basis for the Nation's overall planning, and would be the blueprints for action in countless different areas, can be turned over to CIA.

Furthermore, it has only been in the last three weeks that CIA representatives have been allowed in the Joint Chiefs of Staff "situation room" where current U. S. and enemy operations information is posted.

This mistrust of CIA is abetted by the State Department, which does not admit the agency to its top policy councils. And recently the State Department was slow to turn over to CIA the cables from our embassy in Moscow relative to the talks between the British Ambassador, Sir David V. Kelly, and Andrei Gromyko over Korea.

Because of this poor interchange of all intelligence, the Nation's cabinet officers have very little confidence in intelligence in general, and in particular in CIA's product. They tend to rely on the intelligence of their own services.

The separate military services base much of their operational planning on their own intelligence estimates, not on CIA reports or on joint briefings.

Even the President does not always utilize either the joint service briefings or the CIA report.

INTELLIGENCE officers of long standing and experience say that the following steps must be taken before the U. S. can have basic confidence in its intelligence.

1. The National Security Council should give CIA the power to collate and coordinate all relevant intelligence, and should delineate clear lines of intelligence responsibility among the services and the State Department.

2. CIA should be headed by a civilian or a retired service officer who will make the agency his life work. He should be assisted by three military deputies.

3. A top five-man board to collate all national intelligence, evaluate it and reach considered interpretations should be set up within CIA. The members of this board should have no other administrative duties.

4. CIA should weed out much of its second-rate personnel acquired during its rapid expansion.

5. Departments within CIA's five offices should be reduced to promote better working liaison and to avoid duplication.

6. CIA should get ample funds to provide realistic cover for their agents. The U. S. could purchase foreign business concerns where necessary and advisable for this purpose. The British—long considered professionals in intelligence—have spared no expense in this direction.

7. Military service civilian intelligence personnel should be hired on the basis of their intelligence, experience and qualifications. All too frequently, trained intelligence people in the employ of the services have been let go because they were not able to meet Civil Service permanent status and seniority qualifications. Persons of no intelligence experience but with long Civil Service seniority were hired in their place.

8. The military services should give more attention to the possibilities of setting up career intelligence branches covering cryptographers (code experts) and military attaches. Officers destined for G-2 duty should be assured of adequate intelligence training along with their command experience.

Tomorrow: Top Level Policy and Planning