



University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
**Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative  
Exchange**

---

University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects

University of Tennessee Honors Program

---

5-2010

# Revitalizing the CIA: Intelligence Reform in the Post-Cold War World

Yasmine B. Alotaibi

*University of Tennessee - Knoxville*, [yalotaib@utk.edu](mailto:yalotaib@utk.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_chanhonoproj](http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj)

 Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Alotaibi, Yasmine B., "Revitalizing the CIA: Intelligence Reform in the Post-Cold War World" (2010). *University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects*.

[http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_chanhonoproj/1385](http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/1385)

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Tennessee Honors Program at Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [trace@utk.edu](mailto:trace@utk.edu).

Revitalizing the CIA:  
Intelligence Reform in the Post-  
Cold War World

By Yasmine B. Alotaibi

Spring 2010

**Table of Contents**

I. Introduction.....pg. 2

II. The CIA Before 9/11.....pg. 4

III. The CIA After 9/11.....pg. 18

IV. Recommendations.....pg. 28

V. Conclusion.....pg. 47

The Central Intelligence Agency — No other department within the U.S. government structure has the same element of controversy that surrounds the CIA. As a bureaucracy created to conduct covert operations with minimal government oversight and no transparency, the agency seems the very antithesis of democratic values. Critics of the agency have voiced their opposition for decades, and the idea of agency reform is certainly not new. However, after the CIA's failure to predict and prevent the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and its subsequent "enhanced interrogation" techniques against suspected terrorists, such criticism has only increased. First, how could the CIA — an agency responsible for collecting intelligence on threats against the U.S. — miss a major attack on U.S. soil? Second, regarding "enhanced interrogation," are such techniques even legal?

Those are only two of the many questions surrounding the CIA in recent years. Essentially, it appears that the CIA cannot perform its job and when it does attempt to carry out its duties, uses methods that are suspect at best. This kind of criticism is a relatively new phenomenon, as I will discuss in greater detail in the following sections. During the height of the Cold War, when the CIA had a defined mission, it performed well. The agency had relevance within the intelligence community. Although the CIA certainly had its share of missteps, it did its job. In the post-Cold War world, this has not been the case. Without a clear mission, the CIA has — to put it simply — lost its way, opening itself to attacks and questions like the examples I gave above. I argue that the rise of the Islamic extremist threat, however, has given the CIA the opportunity to redesign itself, and I will present a plan for such redesign.

Before I can detail my recommendations, however, I find it necessary to give an overview of the history of the CIA. I divide this history into two sections — before the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and after. In the former, I will illustrate how the CIA was at its best during the Cold War before showing how the agency's mission became irrelevant after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Indeed, the end of the Cold War left the CIA with neither a clear mission nor a specific enemy. As a result, the agency has floundered and failed in recent years. In the second section, I will discuss how 9/11 has given the agency the opportunity to make itself relevant within the intelligence community once more.

After giving an overview of the agency's history, I will turn to my plan for reform. In this thesis, I will present a plan designed to revitalize the CIA. The plan calls for the CIA to focus exclusively on Islamic terrorism, which I contend is the number one threat to American security today. My plan also calls for change in the way the CIA does business, and I will detail specific reforms the agency must adopt in order to effectively fight Islamic terrorism. In the end, I believe my proposal represents a way forward for a vital yet troubled agency.

## **The CIA Before 9/11**

In this section, I will discuss the history of the CIA, focusing particularly on its efforts against the Soviet Union during the Cold War followed by a description of how the CIA essentially lost its way during the 1990s after the fall of communism. In describing the history and the agency's role, I will focus heavily on works by Scott Monje and Athan Theoharis with some reference to John Diamond and Melissa Boyle Mahle.

### *The Origins of the CIA*

The U.S. government had a long history of intelligence collecting even before the establishment of the CIA in 1947. For instance, the military had created its own intelligence-gathering agencies beginning with the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1882. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) also had some experience in intelligence gathering when it developed the Special Intelligence Service branch to work in Latin American in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> It was not until World War II, however, that the U.S. government felt the need to create a full-time civilian intelligence agency.

The U.S. government began intercepting communications from the Soviet Union, Japan, Germany and other Axis-aligned states even prior to official U.S. involvement in the war.<sup>2</sup> After the attack on Pearl Harbor, however,

President Franklin Roosevelt and his successors recognized the need to anticipate the hostile actions of powerful states or movements that had the intent and capability whether to upset the balance of power,

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Immerman, "A Brief History of the CIA," in *The Central Intelligence Agency : security under scrutiny*, ed: Athan Theoharis (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006), 4

<sup>2</sup> Athan Theoharis, "Introduction," in *The Central Intelligence Agency : security under scrutiny*, ed: Athan Theoharis (Westport, Connecticut.: Greenwood Press, 2006), xvii

to attack the United States, or to undermine support for U.S. policies and/or U.S. investments and commercial opportunities.”<sup>3</sup> For this reason, Roosevelt signed a presidential military order on June 12, 1942 establishing the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) to analyze collected intelligence as well as conduct some operations as directed by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the United States’ involvement in the war, the OSS expanded rapidly under director William “Wild Bill” Donovan, conducting espionage, sabotage, propaganda, code-breaking and intelligence analysis. After Roosevelt’s death and then the end of war in 1945, President Harry Truman ordered the immediate dissolution of the OSS. The existence of such an agency seemed abnormal in the history of U.S. government, and Truman feared Donovan’s actions as director bordered on that of a police state.<sup>5</sup> After abolishing the OSS, Truman transferred most of the organization’s duties to the Departments of War and State.<sup>6</sup> The Strategic Services Unit under the War Department would conduct the operations end of things while the State Department’s Interim Research and Intelligence Service would handle the analysis.<sup>7</sup>

Although Truman was uncomfortable with the idea of a civilian intelligence agency, he recognized the need for a similar organization that could protect the United States from the looming Soviet threat. However, he hoped that such

---

<sup>3</sup> Theoharis, “Introduction,” xviii

<sup>4</sup> Scott C. Monje, *The Central Intelligence Agency: A Documentary History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 1

<sup>5</sup> Immerman, “A Brief History of the CIA,” 4

<sup>6</sup> Monje, 3

<sup>7</sup> Immerman “A Brief History of the CIA,” 4

protection could come from a centralized agency within the armed forces.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in January 1946 he created the Central Intelligence Group, which would coordinate intelligence operations carried out under the War Department. Caught between the State and War departments' bureaucracies and unable to carry out its own operations, this group only lasted 20 months before Truman ordered the creation of an independent intelligence organization — the CIA.<sup>9</sup>

With the passage of the National Security Act on 26 July 1947, Congress created the CIA.<sup>10</sup> Title I, Section 102 of the act described the agency's charter, detailing how the CIA would be created as well as its autonomy from the armed forces. In addition, the act lists the five duties of the agency:

- (1) to advise the National Security Council in matters concerning such intelligence activities of the Government departments and agencies as relate to national security;
- (2) to make recommendations to the National Security Council for the coordination of such intelligence activities of the departments and agencies of the Government as relate to the national security;
- (3) to correlate and evaluate intelligence relating to the national security, and provide for the appropriate dissemination of such intelligence within the Government using where appropriate existing agencies and facilities: *Provided*, That the Agency shall have no police, subpoena, law-enforcement powers, or internal-security functions: *Provided further*, That the departments and other agencies of the Government shall continue to collect, evaluate, correlate, and disseminate departmental intelligence: *And provided further*, That the Director of Central Intelligence shall be responsible for protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure;
- (4) to perform, for the benefit of the existing intelligence agencies, such additional services of common concern as the National Security Council determines can be more efficiently accomplished centrally;

---

<sup>8</sup> Monje, 3

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



(5) to perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct.<sup>11</sup>

As seen in note (3), Truman tried to alleviate fears that this kind of organization would result in the development of a police state. In addition, he tried to address bureaucratic concerns by allowing existing agencies to continue their own operations for their own purposes.

### *Fighting Soviets and Communism*

Almost from its creation, the CIA focused specifically on collecting intelligence on and conducting operations against the Soviet Union. Just a year after Congress passed the National Security Act, the United States faced two events that intensified the Cold War: the Soviet's blockade in Berlin and the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia. Given that the young organization failed to predict either of these events, Truman and his national security advisors recommended "a comprehensive review of the fledgling CIA."<sup>12</sup> What followed in June 1949 was the Central Intelligence Act, which clearly defined the CIA's mission and gave it relevance in the post-World War II global order.

By 1946, the Truman administration "concluded that the United States confronted a different kind of war that required a different kind of thinking. Americans could not afford to 'play fair' because the communists would not."<sup>13</sup> It was not that U.S. officials expected another major war on par with World War II. Instead, they feared the Soviets would resort to propaganda, exploiting political unrest and economic instability in order to further their own agenda and win more

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>12</sup> Immerman, "A Brief History of the CIA," 13

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 15

Communist allies across the globe. In 1948, the Truman administration addressed these fears with the National Security Council directive 10/2, which made the CIA responsible for conducting covert operations in the name of U.S. security.<sup>14</sup> However, this directive not only failed to allocate funds to the CIA, it also essentially divided leadership of the CIA between the State Department and the Defense Department.<sup>15</sup> In the light of the two events in 1948 mentioned previously, the Truman administration rectified these problems with the Central Intelligence Act. Now, the CIA not only had the funds necessary to conduct operations, it would also receive funds allocated to other agencies (thus, concealing the sensitive nature of the CIA's budget.)<sup>16</sup> In addition, the CIA was given the authority to fulfill its duties without oversight from the State and Defense Departments. Essentially, the act "was everything that the 'intelligence professionals' wanted it to be."<sup>17</sup>

So, now that the CIA had the resources and authority to wage a secret war on the Soviet Union, how did they carry through on this mission? For the most part, the CIA relied heavily on technological innovations. Since the Soviet Union and its Communist states were "closed societies," restricting the movement of their people, the CIA found it difficult to recruit spies within the USSR (unless those potential spies volunteered, that is).<sup>18</sup> Thus, in order to collect intelligence, the CIA began to

---

<sup>14</sup> Monje, 9

<sup>15</sup> Immerman, "A Brief History of the CIA," 17

<sup>16</sup> Monje, 10

<sup>17</sup> Immerman, "A Brief History of the CIA," 14

<sup>18</sup> John Prados, "A World of Secrets: Intelligence and Counterintelligence," in *The Central Intelligence Agency : security under scrutiny*, ed: Athan Theoharis (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006), 127

invest heavily in its technological capabilities. One of the most successful operations in collecting such intelligence was the CIA's CORONA.

Launched in 1958, CORONA was a satellite surveillance program. The program involved different satellite lines with some intended for broad area coverage and others for more detailed photography. In addition, the satellites were equipped with "infrared cameras for night photography, shadow elimination, and other applications."<sup>19</sup> The project also involved radar satellites that could observe Soviet activities through cloud cover and across the sea. Finally, the CIA also worked to create a "stealth" satellite that could monitor Soviet activities while remaining unobservable from the ground.<sup>20</sup>

The CIA experienced its first success with the project in August 1962 when it successfully launched the satellite Discoverer XIV. During its flight, the satellite managed to complete seven passes across the Soviet Union, providing the CIA with "more photographic coverage of the Soviet Union than all previous U-2 missions."<sup>21</sup>

The project continued successfully over the next decade as satellites tied with the CORONA operation continued to collect pictures of the Soviet Union and other areas of interest, continually improving picture quality. While the project could not always give exact numbers regarding Soviet military buildup, "the intelligence that CORONA and its successor satellite programs provided about Soviet missile capabilities...and much more was invaluable, frequently providing the

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Immerman, "A Brief History of the CIA," 33.

foundation for National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) and Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIEs).”<sup>22</sup>

Such technological capabilities helped the CIA predict the presence of Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) several months before the Cuban Missile Crisis and also enabled the agency to provide the Kennedy administration the intelligence needed to diffuse the crisis. Although the CIA had been slow to detect the exact weapons capabilities the Soviets had in Cuba, the agency had predicted the possibility of such a crisis in August, presenting the information twice to President Kennedy and his advisors that month.<sup>23</sup> Thus, in early October, the CIA received permission to conduct U-2 surveillance photography, detecting the presence of MRBMs in Cuba. Throughout the thirteen days of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the CIA continued to conduct surveillance through U-2 missions and eavesdropping operations, providing “a steady stream of intelligence on the number and likely operational state of the missile sites, on Soviet and Warsaw Pact military preparations, and on the progress made by Soviet ships headed toward the quarantine line.”<sup>24</sup> With this intelligence, the Kennedy administration had the information necessary to prepare a response as well as disprove Soviet assertions of innocence in the UN Security Council meeting. While Kennedy’s judgment along with Soviet concessions and backchannel exchanges between a KGB agent and a U.S. news media correspondent were what diffused the crisis, “The early detection of the sites by the CIA, nevertheless, provided the administration with a critical window to

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 38

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 39

frame its response, and the subsequent intelligence it provided militated against a precipitate employment of U.S. force.”<sup>25</sup>

The CORONA project and successful prediction and diffusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis are only two examples of the CIA’s work during the Cold War. With a defined mission to collect intelligence on and conduct operations against the Soviet Union, the CIA rapidly developed the technological capabilities needed to perform its duties.

#### *A “Rogue Agency” and its Missteps*

The CIA, since its inception, has been plagued with scandals. To some extent, such continuous scandal is the natural byproduct of the covert operations field. The agency, in order to be effective, needs to conduct many of its operations out of the public eye, occasionally reporting only to the White House. As John Diamond writes, “the risks inherent in the business of intelligence make it a bureaucratic endeavor particularly prone to failure.”<sup>26</sup> For the CIA, the 1970s seemed filled with such failures with the agency’s role in Watergate, the Frank Church investigations and the Otis Pike committee accusations. Indeed, the controversies of the 1970s highlighted the dangers of such a covert organization in a democracy.

In June 1972, Washington city police arrested five burglars breaking into the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate office complex carrying one hundred dollar bills and advanced surveillance equipment. During their arraignment, one of the defendants told the judge that he was a former CIA-

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> John Diamond, *The CIA and the Culture of Failure: U.S. Intelligence from the End of the Cold War to the Invasion of Iraq* (California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 6

employee and currently worked for Nixon's reelection committee.<sup>27</sup> Over the next year, investigations of a possible CIA cover-up of the burglary revealed that Nixon had pressured the CIA to stop the FBI from continuing its investigation of the burglary. If the truth behind Watergate emerged, Nixon said, "it's going to make the CIA look bad, it's going to make (CIA veteran E. Edward) Hunt look bad, and it's likely to blow the whole Bay of Pigs, which we think would be very unfortunate for the CIA."<sup>28</sup> The five men were indicted for burglary, conspiracy, and illegal wiretapping. Nixon, after the release of the tapes, resigned before he could face impeachment. For the agency, the Watergate scandal led to "the most extensive investigations of CIA activities in history."<sup>29</sup>

To further investigate the CIA post-Watergate, Democrat Frank Church led a special Senate panel in 1975 that uncovered CIA assassination plots against Fidel Castro of Cuba, Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, and Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic.<sup>30</sup> The Church committee also uncovered Operation CHAOS, a domestic mail-opening program that resulted in files on 7,200 American citizens. In addition, the White House turned over reports confirming that not only did the CIA monitor domestic activities but it also tested various drugs on unsuspecting Americans.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Kathryn Olmsted "Lapdog or Rogue Elephant? CIA Controversies from 1947 to 2004" in *The Central Intelligence Agency : security under scrutiny*, ed: Athan Theoharis (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006), 200

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 203

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 204

<sup>31</sup> Immerman, "A Brief History," 51

Given such discoveries, Church declared that the agency was a “rogue elephant on a rampage.”<sup>32</sup>

That same year, a special committee in the House of Representatives also investigated charges of CIA misconduct. Using the same evidence, the Pike committee reached a different conclusion than the Church committee. While Church had accused the CIA of acting rogue, the House committee — chaired by Democrat Otis Pike — accused the agency of falling victim to “an imperial presidency.”<sup>33</sup> In its final report, the committee concluded that “All evidence in hand suggests that the CIA, far from being out of control, has been utterly responsive to the instructions of the President and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.”<sup>34</sup> As a result of such investigations, both the Senate and the House created oversight committees.<sup>35</sup>

### *“Unleashing” the CIA*

If the 1970s could be characterized as a decade of investigation and more oversight, the 1980s involved a complete reversal once President Ronald Reagan took office. Reagan was willing to excuse CIA abuses of authority (he had served on the Rockefeller Commission in 1975 to investigate the “family jewels” — a report on the CIA’s illegal activities) but was unwilling to excuse what he considered the CIA’s greatest flaw — underestimating the power and capabilities of the Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup> Thus, in his first year, Reagan issued Executive Order 12333, “which allowed some

---

<sup>32</sup> Olmsted, “Lapdog or Rogue Elephant?”, 205

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 206

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 208

<sup>36</sup> Immerman, “A Brief History of the CIA,” 57

CIA domestic spying, surveillance of Americans abroad, and some covert operations in the United States.”<sup>37</sup> He also appointed William Casey as the new director. Reagan believed that Casey, an OSS veteran, “appreciated that the United States was in danger and was willing to take risks to secure the national interest.”<sup>38</sup>

*Floundering and Failing in the 1990s*

If the CIA’s mission was to fight the Soviet Union, then the collapse of the Communist threat left the agency without a clear agenda. Indeed, between the end of the Cold War and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the CIA lacked a clear goal. Furthermore, the CIA was plagued by what many labeled as “intelligence failures” as the agency either failed (or the White House or Congress found it convenient to pin the blame of various controversies on the agency).<sup>39</sup> “These controversies — allegations that the CIA missed the collapse of the Soviet Union, the CIA’s performance before and during the Persian Gulf War, the Aldrich Ames spy scandal, the belated realization of the al-Qaeda threat, battles over the capabilities of ‘rogue state’ adversaries...” occurred at a time of transition both for the nation and the CIA.<sup>40</sup> The United States had to find a way to navigate international relations in a post-Cold War world, and the CIA struggled to find its purpose. Authors have devoted entire books to this one decade. For this reason, I shall focus less on the details of the aforementioned crises and instead focus on showing the pattern of failure, or perceived failures, that plagued the agency after the collapse of its defined enemy of four decades.

---

<sup>37</sup> Olmsted, “Lapdog or Rogue Elephant?” 208

<sup>38</sup> Immerman, “A Brief History of the CIA,” 57

<sup>39</sup> Diamond, *The CIA and the Culture of Failure*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



“The dynamics of intelligence failure changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union because the geopolitical situation changed.”<sup>41</sup> With post-Cold War downsizing, the agency, in particular, found its own capabilities shrinking rapidly as its budget was cut dramatically.<sup>42</sup> During the Cold War, politicians on both sides of the aisle agreed that the Soviet Union posed a threat to U.S. security and that threat needed elimination. After the Cold War, however, some Americans began to debate whether or not the agency was still necessary. In fact, some politicians were calling for a complete dissolution of the agency. Not only had the CIA outlived its purpose, they claimed, it also failed to fulfill its mission — stay informed on all matters surrounding the Soviet Union so that U.S. policy makers had the necessary information to make sound decisions for U.S. security policy. “Failure to foresee the Soviet collapse stood as a fundamental failure of intelligence collection and analysis, a failure that went to the core of the CIA’s mission.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, in 1991, New York Senator Daniel Moynihan began suggesting that the CIA’s functions be folded into the State Department.<sup>44</sup> In fact, in 1995, he sponsored the Abolition of the Central Intelligence Agency Act. His legislation, however, won only a few supporters.<sup>45</sup> While Moynihan’s act never passed in the Senate, it represented a dramatic shift in how the rest of the U.S. government viewed the CIA. In a unipolar world, without a clear-cut enemy like the Soviet Union, it was suddenly politically feasible to call for a

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 6

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 24

<sup>44</sup> Immerman, 64

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

complete elimination of the agency charged with collecting and analyzing foreign intelligence.

The end of the Cold War also changed agency morale. While many CIA employees celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, they did not know to find their footing in a post-Cold War world. As Mahle, a former CIA operative, writes that the agency began to drift without its former mission. “Yet, we did not seem to be in any hurry to reorient ourselves to meet new challenges in the new unipolar world,” she says.<sup>46</sup> Instead, the CIA continued to focus on the Soviet Union — the breakup of the USSR, recruitment of former Soviet intelligence officers, and continuing to focus on “proxy wars” despite a lack of Soviet participation.<sup>47</sup>

Under the leadership of Robert Gates, the agency began to finally turn away from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. For example, the agency provided vital intelligence on Iraqi capabilities after the outbreak of the Persian Gulf War.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the agency began to monitor Sudan “as a state sponsor of a new kind of international terrorism” and aided the U.S. military when it intervened in the Balkans and Africa.<sup>49</sup> Essentially, “The Agency tried to do everything in order to please all consumers rather than refocus or redefine a strategic mission.”<sup>50</sup> As a result, the agency floundered through the decade, dispersing its reduced resources among many, varied missions.

---

<sup>46</sup> Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial and Deception: An Insider's View of the CIA from Iran-Contra to 9/11* (New York: Nation Books, 2004), 57

<sup>47</sup> Diamond, 6

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-117

<sup>49</sup> Mahle, 103

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

### **The CIA After 9/11**

In this section, I will discuss how the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, clearly defined a threat — Islamic terrorism — for the CIA to target. If the CIA

worked best when faced with a clear mission (as discussed in Section II), then 9/11 gave the agency the change to prove its relevance once more. Despite this opportunity, the CIA continued to flounder. In describing the CIA's immediate response to 9/11 and its handling of the war in Afghanistan, I will rely heavily on first-hand accounts from former CIA director George Tenet and former CIA operative Gary C. Schroen. I will then turn to the 9/11 Commission Report and how the CIA reforms, thus far, have failed to make the agency a truly relevant and effective organization.

### *The Invasion of Afghanistan*

After nineteen al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four U.S. planes, destroying the World Trade Center and damaging the Pentagon in the process, the CIA — along with the rest of the U.S. government — acted quickly to respond to this attack. At the agency, CIA officials felt they “had good reason to believe that more attacks might come in the hours or days ahead and that 9/11 was just the opening salvo of a multi-pronged assault on the American mainland.”<sup>51</sup> For this reason, the CIA immediately began drafting a response that would not only prevent further attacks but also eradicate al-Qaeda altogether. By September 13, agency officials presented to President George Bush and the War Cabinet a plan to invade Afghanistan.<sup>52</sup> The early plan involved the deployment of a CIA paramilitary team that would work with Taliban opposition forces and prepare the ground for the invasion of U.S. Special Forces. At this point, the plan involved not only a strike against al-Qaeda but

---

<sup>51</sup> George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), xix

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 175

the Taliban as well. According to Tenet and CIA Counterterrorist Center Chief Cofer Black, al-Qaeda and the Taliban were virtually inseparable. Thus, any plan to destroy the terrorist organization must include the destruction of the Taliban unless the latter chose to separate itself from al-Qaeda (which Tenet and other CIA officials believed was unlikely).<sup>53</sup>

The next day, the CIA continued refining its plan for Afghanistan. While the perimeters of the plan within Afghanistan remained the same, the CIA began broadening its scope, making Afghanistan “only the opening act of a comprehensive strategy for combating international terrorism.”<sup>54</sup> On September 15, Tenet, Black and other agency officials took the plan — “Destroying International Terrorism” — to Camp David. First, the CIA would close off Afghanistan by engaging directly the Iranians, Turks, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Pakistanis.<sup>55</sup> The agency would further isolate the Taliban by providing assistance to the Northern Alliance — various tribes that were united against the Taliban — as well as to southern Pashtun leaders, including any Taliban leaders who wanted to see Mullah Omar removed from power.<sup>56</sup> Next, the agency would look to regional allies to “create a cadre of officers who could blend seamlessly into environments where it would be difficult for (Americans) to operate on (their) own.”<sup>57</sup> Finally, the CIA would also look to its allies across the globe to pursue and capture al-Qaeda terrorists in every country in the world.

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 175

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 176

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 177

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 177

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 177-178

Essentially, the CIA was prepared to take on an entirely new mission that would define its role for the foreseeable future.

Bush, much like Reagan in the 1980s, unleashed the CIA, directing “the full resources of (American) intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible (for 9/11) and bring them to justice.”<sup>58</sup> Tenet had asked for “broad operational authority,” and Bush granted the agency the right to use as many authorities as it needed to successfully complete this mission.<sup>59</sup> Thus, by September 27, just sixteen days after 9/11, the CIA had inserted its first covert teams into Afghanistan.<sup>60</sup>

The Northern Afghanistan Liaison Team (NALT) — codenamed JAWBREAKER — was the first such team the CIA sent to the nation. Consisting of seven members, the team had orders to not only prepare the way for the U.S. military by reaching out to the Northern Alliance but also “to exert all efforts to find Usama bin Ladin and his senior lieutenants and to kill them.”<sup>61</sup> Within days of its arrival, the NALT established contact with senior Northern Alliance members, offering money and supplies in exchange for the alliance’s help in attacking the Taliban. The team also began to create a joint intelligence cell with the Northern Alliance. “All the intelligence that (Northern Alliance) forces collected over the coming days...could therefore be funneled into a single office, where it would be

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 171

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 179

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 187

<sup>61</sup> Gary C. Shroen, *First In: An Insider’s Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2007), 40

collected, analyzed, and shared with the CIA.”<sup>62</sup> With this joint intelligence cell, the CIA was able to collect Taliban radio transmissions and troop movement observations from its Northern Alliance allies. In addition, the NALT also received daily reports from Taliban inside sources — generally either Taliban soldiers recruited by the Northern Alliance or civilians living within Northern Alliance lines.<sup>63</sup> Such intelligence allowed NALT to analyze and predict Taliban activities and forward this information back to CIA headquarters, which would then share the necessary information with Bush and his War Cabinet. Over the next month, the collected information allowed NALT to produce more than four hundred intelligence reports, which “allowed U.S. military aircraft to strike Taliban and al-Qa’ida positions with great accuracy and a minimum of collateral damage.”<sup>64</sup>

Thus, the CIA showed that — like it did during the Cold War — the agency could mobilize quickly when given a clearly defined mission. In the months after 9/11, the mission clearly involved destroying al-Qaeda and capturing bin Laden. Despite this opportunity to make itself relevant once more, the agency found itself sidetracked with criticisms for its failure to predict (and prevent) the 9/11 terrorist attacks as well as its ongoing failure to adapt to a non-state threat. Fighting international terrorism required a different operation procedure than fighting the Soviet Union, a fact that became more evident as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq dragged on while al-Qaeda remained elusive.

### *The Failure of Intelligence*

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 97

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 119

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Because the attacks on 9/11 had taken the U.S. government completely by surprise, Bush along with Congress created the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.<sup>65</sup> In investigating why the U.S. government missed the attacks, the 9/11 Commission highlighted a variety of problems in the intelligence community, significantly the “structural barriers to performing joint intelligence work.”<sup>66</sup> Since the various organizations within the intelligence community are organized around gathering information rather than the joint mission, the 9/11 Commission said it was impossible for any one organization to “connect the dots.”<sup>67</sup>

For instance, in January 2000, the CIA had learned that Khalid al Mihdhar (a suspected al-Qaeda member who would become one of the nineteen hijackers) possessed a U.S. visa. Two months later, the CIA also learned that a second al-Qaeda member (and future 9/11 terrorist), Nawaf al Hazmi, also had a U.S. visa and had flown to Los Angeles in January. The agency failed to pass any of this information to the FBI, however.<sup>68</sup> Thus, in August 2001, the FBI failed to “recognize the significance of the information regarding Mihdhar and Hazmi’s possible arrival in the United States” and did not “share information, assign resources, and give sufficient priority to the search.”<sup>69</sup> After 9/11, senior FBI officials said that had the

---

<sup>65</sup> The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2004), xv

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 408

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 355

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 356



CIA shared such information, the Bureau could have connected Mihdhar and Hazmi to the other hijackers and the attacks, perhaps, could have been prevented.<sup>70</sup>

The Commission's report did not only fault the CIA for missing 9/11. In fact, the report highlighted failures in all parts of the intelligence community and even the entire U.S. government. In response to the Commission's findings, Bush signed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) in 2004 to better centralize intelligence analysis.<sup>71</sup> Essentially, the Intelligence Reform Act created a new position — Director of National Intelligence (DNI) — charged with overseeing “all U.S. intelligence agencies and reporting directly to the president — a major reorganization that affected the role and authority of the CIA.”<sup>72</sup> Previously, the CIA director also had the burden of managing all fifteen agencies within the intelligence community. With the 2004 IRTPA, however, the CIA director now focused solely on the agency while another office managed the intelligence community as a whole.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the CIA director could better concentrate on the agency's mission and operations. In addition, the reform act created a national counterterrorism center (as part of the Executive Office of the President) “to coordinate information sharing among intelligence agencies.”<sup>74</sup>

### *Why Change is Necessary*

---

<sup>70</sup> Tenet, 192

<sup>71</sup> Melvin A. Goodman, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 197

<sup>72</sup> Theoharis, “Introduction,” xviii

<sup>73</sup> Loch Johnson, “The Liaison Arrangements of the Central Intelligence Agency” in *The Central Intelligence Agency: security under scrutiny*, ed: Athan Theoharis (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006), 90

<sup>74</sup> Olmsted, 225

Since Bush signed the IRTPA six years ago, why is change still necessary? Although the act did put the CIA (and the rest of the intelligence community) on the path to reform, the legislation was by no means comprehensive enough to revitalize the CIA. For instance, as mentioned previously, the act created a new office with the DNI in order to free the CIA director to focus on agency responsibilities (see figures 3.1 and 3.2 for a comparison of the intelligence community pre- and post- IRTPA). The DNI, thus, would be responsible for coordinating interagency activities. Critics of the act, however, suggest that creating a new office does “little more than add another layer of bureaucracy to the nation’s intelligence community.”<sup>75</sup>

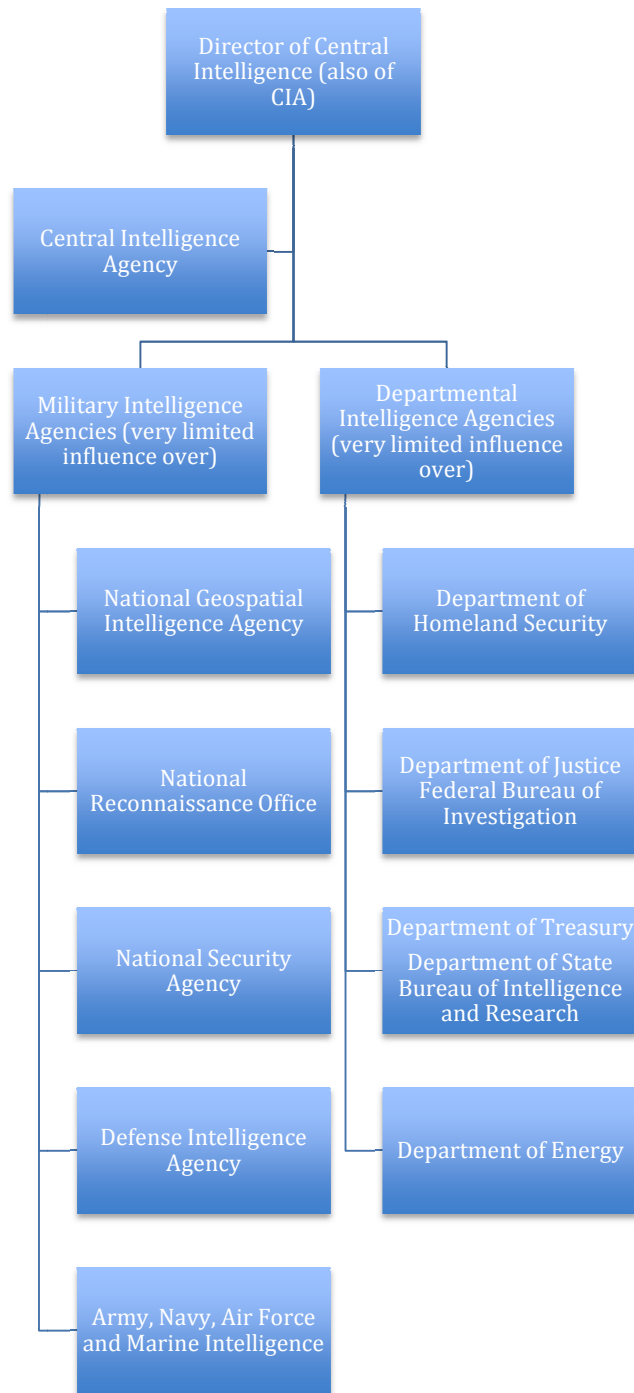
Furthermore, the act requires the DNI to provide the president and Congress with quality intelligence analysis but does not demand the same responsibility from the CIA director. In fact, the DNI — although compelled to provide such quality analysis — does not have the authority over the CIA to hold the agency to a higher standard.<sup>76</sup> In this way, the act did not substantively reform the agency itself but rather only the broad framework of the entire intelligence community. Even those reforms were mediocre at best since the reform act excluded the Pentagon (and all of its military intelligence divisions) from its control, which resulting in a large portion of the intelligence community — the military — experiencing very little

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

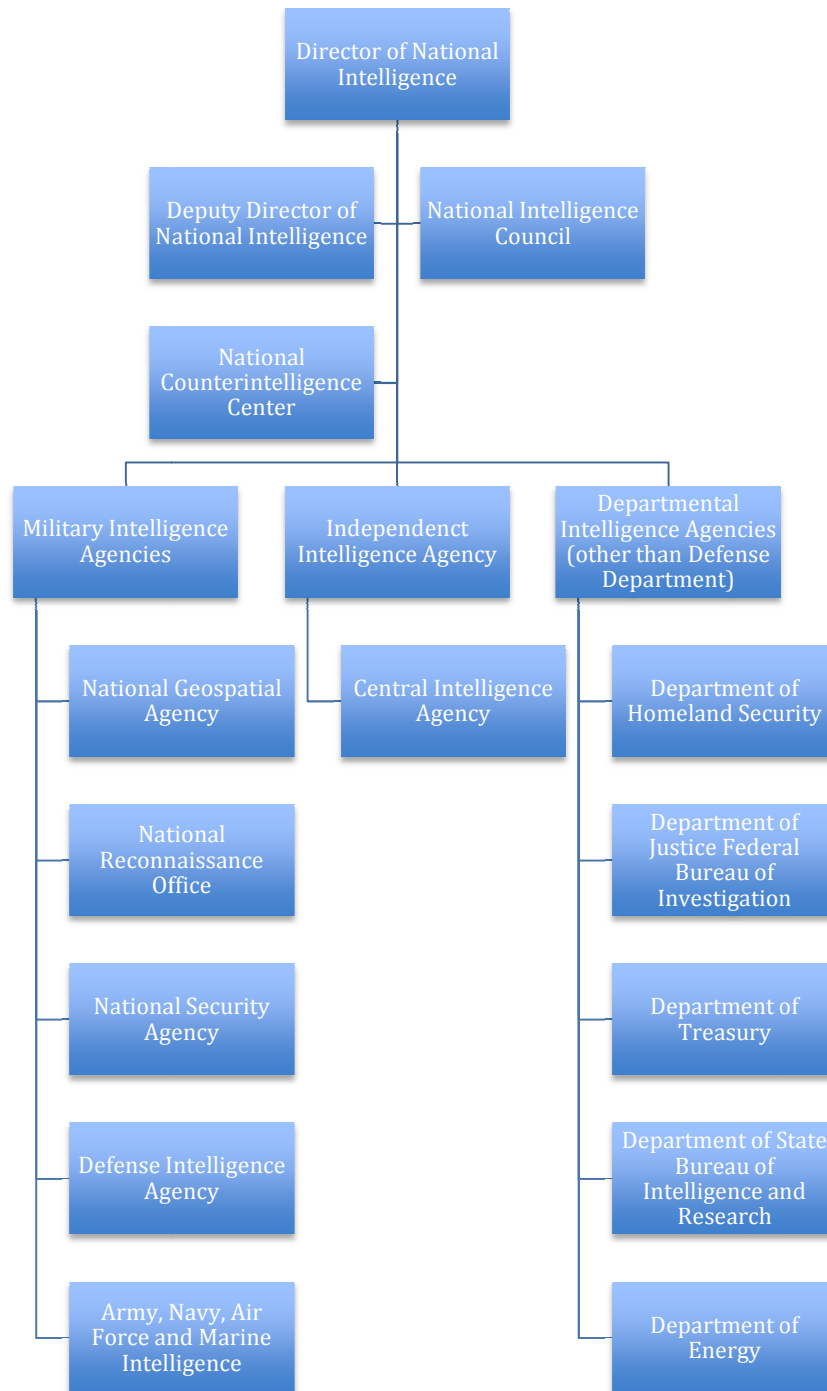
<sup>76</sup> Prados, 154

FIGURE 3.1 The Intelligence Community Before the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act<sup>77</sup>



<sup>77</sup> information from Johnson, "The Liaison Arrangements of the Central Intelligence Agency

FIGURE 3.2 The Intelligence Community After the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act<sup>78</sup>



<sup>78</sup> Information from Johnson, “The Liaison Arrangements of the Central Intelligence Agency”

reform under the act. Thus, “The net effect of the 2004 reforms may therefore be to create an intelligence director with less power than the old one, and to turn the CIA into a mostly-espionage agency with only residual intelligence analytical capability.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, while the U.S. intelligence has made some measure of reform, this reform only affected the bureaucratic structure of the community — not the CIA’s core mission and its methods in fighting Islamic terrorism.

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

## Recommendations

Now that I have given an overview of the CIA's history and discussed why change is needed, I will devote the fourth section to my suggestions for reform. I have divided my plan into two parts — improving human intelligence and improving analytical capabilities. With the former, I will offer a plan to enable the agency to effectively collect intelligence on al-Qaeda members and other Islamic terrorists on the ground. With the latter section, I will discuss how the CIA officers back in Langley can better analyze and interpret such intelligence in order to provide policymakers with a full picture when the U.S. government develops its foreign policy in relation to the war on terror. Taken together, my two-part reform plan gives the CIA not only the opportunity to become relevant once more but to effectively protect the United States from al-Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist organizations.

### *Part I: Improving Collection through Human Intelligence*

As I mentioned in Section II, the agency has lacked a depth in its human intelligence for the better part of its history — an intelligence gap the agency often tried to fill with signals intelligence instead. While accurate signals intelligence is critical, such information only provides policymakers with qualitative data, such as missile capabilities and troop movements. Such information can be critical, particularly during wartime or in the buildup to war. Through human intelligence, however, the agency can reach even deeper into the opponent's plans. Good human intelligence can give the CIA information on the target's plans in the earliest stages. For example, in the case of terrorism, human intelligence allows the U.S.

government to discover the security weakness that al-Qaeda (or any other terrorist organization) plans to exploit. Furthermore, such intelligence can give the U.S. government the opportunity to capture such terrorists and foil an attempted attack. Signals intelligence — in regards to terrorist attacks — can often only reveal a plan in its final stages, perhaps in a movement of explosives from a safe house to the target. Also, through analysis and the Western media, terrorists have learned how to counter U.S. eavesdropping.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the agency must begin placing a heavier emphasis on human intelligence.

The agency's record on human intelligence is mediocre at best. In all fairness, the agency did obtain critical information from defecting KGB officers during the Cold War. However, the CIA has yet to cultivate the human intelligence capabilities necessary to become an effective, relevant organization. In my plan for reform, I offer four measures the CIA must adopt to improve its human intelligence, which I will then discuss in greater detail:

1. Improve the language and regional expertise of case officers
2. Change the methods of case officer advancement
3. Stop using failed Cold War techniques
4. Develop a recruiting and collection strategy based on the realities on the ground.

*Improving language and expertise.* The agency currently relies heavily on foreign liaison services (its counterparts in other nations) to provide intelligence from the

---

<sup>80</sup> Burton Gerber, "Managing HUMINT: The Need for a New Approach" in *Transforming U.S. Intelligence*, ed: Jennifer E. Sims and Burton Gerber (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 181

field, particularly in the Middle East.<sup>81</sup> Why? The agency simply lacks the foreign language skills within its own officer base.<sup>82</sup> CIA case officers (agency employees stationed abroad and charged with recruiting locals to work as double agents) frequently serve brief tours of duty, often no more than two years at a time.<sup>83</sup> Once the case officer finishes his or her tour, that officer is either transferred to a different region or returns to the agency headquarters at Langley, Virginia. As a result, CIA officers have “simply too little time to know the ins and outs of politics, society and culture, and language as well as the ‘who’s who’ in the power structure.”<sup>84</sup> Essentially, CIA officers rarely have the opportunity to develop regional expertise. As a result, the CIA continues to lack a cadre of employees who can fully understand the intricacies of Islamic and tribal culture in Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and other sources of al-Qaeda recruits.

In its defense, the CIA claims that by allowing officers to serve extended tours of duty, the agency risks losing some officers to “clientitis” — indentifying less with U.S. national interests and more so with the national interests of the assigned country.<sup>85</sup> Although, hypothetically, such a risk exists, the CIA risks even more by not developing a corps of experts on the Middle East and Islamic terrorism. Without the regional expertise as well as the language skills, the CIA cannot fully and accurately interpret the intelligence it receives on al-Qaeda and other Islamic

---

<sup>81</sup> Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA Gets It Wrong and What Needs to Be Done to Get it Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 99

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 107

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



terrorist organizations. Moreover, the agency's case officers, if serving short tours, will not be able to develop the network at the ground critical to rooting out Islamic terrorists in that area. While the CIA risks losing some officers, such a risk will always exist, regardless of how long an officer spends abroad. By *not* developing more regional and linguistic experts, the CIA risks even more — failing to follow its core mission.

*Changing case officer advancement.* The current path to advancement for case officers sets the stage for poor intelligence. Basically, case officers are currently promoted based on the number of agents they recruit, regardless of whether or not the intelligence such agents provide is of any use to the CIA.<sup>86</sup> As a result, “the case officer who recruits several spies who produce third-rate intelligence...stands a better chance of getting promoted than the case officer who recruits one spy whose intelligence is extremely relevant and insightful.”<sup>87</sup> I propose that the number of recruits should be disregarded entirely when considering which case officer to promote. Instead, what should be considered is: the quality of the intelligence the officer collects (including relevance and timeliness), the officer's management and leadership ability within the officer corps, and the officer's understanding (including language skills) of his or her assigned region. In this way, case officers would focus more on the *quality* of recruits rather than the quantity. This would also give CIA employees more incentive to develop a regional expertise.

The agency must not also highlight case officers who have performed well. It must also evaluate those employees that fall short. “Ignoring lackluster achievement

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 100

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

deprives the U.S. government of return on investment, lulls an employee into thinking he or she can get by without full effort, and risks alienating officers who do work to their fullest capacity.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, the agency should identify such poor-performing employees and either reassign those employees to positions for which they are better suited or provide retraining before sending those employees back into the field. In this way, the agency allows each employee to play to his or her strengths without rewarding substandard behavior.

*Ending failed Cold War methods.* Throughout the Cold War, the CIA relied on a specific strategy in recruiting potential KGB spies (see Figure 4.1 for an illustration of the strategy, which continues to be in effect). With this strategy, CIA officers would “spot” a potential spy, generally at a diplomatic function. The CIA officer would then “assess” the recruit, determining whether he or she had access to the Soviet intelligence the agency needed. The case officer would then “recruit” the spy and “develop” him or her, setting up frequent meetings in order for the spy to pass information. Finally, when the case officer finished his or her tour of duty, the officer would “turnover” the spies to the incoming CIA replacement.

Although the CIA continued to use this strategy over throughout the Cold War, Soviet intelligence officials said the strategy discouraged potential recruits. Indeed, they said the CIA would have done well to simply pass contact information to the potential spy and avoid frequent face-to-face interactions because “the procedures for nurturing a personal relationship with Soviets who potentially could

---

<sup>88</sup> Gerber, “Managing HUMINT,” 191

work for the CIA only drew the attention of Soviet counter-intelligence officers and prevented an individual from working for the CIA.”<sup>89</sup>

Finally, even if this recruitment cycle did work for Cold War, the same strategy does not fit with the current war on terror. The agency focuses on recruiting foreign diplomats who might have access to useful intelligence “but the trolling of cocktail parties is not going to bring CIA case officers in contact with terrorists from groups such as al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad who do not frequent these parties.”<sup>90</sup>

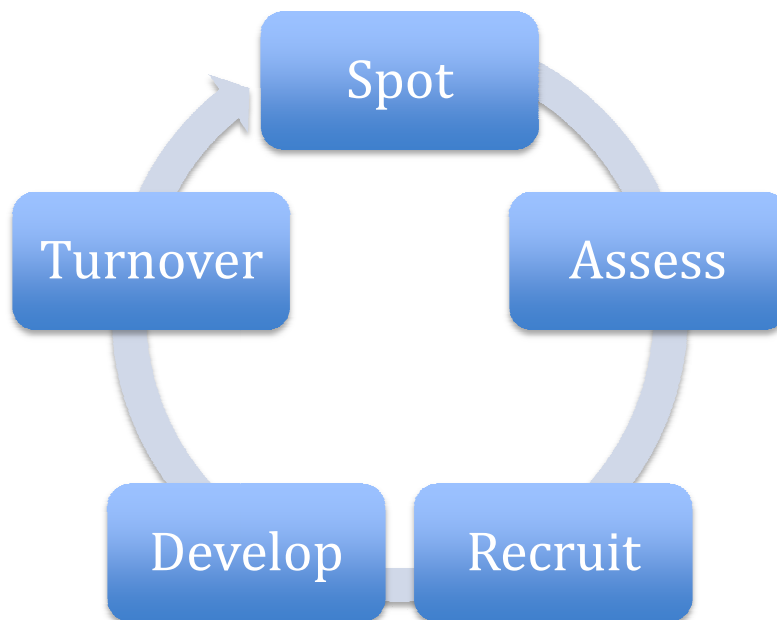


FIGURE 4.1 Cold War-Recruiting Strategy (still used today)<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Russell, 102

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 106

<sup>91</sup> Information from Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence*, 99

*Developing a new recruiting and collection strategy.* In place of the discarded Cold War recruiting strategy, the CIA needs to develop a strategy that can safely obtain the best intelligence within terrorist organizations. First, the agency must give up the idea of developing personal relationships with recruits since such a method, as mentioned previously, only compromises potential recruits. Also, the agency needs to allow for more defections rather than focusing only on sending such sources back into the field for more information. An comprised al-Qaeda member, if discovered by other terrorist members, would likely be executed (and likely forced to divulge information on any CIA officers he or she encountered before being put to death). “Although defections offer a one-time snapshot of clandestine activities,” the CIA stands the chance of getting information from terrorist with highly-sensitive intelligence if that recruit knew he would be safely removed from the area and relocated.<sup>92</sup>

Of course, the possibility exists that the intelligence may be incorrect and that the potential recruit is only using the agency to be transported to the United States (where he can then carry out a possible attack). Also, the supposed defector might simply be trying to ascertain CIA capabilities, such as the identities of the CIA officers in that area. For this reason, the agency needs to develop a vetting system for defectors. First, if possible, the potential defector should be kept separate from the CIA officer conducting the interview. The CIA officer would remain behind a one-way glass window in order to protect his or her identity.<sup>93</sup> If resources are scarce, a more crude method could be developed that would hide the officer’s identity.

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 108

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 110

Second, the agency needs to develop a broad-base of information sources, not only relying on defectors or only double agents, but rather a combination of these two sources as well as information from foreign liaison sources. In this way, the agency can develop “a strong empirical base on which to compare and contrast information to gauge ground truth.”<sup>94</sup>

The agency must also develop a better recruiting strategy at home, focusing on two goals: making better use of nonofficial cover officers (NOCs) and adjusting security investigations. In regards to the former, the CIA must take advantage of the opportunities provided by NOCs — those undercover CIA employees who have no connections to the U.S. government infrastructure.<sup>95</sup> Without obvious ties to the U.S. government (most case officers today work under official cover, generally in embassies as a general consulate employee), the sources can “melt into areas rich in hard-target (human intelligence) collection opportunities such as the Muslim expatriate communities in Europe that are hotbeds for al-Qaeda recruitment, indoctrination, and logistics.”<sup>96</sup> In addition, NOCs are often people with along working history in the private sector. Thus, they have developed their own contacts abroad, establishing themselves as American businesspeople and scientists.<sup>97</sup> “The money that many business dealings entail, moreover, ensures access to real power and authorities in foreign governments and societies, access to which government-salaried Americans rarely even hear about.”<sup>98</sup> The agency, however, has been slow

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 109

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 112

<sup>96</sup> Ibid,

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 113

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 113

to develop this program, continuing to rely on career bureaucrats to serve as undercover officers.

In regards to security clearances, the agency continues to follow background investigation methods that exclude many potential employees — including those with critical language skills in Arabic or Farsi. Job applicants who are naturalized citizens, have family abroad or have spent extensive time abroad are generally unable to receive the security clearance necessary to work at the CIA. Arab Americans, for example, are frequently disqualified during the security investigation due to their family and friend connections in the Middle East. The agency fears that such employees would be vulnerable to foreign pressure.<sup>99</sup>

By taking such extreme precautions, the CIA continues to lack the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity it desperately needs within its officer corps. As mentioned previously, the CIA lacks language and regional expertise within its agency because it keeps officers' tours of duty short. By excluding Americans with connections to the Middle East, the CIA further weakens its ability to collect human intelligence on al-Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist organizations. Furthermore, "many of the people U.S. intelligence needs to hire for highly classified positions will necessarily have extensive foreign experience and foreign contacts."<sup>100</sup> Those most qualified for these positions should have experience with foreign travel and languages. I recommend that the CIA develop a tiered security clearance. On the one hand, officers who would have access to top-secret information at Langley would continue to receive heavy scrutiny. These officers' foreign connections would be as

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 115

<sup>100</sup> Gerber, "Managing HUMINT," 186

heavily investigated as they are today. On the other hand, those officers who would be on the ground collecting intelligence on al-Qaeda would continue to be vetted but with the knowledge that such officers would not have access to U.S. nuclear secrets, advanced signals intelligence, or operations in other areas.<sup>101</sup> These officers — with their Middle East regional experience — could better connect with information sources and provide the agency with critical intelligence without compromising agency secrets.

I have mentioned this point throughout this thesis and will emphasize the point again — the Soviet threat is very different from the Islamic terrorism threat and requires a different operating procedure. Since al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations are connected to individuals and not necessarily a government, ordinary citizens — rather than high-ranking government or military leaders — can have access to extremely critical intelligence, such as where a terrorist leader might be spending the night. A CIA officer with relations in the Middle East might be susceptible to foreign pressure but that same officer can also obtain information that an American officer (undercover at the U.S. embassy) could never access. Such an officer “could more readily strike up a personal rapport...and understand the cultural, tribal, and family ties that often lie at the heart of the politics in nation-states, insurgencies, and terrorists groups in the Middle East.”<sup>102</sup>

### *Part II: Improving Analysis*

In addition to improving human intelligence, the agency critically needs reform in a second area — analysis. While case officers collect intelligence on the

---

<sup>101</sup> Russell, 115

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

ground, it is the analysts back at Langley who have the responsibility of interpreting such intelligence and providing policymakers with the information needed to develop U.S. foreign policy. Along with collecting intelligence, analysis is one of the agency's most important duties. If the CIA cannot sift through and understand the incoming data, then the agency is only partially effective, acting as a storehouse for information rather than a conduit through which policymakers can make informed decisions for the nation's security. In my plan for reform, I offer four measures the CIA must adopt to improve its analytical capabilities, which I will then discuss in greater detail:

1. Move focus from traditional to transnational targets
2. Improve regional and analytical expertise
3. Develop analyst-policymaker relationships
4. Develop analyst-collector relationships

*Moving focus to transnational targets.* During the Cold War, intelligence analysis provided estimates in three areas — what exists (for example, how many nuclear weapons does the Soviet Union have?), what will be (is the Soviet Union planning on invading X nation-state?), and what might be (if the United States does Y, how would the Soviet Union react?).<sup>103</sup> Essentially, Cold War intelligence analysis involved puzzle solving — putting together pieces within a known broad shape. In the war against a transnational threat — al-Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist organizations — CIA analysts “are now engaged in a joint and continuing process of trying to

---

<sup>103</sup> Gregory F. Treverton, *Intelligence for an Age of Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 138



understand the terrorist target in the absence of convenient frames of reference.”<sup>104</sup> No longer can the agency rely on a given set of information when interpreting incoming intelligence. The Soviet Union was predictable and “discontinuities in its behavior were rare. Al-Qaeda has been shown to be patient; however, discontinuities in the terrorist threat — new groups or new weapons or new modes of attack — are all too possible.”<sup>105</sup>

So, how should the agency analyze incoming intelligence in light of transnational rather than traditional war? Basically, intelligence analysis should not focus only on the long-term, as it did during the Cold War, but should focus on analyzing the long term in combination with answering immediate questions. In order to do this, analysts must begin reaching out to a broad array of sources and not only the intelligence they receive from case officers stationed on the ground. For example, analysts begin viewing their intelligence in context of news reports from the same region. As mentioned previously, intelligence on the Soviet Union was understood based on what the U.S. government already knew of the communist government. In terrorist organizations, different cells throughout the world have different goals, even if every cell connects to the same terrorist organization. A CIA analyst cannot view a cell based in Syria and a cell based in Pakistan through the same lens. An awareness of current events in Syria and Pakistan allows the analyst to more accurately estimate possible targets for each cell since events in the two nations will affect not only the possible target but the likely profile of a terrorist recruit. Not every terrorist will fit the same profile. Understanding the nature of a

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 138

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 143-144

transnational versus traditional war will help the CIA analyst better appreciate that fact.

At the same time, however, analysts need to take care not to fall “into the trap of trying to become the government’s CNN.”<sup>106</sup> In today’s information age and 24-hours news cycle, the CIA often repeats to policymakers information already shared through the media. The CIA should not try to avoid repeating now public information but rather use the media to enhance their own intelligence reports by targeting “collection assets to collect additional information that rounds out (or contradicts) the picture being conveyed by the international media.”<sup>107</sup> The liaison between the intelligence community and policymakers, thus, can use the media to enhance its own intelligence reports rather than repeating information that is already public knowledge.

*Improving expertise.* As I emphasized in my section on human intelligence, improving regional expertise is absolutely critical in reforming and revitalizing the agency. As it has with case officers, “the CIA has traditionally done a poor job of recruiting, nurturing, and maintaining nationally or internationally recognized experts in its analytic ranks.”<sup>108</sup> With the agency conducting approximately 90 percent of the U.S. government’s analysis on foreign affairs as well as serving as principal producer of the Presidential Daily Brief (PDB), such lackluster

---

<sup>106</sup> Gary J. Schmitt, “Truth to Power? Rethinking Intelligence Analysis” in *The Future of American Intelligence*, ed: Peter Berkowitz (Stanford: The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 2005), 52

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 52

<sup>108</sup> Russell, 120

performance is unacceptable.<sup>109</sup> Thus, how can the agency better its regional and analytical expertise?

First, the agency must emphasize deep country knowledge. As I mentioned in my section on human intelligence, the agency must adapt its recruiting methods and security clearance procedures to reflect the agency's dire need for Arabic speakers and Middle East experts. Within the CIA's analytical branch, employees might be aware of the structure of a Middle East nation's government but not fully appreciate how such a structure works in a practical sense. Rather, "analysts often are individuals who have been trained to follow a particular stream of information...but have never had deep immersion in the country's political system, economy, and modern history."<sup>110</sup> As a result, analysts fail to predict what foreign leaders worry about and what will provoke outrage from the people.

For example, in the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan, the U.S. government needs the assistance of the government in Pakistan. Taliban fighters and al-Qaeda terrorists frequently find refuge from U.S. soldiers by escaping across the border. From Pakistan, they can then reorganize and prepare a counter attack. Since the assistance of the Pakistani government is so necessary, the U.S. government might seek to pressure its counterpart to adopt a specific policy or implement certain border control procedures. If and when the government of Pakistan chooses a different policy or adopts a different track, CIA analysts need to be able to explain to policymakers why this is the case and how the U.S. government could respond. As

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 120

<sup>110</sup> Kenneth Lieberthal, "The U.S. Intelligence Community and Foreign Policy: Getting Analysis Right," in *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, No. 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 2009), 26

mentioned previously, the CIA provides approximately 90 percent of the U.S. government's analytical work on foreign affairs. Thus, in the United States' fight against Islamic extremists, the CIA's analytical assessments are critical in providing policymakers with a full picture of the political, economic and social landscape of the region.

Not only are the agency analysts lacking in regional expertise, they are also lacking the academic credentials for analytical work. This is not to say that CIA analysts are undereducated (although only a small minority of analysts hold Ph.Ds) but rather their positions are viewed as intelligence collection rather than more scholarly, detailed analytical work.<sup>111</sup> Basically, analysts spend more time monitoring classified cable traffic — reports coming in from case officers — instead of reading and studying “the publicly available scholarship on the countries or topics they are responsible for before assuming their analytic responsibilities on an account.”<sup>112</sup> As a result, analysts have access to the classified intelligence but lack the expertise to analyze such intelligence *strategically*.

With such poorly developed analytical capabilities, the CIA has a wide range of cable readers and memo writers but few experts on such topics as al-Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist organizations. Correcting this requires the agency to not only make an effort in hiring more recognized experts but also providing the time, resources and attention needed to develop and maintain a regional or topical expertise. With the former, the agency should look to efficiently allocating its hiring budget to recruiting fewer, quality experts rather than an array of under-qualified

---

<sup>111</sup> Russell, 125

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 127

individuals.<sup>113</sup> With the latter, the agency must make scholarship a priority. Analysts should not only devote their time to monitoring cable traffic but also reading the latest work on their country or topic. The CIA should expect its analysts to stay abreast of such information just as it expects them to such on top of collected intelligence.

*Developing relationships between the analyst and the policymaker.* Throughout this section, I have alluded to the analyst's relationship with the policymaker. One thing that can be said about this relationship is that it is complex with many elements affecting this relationship. Indeed, "the very different 'cultures' of intelligence and policy" naturally affects not only "the expectations policymakers bring to the table regarding intelligence capabilities," but the analyst's view of the policy making process.<sup>114</sup> A policymaker needs to believe the analysts are providing accurate, complete information while the analyst needs to feel free from the influence of politics and strive "objectivity, civility, thoroughness, and balance."<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, as was seen in the much publicized misinformation in the buildup to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the analyst-policymaker relationship does not always result in accurate intelligence and sound policy decisions.

The most critical step the agency should take in improving this relationship is by avoiding politicization. Ideally, the analyst's role is always to *inform* policy and never *prescribe* policy. This role demands that the CIA remain free from the political

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 124

<sup>114</sup> John McLaughlin, "Serving the National Policymaker," in *Analyzing Intelligence: Origins, Obstacles, and Innovation*, ed.: Roger Z. George and James B. Bruce (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 71

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 71

temperature of the day and instead provide the intelligence and analysis as it is developed. How can the CIA avoid politicization? Essentially, the ways to mitigate politicization depend upon the type of politicization used (see figure 4.2). In taking steps to mitigate politicization, the agency can produce a more objective set of analyses, giving policymakers a more accurate perspective when developing U.S. foreign policy.

FIGURE 4.2 Forms of Politicization<sup>116</sup>

Type	Description	Example	Ways to Mitigate
<b>Direct pressure from policy</b>	Policy officials intervene directly to affect analytic conclusion	Agency is pressure to give intelligence saying Iraq has WMDs	Rare but can be subtle — logic is to insulate intelligence
<b>House view</b>	Analytic office has developed strong view over time, heresy discouraged	Al-Qaeda is based only in Iraq and Afghanistan	Changed nature of target helps, along with need for wide variety of methods and alternative analyses
<b>Cherry picking</b>	Policy officials see a range of assessments and pick their favorite	Egypt is our ally. Our allies will not support al-Qaeda in any way	Better vetting of courses, NIE-like process to confront views
<b>Question asking</b>	How the question is framed, by intelligence or policy, affects the answer	“How is Saddam Hussein aiding al-Qaeda?”	Closer relations between intelligence and policy to define question, along with contrarian question asking by intelligence
<b>Shared mindset</b>	Intelligence and policy share strong presumptions	Al-Qaeda has targeted U.S. airlines in the past. It will continue to target only airlines	Requires new evidence or alternative arguments

*Developing relationships between the analyst and the collector.* Not only must the CIA work on improving relations between its analysts and outside policymakers, it also

<sup>116</sup> Information from Gregory F. Treverton, “Intelligence Analysis: Between “Politicization” and Irrelevance” in *Analyzing Intelligence: Origins, Obstacles and Innovation*, ed: Roger Z. George and James B. Bruce (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 94

Note: The text within the “description” and “ways to mitigate” columns are in Treverton’s own words. The examples given, however, are my own.

needs to work on better developing intra-agency relations, specifically those between the analysts and the collectors (the case officers). “When collection fails, the probability of analytical failure increases dramatically.”<sup>117</sup> Basically, analysts cannot create a full and reasonably accurate estimate without all of the facts.

On the collection side of this relationship, intelligence failure occurs through “intelligence denial” — when the target successfully prevents the case officer and his or her source from accessing certain information.<sup>118</sup> As a result, the analytical side tries to correct for such missing information, often misinterpreting the intelligence when turning around and providing what information they do have to the policymakers.

An easy solution to this problem would be better collection. However, even if the agency followed my recommendations for improving human intelligence while also improving signals intelligence capabilities, the very nature of the Islamic terrorist threat will prevent case officers from obtaining all needed information on the terrorist threat. Unfortunately, “the penetrability of the top ranks of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda is likely to remain more an aspiration than a reality.”<sup>119</sup> For this reason, agency analysts need to recognize the limits of intelligence collecting as well as the intelligence capabilities the CIA does have access to.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the temptation to overcompensate for lacking intelligence by filling in the gaps must be curbed. Instead, the analyst — when studying the intelligence — should determine

---

<sup>117</sup> James B. Bruce, “The Missing Link: The Analyst-Collector Relationship” in *Analyzing Intelligence: Origins, Obstacles, and Innovation*, ed.: Roger Z. George and James B. Bruce (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 191

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 191

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 203

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 203

what key information is missing (for example, is a specific target not mentioned?). The analyst should also question whether it is possible the target successfully hid in information and if so, how such information was denied (for example, does the agency lack quality informants or was the information misleading?).<sup>121</sup>

Once the analyst recognizes that critical information is missing, the analyst should provide a range of alternative analyses to compensate for this denial rather than one seemingly plausible answer. Poor intelligence necessitates better analytical information. “Analysts must significantly increase their use of alternative or structured analysis to generate hypothesis about unlikely but consequential events, even — perhaps especially — if they are otherwise hard to imagine.”<sup>122</sup> In this way, the CIA’s analysis can better reach its full potential.

### **Conclusion**

Given the criticisms of the CIA in recent years, many have raised the question of whether or not the U.S. government should simply dissolve the agency altogether, assigning its duties to various intelligence agencies within the military or executive

---

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 205

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 206



branch. Although the agency certainly deserves much of the criticism thrown its way, I believe shutting down the organization is not only unwise and would seriously threaten the U.S. effort in the fight against Islamic extremists.

First, many of the recommendations I have presented are, broadly speaking, “common sense” solutions — improving language expertise and streamlining security procedures, for example. While such proposals do not seem radical, they will go a long way in making the CIA relevant and effective in fighting Islamic terrorism. Every recommendation I have detailed demands that the CIA discard its old way of business from the Cold War and adapt to a post-9/11 world where transnational terrorists — and not a communist government — are the true threat to U.S. national security.

In addition, the CIA is the only independent intelligence agency throughout the U.S. government structure. The intelligence bureaus within various cabinet departments and the agencies within the military are only subsets of a larger organization with its own mission. For example, the State Department’s main responsibility is acting as the diplomatic arm of the United States. Its main priority is not the collection and analysis of foreign intelligence but rather carrying through U.S. foreign policy in a more overt manner. The CIA is the only part of the federal government devoted solely to such collection and analysis.

Finally, rather than dissolving the CIA and dividing its responsibilities amongst the other agencies, the U.S. government would do well to use the large intelligence community to, essentially, divvy up responsibilities. While the CIA devotes the bulk of its resources and capabilities to fighting Islamic terrorism, the

other agencies could focus on other threats — for example, North Korean nuclear proliferation or domestic terrorism. In this way, the intelligence community leaves no threat unnoticed. The answer, thus, is not to simply erase the controversial CIA but rather re-conceptualize the agency, making it relevant, efficient and effective. With the bureaucratic structure already in place, it would be foolish to disband it and start from scratch.