
Preface

THE perception many Americans have of intelligence probably owes more to fiction than fact. Indeed, most Americans have little understanding of either what intelligence is or what intelligence does. Compared with other areas of government activity, intelligence, by its very nature, is exposed to little public debate and cannot receive the normal level of serious and informed scrutiny by the press. It is, moreover, a function internal to the workings of government, one which has little perceptible effect on the daily lives of most Americans, and thus, generates few constituencies among the public.

During the Cold War, when U.S. survival seemed at stake, Americans, for the most part, accepted the need for an intelligence apparatus to fathom the intentions and capabilities of a hostile, dangerous adversary which often acted in secret. While some citizens were uncomfortable with the notion of a democratic government carrying out clandestine activities abroad with seemingly little accountability to the electorate, most accepted the need for the United States to cope realistically and comprehensively with clear and significant external threats to its security.

For more than forty years, the United States invested in an intelligence apparatus which grew ever more capable and ever more costly, encompassing not only a far-flung network of human agents but also a fleet of satellites, high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft, and sophisticated listening posts around the world. During the days of the Cold War, intelligence was widely accepted as worth the cost, regardless of what it took, because our survival was at stake.

Today, by all accounts, the technical intelligence capabilities of the United States are the most advanced of any government in the world. As such, they provide an advantage over potential adversaries and constitute an important element of national strength both in military and political terms. Moreover, given the enormous long-term investment required to create a comparable capability, the United States is apt to retain its preeminent position so long as it chooses to maintain and modernize these capabilities.

But maintaining and modernizing these capabilities are costly. Given other pressing fiscal needs, serious attention must be paid to why they are needed in the post-Cold War era. Countries that once threatened our survival now are emerging democracies. Information once denied the outside world now is readily available from a multitude of sources. Some “denied areas” are no longer so.

Given this radically changed global environment, are intelligence capabilities still needed? If so, can their efficiency and effectiveness be improved?

These questions have been raised repeatedly since the end of the Cold War without a satisfactory answer. At the same time, the confidence of the public and the Congress in intelligence agencies eroded amid evidence of instances of incompetence, allegations of wrongdoing, and a seeming lack of accountability.

By the autumn of 1994, these episodes had taken their toll on the credibility of the enterprise. Congress decided it needed an outside opinion. What kind of intelligence capability is needed by the United States, and, if one still made sense, how can it be improved? Those are the questions that prompted the creation of this Commission. Congress wanted an independent and objective judgment, untainted by politics or blind adherence to the *status quo*.

That is the standard the Commission strove to satisfy, and that is how we hope this report is perceived. For almost a year, the Commission wrestled with the issues. We found an Intelligence Community of greater size and complexity than many of us had realized. Understanding it even at a “macro” level required mastering a great deal of arcane and technical information. A large part of our initial effort involved identifying among myriad details the key problems and appropriate levers for bringing about needed change. From there we considered the various options for instituting such change, evaluating literally hundreds of ideas and proposals communicated to us over the course of our inquiry. Those which appeared to have merit were scheduled for discussion. From those discussions, consensus began to emerge on most issues.

During this process, we could not divorce ourselves from unfolding events. Several months into our work, a new Director of Central Intelligence was confirmed who had his own ideas for reforming institutions and procedures. Those had to be taken into account. In addition, oversight matters arose during the year which aroused considerable public controversy and had to be evaluated. While the Commission was not charged with conducting an oversight inquiry, we had to ascertain whether these episodes suggested any systemic changes.

This report contains numerous findings and recommendations. Some call for major change; others recommend preserving the *status quo*. All were arrived at after a long process of fact-finding and debate. We recognize that they will not be greeted with unanimous support and approval. Indeed, among the witnesses who appeared before the Commission, we found unanimity on very few issues. That a commission of 17 people with such different backgrounds and experience could reach the degree of consensus reflected by this report is remarkable in and of itself.

While the Commission’s recommendations address a great many issues, there are discernable overarching themes:

- ◆ First is the need to better integrate intelligence into the policy community it serves. Intelligence cannot operate successfully in a vacuum. Its effectiveness is largely a function of its responsiveness, and its responsiveness is a function of the relationships it has with those it serves, from the President on down.
- ◆ Second is the need for intelligence agencies to operate as a “community.” In times of crisis or war, intelligence agencies overcome the obstacles that separate them and pull together toward a common objective. By all accounts, it is in such situations that intelligence performs best. The challenge is to create the same level of performance in the absence of crisis.

-
- ◆ Third is the need to create greater efficiency. The Commission's report suggests a number of ways this might be done. Few will be easy. If the intelligence function is to retain its vitality, however, and if the confidence of the Congress and the public is to be restored, more rigor and modern management practices must be brought to the system.

In closing, we express our appreciation for the assistance of the Commission staff, under the direction of Britt Snider, Staff Director, John Moseman, Deputy Staff Director, and John Bellinger, General Counsel. To Britt Snider in particular, our thanks for his leadership in guiding our inquiry and his unstinting efforts to produce a thorough and balanced report.

For all who worked on this project, Commissioners and staff alike, this has been an exceptionally compelling experience. Our work now passes to the President and to the Congress for consideration and implementation as they may deem appropriate. We hope that the actions recommended by the Commission will strike a responsive chord in both branches and lead to a more effective, responsive, and efficient intelligence capability to serve the nation's interests. From the beginning, that goal has united all who served on this Commission.



Harold Brown
Chairman



Warren B. Rudman
Vice Chairman

