

Pearl Harbor Redux: The Warning Failure

By Melvin A Goodman

One week after the attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, the president's national security adviser, Condoleeza Rice, told the press corps "This isn't Pearl Harbor." No! It is worse. Sixty years ago the U.S. did not have a director of central intelligence with 13 intelligence agencies and a combined budget of more than \$30 billion to produce early warning of our enemies' moves.

Prior to the horrific events last month, we had eight years of Osama bin Laden's activities against America at home and abroad as well as a raft of threatening indicators concerning his organization and its key players. In view of the attack against the World Trade Center in 1993, U.S. military barracks in Saudi Arabia in 1996, U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the USS Cole in 2000, and the plan to use commercial airlines as weapons in 1994-95 (including the CIA headquarters building as a target!), it is mind-boggling that the CIA did not provide urgent warning to the policy community of the possibility of terrorism in the United States.

Unfortunately, our bureaucratic labeling for national security has led to a false sense of security about intelligence. Despite impressive labels, there is no intelligence community, no director of central intelligence, no Central Intelligence Agency. We have a gaggle of competing intelligence bureaucracies, and the conflicts between them, particularly between the CIA and the FBI, have contributed significantly to the warnings failure. Intelligence can have no genuine director when George Tenet must deal with key agencies that are staffed and funded almost totally by the uniformed services and responsible to the DoD—and not to him.

Governor Tom Ridge must learn from Tenet's experience that the new Cabinet-level Office of Homeland Security will not actually preside

over a council of key agency and department heads if it has no control over the funding and personnel for counterterrorism. Ridge will require the very capability that Tenet lacks, an all-source intelligence shop that analyzes raw operational intelligence from both CIA and FBI. If Ridge's office lacks such capabilities, it will soon be apparent that his position will be no different than Tenet's as director of central intelligence—all hat and no cattle.

The three most recent intelligence failures illustrate the problem: the failure to monitor Indian nuclear tests in 1998, the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, and now the absence of warning for terrorism in the United States. The Pentagon, which drives intelligence collection requirements and dominates the intelligence community, has never demonstrated a significant interest in the problems of proliferation and terrorism. The Department of Defense, where cold war status quo thinking has persevered, has not prepared for a war against terrorism and has built weapons systems ill-suited to the conduct of such a war. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has been far more concerned with the phantom menace of rogue state missiles than with the concept of maneuver warfare required to counter terrorism, demanding trenchant intelligence analysis.

Since the CIA failed to provide timely and relevant intelligence during the war in the Persian Gulf in 1991, the Pentagon has taken control over most of the intelligence community and weakened the agency's ability to serve as an independent and objective interpreter of foreign events. The Pentagon's increased control of intelligence collection has led to a downgrading of the important role of verification and monitoring of arms control. For the first time in nearly 40 years, the director for central intelligence testified to Congress that the intelligence

community could not monitor a strategic arms control agreement—the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—which contributed to the Senate’s refusal to confirm the treaty. Along with many qualified experts, I believe that the CIA, which monitored Soviet and Chinese weapons testing for decades, deliberately underestimated the capacity of the intelligence community to monitor compliance of the CTBT as part of its own political agenda against disarmament.

So what is to be done? The White House and the CIA must reverse the efforts toward militarizing the CIA and re-emphasize the role of strategic intelligence. Former director Robert M. Gates turned over such key aspects of military intelligence as order of battle analysis and bomb damage assessments to the Pentagon and the Defense Intelligence Agency, and John Deutch gave the Pentagon responsibility for analysis of all satellite photography, abolishing the CIA’s Office of Imagery Analysis and the joint CIA-Pentagon National Photographic Interpretation Center. The CIA should have fought the downgrading of its ability to monitor compliance of arms control agreements, where it had played a major role in creating the confidence to negotiate the first strategic arms control agreement and the anti-ballistic missile treaty in 1972. Instead, it welcomed being relieved of such a controversial task that might have placed the agency at odds with those who still fight the cold war.

A separate analytic office needs to be created for the presentation and

interpretation of strategic intelligence. Walter Lippmann reminded us 70 years ago that it is essential to “separate as absolutely as it is possible to do so the staff which executes from the staff which investigates.” The CIA will undoubtedly try to strengthen its analytic cadre on terrorism, but it will take at least a year for the agency to hire new analysts.

In his memoirs, former secretary of state George Shultz demonstrated that CIA involvement in a policy of covert action tainted its intelligence. His memoirs remind us that when operations and analysis get mixed up, “the president gets bum dope.” Shultz demonstrated how this happened in the 1980s in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, all contributign to the strife we face today in Southwest Asia. CIA director William Casey and his deputy Robert Gates covered up important intelligence regarding Pakistani nuclear developments in order to protect the covert action program supporting the mujahedeen in Afghanistan, and they exaggerated the role of the Stingers against Soviet forces in order to trumpet clandestine deliveries of surface-to-air weapons. When I challenged the operational director of the deliveries about providing weapons to the most reactionary members of the mujahedeen long after the Soviet withdrawal, he responded “we merely delivered the weapons to Pakistan and let God sort it out.” This is the mentality that provided weapons and influence to Bin Laden and other anti-western fanatics.

There is no doubt that Washington has the will, resolve, and character to

eventually win the war against terrorism. But such a victory will demand accurate and objective intelligence analysis, both short-term and tactical as well as long-term and strategic. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld recently stated that the role of intelligence will be more important than military operations in the war against terrorism.

But the CIA will have to install a new leadership team, particularly in its intelligence and operations directorates, to replace those individuals who have come from staff positions at the Senate intelligence committee to become the CIA director and his chief of staff. The CIA also rewarded those individuals who contributed to the politicization of intelligence under Robert Gates, including the current deputy CIA director, the deputy director for intelligence, the national intelligence officer for Russia and Europe, the chief of legislative affairs, and the head of the school for the study of intelligence. These careerists carry the message that the CIA still favors a management style that puts personal ambition ahead of solid intelligence analysis.

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