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A Function of Command:  
The Defense Intelligence Agency, 1961-1969

Patrick Neil Mescall

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The University of Edinburgh

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I hereby affirm that I composed the following Ph.D. thesis.

Patrick Neil Mescall

# Abstract

The Ph.D. thesis chronicles the establishment and history of the Defense Intelligence Agency under its first director, Lt. General Joseph Carroll, from 1961-1969. Based on published works, archival materials, declassified documents, and interviews with cognoscenti, the thesis explores the creation of the agency in the context of the historical propensity to consolidate common military functions under the auspices of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Although the intelligence function of the military departments resisted this trend for over two decades after the Second World War, by 1960 the perceived failures of military espionage made the consolidation of this function ineluctable. Impelled by the recommendations of the Joint Study Group, in 1961 Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara concluded that the creation of a potent military intelligence agency was necessary to meliorate the strategic estimate process -- which he believed to be flawed and ineffectual -- through the centralization of military espionage activities. The military leadership was averse to this design, alternately favoring the establishment of a weak coordinating body as a means to preserve the autonomy of existing military structures. After fervent debate, the DIA was eventually created as a compromise between both factions. The thesis argues that the history of the agency, its successes and failures, largely has been the result of the dialectic between both visions of the agency. Caught between the dissimilar, often competing, requirements and expectations of its two masters -- the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff -- the agency strove to forge its identity, establish and preserve its autonomy, and secure the resources necessary to fulfill its responsibilities. It was an arduous, frequently contentious struggle. In its first year of existence, the agency's efforts to consolidate and manage military contributions to strategic intelligence estimates were opposed in Washington by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and in the field by the theater commanders. As a consequence, the authority of the inchoate agency was diminished: its jurisdiction restricted. The thesis details the exploits of the DIA in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Although the missile crisis was in many ways a rite of passage for the DIA, the work notes that the agency displayed a troubling propensity to conform its intelligence analyses in accordance with the operational preferences of the military leadership. Surveying the performance of the agency in the Vietnam conflict, the thesis concludes that this predilection was reinforced. The causes of this analytical subservience are explored. The influence of the agency on policy deliberations over intervention, and the subsequent course of the air and land war in Southeast Asia are examined. The agency's shifting assessments of the sustained bombing campaign of North Vietnam -- codenamed Rolling Thunder -- are chronicled; as is the consequent disillusionment of Robert McNamara. In exploring the role of the agency in the infamous 1967 order of battle dispute, the thesis demonstrates that the agency was unable to challenge the intelligence estimates of the military command, despite considerable evidence that the estimates were erroneous. The work concludes that the performance of the DIA in its first eight years was marked by timidity and pliancy. Reflecting the principle that intelligence is a function of command -- subordinate to plans and operations -- the Defense Intelligence Agency was not able to surmount its heritage and truly direct the military intelligence community as its founder had intended.

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# What Came Before

The origins of this dissertation lay in a 1990 thesis submitted for a M.Sc. in American Espionage (Department of History, Faculty of Arts, the University of Edinburgh). Entitled "The Triumph of Parochialism and Bureaucracy: Robert S. McNamara and the Birth of the Defense Intelligence Agency," the short work (some 18,000 words) surveyed published secondary sources (and some primary sources, notably those materials collected by the Declassified Document Reference Service) to chronicle the establishment of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). In so doing, the work presented several themes that are developed in detail in this dissertation. First, the thesis dismissed the prevalent notion that the DIA was established in response to the perceived failure of military intelligence in the Bay of Pigs fiasco; instead asserting that the organization was primarily a result of the organizational propensity to consolidate traditional military functions within the Defense Department. Second, the thesis argued that Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the Secretary of Defense pursued disparate objectives in creating the agency. Whereas the military leadership was principally concerned with preserving the prerogatives of the military departments, Robert McNamara was committed to meliorating the strategic intelligence estimative process. This disparity of purpose resulted in conflict over the structure and mission of the proposed agency. Finally, the thesis concluded that the JCS ultimately prevailed in this dispute, establishing the agency in accordance with its desires as a weak organization largely subordinate to existing military institutions.

The M.Sc. thesis was later published in truncated form in the anthology *North American Spies: New Revisionist Essays*. [Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones and Andrew Lownie (eds.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.]

The first two chapters of this Ph.D. thesis explore the preconditions and precipitants of the creation of the agency in far greater detail, employing new documentary evidence to explicate on the aforementioned three themes. The use of new primary sources -- much of it derived from the National Security Files of the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Libraries, the Military Reference Branch of the National Archives, and Freedom of Information Act requests -- allows the author to reconstruct the historical proclivities and events which influenced the evolution of the military intelligence community and the creation of the DIA with unprecedented accuracy. Consequently, while the discussion of the evolution of the military intelligence community between 1947 and 1960 and the historical trend toward centralization in the Defense Department presented in the first chapter roughly parallels that of the thesis, the interpretation is more refined; based on historical evidence of greater accuracy and reliability. The role of the U-2 Affair and the missile "gaps" in the creation of the agency are given added prominence; the examination of the influence of nascent nuclear doctrine and the declining hegemony of the Air Force on the debate is novel. The second chapter

contrasts civilian objectives in intelligence reform -- the reorganization of the United States Intelligence Board to provide improved management capabilities and putative national estimates for strategic planning and budgetary purposes -- with those of the military. The JCS proposal for the creation of a *Military Intelligence Agency* is examined in unprecedented detail, as are the suspicions of the Secretary of Defense and his staff. The narrative demonstrates that in the end, the DIA was created - - despite the wishes of Robert McNamara -- as a creature of the JCS: subject to the compelling influences of established military institutions. The remainder of the Ph.D. thesis chronicles the consequences of this conception.

# Abbreviations

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| AEC       | Atomic Energy Commission   |
| AFSA      | Air Force Security Agency  |
| ARVN      | Army of the Republic of Vietnam (South)                            |
| ARPAC     | Army Pacific Command   |
| ASCI      | Army Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence                     |
| ASD       | Assistant Secretary of Defense                                     |
| BNE       | Board of National Estimates  |
| BOB       | Bureau of the Budget   |
| CIA       | Central Intelligence Agency  |
| CIIC      | Current Intelligence and Indications Center (DIA)                  |
| CINC      | Commander-in-Chief   |
| CINCLANT  | Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet                                 |
| CINCPAC   | Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Theater                                |
| CJCS      | Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff                                    |
| CNO       | Chief of Naval Operations  |
| COMINT    | Communications Intelligence  |
| COMOR     | Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance                               |
| COMSEC    | Communications Security  |
| COMUSMACV | Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam                 |
| DAS       | Defense Attache System   |
| DCA       | Defense Communications Agency                                      |
| DCI       | Director of Central Intelligence                                   |
| DDRS      | Declassified Documents Reference Service                           |
| DefCon    | Defensive Condition  |
| DIA       | Defense Intelligence Agency  |
| DIS       | Defense Intelligence Summary                                       |
| DOD       | Department of Defense  |
| DODPP     | <i>Pentagon Papers</i> , Department of Defense edition             |
| DOS       | Department of State, <i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i> |
| DPM       | Draft Presidential Memorandum                                      |
| ELINT     | Electronic Intelligence  |
| ExCom     | Executive Committee of the National Security Council               |
| G-2       | Military intelligence staff division                               |
| G-3       | Military operations staff division                                 |
| GPP       | <i>Pentagon Papers</i> , Senator Gravel Edition                    |

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| GVN    | Government of South Vietnam   |
| ICBM   | Intercontinental Ballistic Missile                                  |
| INR    | Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State            |
| IRBM   | Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile                                |
| ISA    | Office of International Security Affairs, Department of Defense     |
| J-2    | Intelligence Element of the Joint Staff                             |
| JCS    | Joint Chiefs of Staff   |
| JEC    | Joint Evaluation Center, Saigon                                     |
| JIG    | Joint Intelligence Group  |
| JRC    | Joint Reconnaissance Center   |
| JSG    | Joint Study Group   |
| JSTPS  | Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff                               |
| LOCs   | Lines of Communication  |
| MACV   | Military Assistance Command, Vietnam                                |
| MAD    | Mutual Assured Destruction  |
| MIA    | Military Intelligence Agency  |
| MIB    | Military Intelligence Board   |
| MRBM   | Medium-Range Ballistic Missile                                      |
| NATO   | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                                  |
| NAVPIC | Naval Photographic Intelligence Center                              |
| NIE    | National Intelligence Estimate                                      |
| NMCC   | National Military Command Center                                    |
| NME    | National Military Establishment                                     |
| NPIC   | National Photographic Interpretation Center                         |
| NRO    | National Reconnaissance Office                                      |
| NSA    | National Security Agency  |
| NSAM   | National Security Action Memorandum                                 |
| NSC    | National Security Council   |
| NYTPP  | <i>Pentagon Papers, New York Times</i> edition                      |
| OAS    | Organization of American States                                     |
| OB     | Order of Battle estimate  |
| OMPOS  | Office of Management Planning and Organizational Studies            |
| ONE    | Office of National Estimates  |
| ONI    | Office of Naval Intelligence  |
| OPLAN  | Operational Plan  |
| OSA    | Office of Systems Analysis  |
| OSD    | Office of the Secretary of Defense                                  |
| OSO    | Office of Special Operations  |
| PBCFIA | President's Board of Consultants on Foreign Intelligence Activities |
| PFIAB  | President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board                     |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| POL    | Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants facilities                      |
| PPBS   | Planning-Programming-Budgeting System                          |
| RVN    | Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)                            |
| SAC    | Strategic Air Command  |
| SACSA  | Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities |
| SAM    | Surface-to-Air Missile   |
| SIGINT | Signals Intelligence   |
| SIOF   | Single Integrated Operational Plan                             |
| SNIE   | Special National Intelligence Estimate                         |
| U&SC   | Unified and Specified Commands                                 |
| USIB   | United States Intelligence Board                               |
| VC     | Viet Cong  |
| WIEU   | Weekly Intelligence Estimate Update                            |

# Introduction

## The Defense Intelligence Agency

Established in 1961 by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) was an ambitious attempt to centralize the prodigious espionage activities of the Department of Defense without destroying the autonomy of the intelligence elements of the military departments. Heralded as the most significant organizational development in military intelligence since World War II, the agency was publicly directed to challenge the waste and redundancy which had long imperiled the nation's defense efforts.

These aims proved to be unattainable. Since its inception the DIA has been widely condemned for a multitude of failures. Successive government-sponsored reviews of the American intelligence effort -- notably the Whitten Report (1968), the Fitzhugh Report (1970), the Schlesinger Report (1971), and the Final Reports of the Church and Pike Committees (1976) -- censured the DIA for its inability to fulfill its mission: its failure to allocate resources efficiently and reduce the duplication of effort within the defense intelligence community. The Pike Committee went so far as to recommend that the agency be abolished.

In spite of this repeated disapprobation, to date the DIA remains the preeminent organization within the American military intelligence community. Its duties are extensive. The agency is responsible for coordinating the contributions of the military services to national intelligence products, in support of the strategic requirements of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and the Unified and Specified (U&S) Commands (that is, the theater commands). Accordingly, the DIA is charged with coordinating military input to National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) and Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIEs), the vital threat assessments which are the foundations of American strategic force planning decisions and crisis management. The organization is responsible for setting military policies and procedures in the intelligence collection process, performing imagery analysis on foreign military capabilities, and managing and operating the international Defense Attache System. Additionally, the agency is tasked with "planning, reviewing, coordinating, and evaluating" all the intelligence programs and activities of the American military intelligence community, including the preparation of a consolidated defense intelligence budget (the General Defense Intelligence Programs budget, or GDIP). The latter function is particularly important when one considers that the intelligence activities of the Department of Defense (DOD) consume over ninety percent of the total funds allocated for the American intelligence effort, currently estimated to be in excess of thirty billion dollars per annum.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, "The CIA Club Needs a Cleanup," 30 September 1994 (A30:1).

Curiously, scholars and journalists have all but ignored the DIA. What little information there is available in the public domain is scattered and fragmentary. The agency typically receives cursory review in works which survey the American espionage community, or is mentioned merely incidentally in studies of the more palpable Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).<sup>2</sup> Outside of the armed forces, defense intelligence has been conspicuously neglected, despite the fact that the military intelligence effort is far more extensive (and expensive) than that of the civilian agencies. A venerable metaphor is apt: the tree (that is, the CIA) has been scrutinized at the expense of the forest. My thesis is a modest attempt to redress this situation.

The work attempts to recount the most promising years of the DIA, from 1961 to 1969, when the agency was still in its youth. The period of inquiry was selected for several reasons. First, it coincides with the tenures of its creator Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and its first director General Joseph Carroll. Both men significantly influenced the agency in its formative years. Second, the relative continuity of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations provides a stable context to explore the evolution of the agency: for the most part, the key protagonists and institutions that influenced the DIA remained in power throughout this period. Third, the declassification of many important government documents from these years allows the author to reconstruct a cogent, if incomplete, documentary record of events. The recent declassification of myriad documents relating to the Vietnam conflict and the Cuban missile crisis -- two events examined in detail in this work -- facilitate historical research. In contrast, the documentary record accessible to scholars for the subsequent years of the Nixon administration (1969-1974) is meager and fragmentary, presenting formidable obstacles to historical inquiry. Fourth, since the thesis contends that many of the failures and deficiencies of the agency are a product of its peculiar birth, it is appropriate to explore the establishment and first years of the agency with thoroughness.

The thesis is seminal in that it is the only comprehensive scholarly history of the DIA in existence. The work collects, refines, and explicates upon the scattered work of previous authors, mining new primary source material and incorporating broader historical perspectives. It attempts to supply a balanced account of why and how the agency was formed, how it has performed over the years, and why it has attracted so much criticism.

Its originality lays further in its methodology and interpretation. The work is unprecedented in its use of primary source material -- some neglected in the past, some newly-discovered -- to chronicle the early years of the DIA. The preponderance of this material is in the form of declassified government documents from the United States Congress, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Executive Office of the President (and the National Security Agency), the CIA, and the military departments and related agencies. They were garnered from departmental histories, CIA historical studies, executive branch inquiries, the Declassified Document Reference Service, commercial

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<sup>2</sup> Illustrative of this treatment are William Corson, *The Armies of Ignorance: The Rise of the American Intelligence Empire*. New York: Dial Press, 1977, p. 386; and Thomas Ross and David Wise, *The Invisible Government*. New York: Vintage, 1964, pp. 212-17. N.B. At first reference in the thesis, works and materials receive full citations. Subsequent references are limited to author, short title, and page numbers, in the interest of economy. Complete citations are, of course, provided in the bibliography.

microfilm collections, and trial evidence and testimony. The material was collected through the National Library of Scotland, the United States National Archives, the Library of Congress, Presidential libraries (notably the John F. Kennedy Library and Lyndon B. Johnson Library), the CIA, the Department of State, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the military departments, and the DIA. Many of the documents were public; some were until recently classified. The latter were declassified at the request of the author through the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and the Mandatory Review process. Although declassification is frequently a long and arduous procedure -- commonly requiring two years time and repeated correspondence -- on rare occasions it yields surprising results.<sup>3</sup> In excess of 60,000 pages of printed material were reviewed. Memoirs and oral history collections were also consulted and compared with official documents.

Aware of Morton Halperin's warning that "Bureaucrats rarely write what they sign, and rarely sign what they write," the author interviewed present and former intelligence officials, policymakers, and cognoscenti.<sup>4</sup> Their insights and recollections proved to be invaluable. Some confirmed events and interpretations; others suggested additional areas of inquiry. Many of those interviewed requested anonymity. In respecting their wishes, they are cited only by profession. As the author's itinerary was often well-known, additional details -- interview dates and places, organizational positions -- are omitted as they would be revealing. The author interpreted these recollections with prudence, recalling the words of the historian R. G. Collingwood:

Recollection is a treacherous guide . . . politicians [and historical actors] . . . remember very well the impacts and emotions of crisis, but are apt, in describing the policy they then advocated, to contaminate it with ideas that belonged in fact to a later stage in their career. And this is natural: because thought is not wholly entangled in the flow of experience, so that we constantly reinterpret our past thoughts and assimilate them to those we are thinking now.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In works on intelligence it is standard to lament the lack of access to archival material, much of which remains classified after several decades of disuse. While I shall strive to resist the temptation, I will note that the John F. Kennedy Library and the Historical Office of the DIA are the most intransigent archive and agency respectively. The former is still processing several requests by the author submitted in 1989, with little hope on the horizon. The latter enjoys a similar predilection toward procrastination: when asked about the seemingly interminable delays in responding to Freedom of Information Act requests, a senior DIA official confided to the author: "As a general rule, the DIA does not declassify. I know its the law, but that's our policy."

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War*. New York: Pocket Books, 1972, p. 77. Halperin is a former Harvard professor and protege of Henry Kissinger. In a similar vein, the secret Defense Department history of the Vietnam conflict concludes: "The lesson in this [the historical study] is that the rationales given in such pieces of paper (intended for fairly wide circulation among the bureaucracy, as opposed to tightly held memoranda limited to those closest to the decision maker), do not reliably indicate why recommendations were made the way they were." *The Pentagon Papers*. As published by the *New York Times*. Written by Neil Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, E. W. Kenworthy, and Fox Butterfield. New York: Bantam, 1971, p. xxiv.

<sup>5</sup> Collingwood quoted in James Blight and David A. Welch, *On The Brink: Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1989, p. 135.

Finally, the author read and weighed myriad secondary sources, particularly those relating to the evolution of American intelligence and the Defense Department. Many were read for historical context; some for theme; others provided gems of information. In all, well over 200 books and articles were surveyed for this thesis.

George Carver, a veteran of the CIA, once remarked "Intelligence is not written for history; it is written for an audience."<sup>6</sup> The DIA performs for an audience of two: the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Joint Staff. The needs and preferences of these organizations are dissimilar. The thesis attempts to explore the relationship of the agency to both of its superiors by examining its efforts to provide *strategic* (as opposed to tactical) intelligence to each: intelligence which is employed in the formulation of policy and military plans at the national and international levels.<sup>7</sup> The emphasis on strategic intelligence is born of design and necessity: design because it illuminates the political and bureaucratic influences on the agency; necessity because the bulk of the tactical intelligence produced by the DIA remains classified and unavailable to researchers. By examining the DIA's concurrent efforts to supply the Secretary of Defense and the the JCS with strategic intelligence, we may discern much about the complex relationship between the producer and consumers of national intelligence. This is important because in the end the agency must be judged in part by its success in fulfilling the requirements of both superiors.

At times the work strays from a narrow recounting of the history of the DIA to explore broader developments in the American intelligence effort. This is intentional. To understand and evaluate the performance of the agency fully, it is often necessary to illuminate the context in which it functioned, to explore the forces and events that influenced the agency. Thus in the third and fifth chapters the thesis details the evolution of American nuclear doctrine to assess the impact on strategic intelligence requirements; considerations that significantly influenced Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's expectations on the inchoate DIA. Without the proper exploration of historical context, the actions of the agency would be frequently inexplicable. Furthermore, the achievements and failures of the DIA may be properly measured only by this expansive examination.

Although the thesis is primarily a work of historical scholarship, committed to verifiable documentation and historical evidence, it raises many issues relevant to contemporary political policy. Foremost among these is the relationship of intelligence to policy. Conventional wisdom holds that the two processes should be independent, but recent writings have challenged this belief, arguing that closer collaboration between both processes is necessary in order to ensure that intelligence is relevant to the policies under consideration.<sup>8</sup> Throughout its history, the DIA has been repeatedly accused of committing the cardinal sin in intelligence analysis: tailoring its assessments to accommodate political concerns, civilian and military. The experience of the DIA questions the proposition that intelligence and policy can be separated, in spite of the best efforts of reformers to the contrary. Yet the

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Thomas Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979, p. 217.

<sup>7</sup> United States Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of Military Terms*. London: Greenhill, 1990, p. 373.

<sup>8</sup> A discussion of the evolution of intelligence theory may be found in Walter Laqueur, *A World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence*. New York: Basic, 1985, pp. 89-91.

revisionists can not claim victory, for the DIA also challenges their assertions by casting doubt on the notion that close collaboration between the producers and consumers of intelligence is preferable. The history of the DIA suggests that proximity promotes bias. It also demonstrates the perils of being overly amenable to the demands of two superiors: that in striving to accommodate both, the agency often satisfies neither.

Moreover, the work explores the value of pluralism versus consolidation in the intelligence effort. This dichotomy is central to the problem of military centralization, and is especially germane to the current political debate regarding the best means to reduce the American defense budget without compromising national security. Consolidating reforms offer the promise of augmenting efficacy, reducing redundancy, and clarifying lines of accountability, but increase the danger of the suppression of dissent and the abuse of power. Pluralistic structures tend to be more flexible, providing greater access to information and assuring a multiplicity of interpretation, but are marked by duplication of effort and by waste. The DIA was an early and ambitious attempt to bridge both seemingly-contradictory organizational structures. As James Roherty remarked, the establishment of the DIA as a *consolidated* military intelligence agency poses in microcosm many of the problems which have plagued the *consolidated* Department of Defense.<sup>9</sup> It forces the analyst to compare the value of pluralism and competition in the interrelated realms of statecraft and intelligence with the merits of centralization and economy. In this regard, the history of the DIA is instructive, and may be useful to future reformers struggling to find a practical compromise within this dichotomy, to plot a course between Scylla and Charybdis.

Finally, the history of the DIA sheds light on the role of organizational reform within the American federal system. The agency is undoubtedly the most reformed mechanism in the intelligence community (perhaps in all the Department of Defense), subjected to nine major reorganizations and countless minor ones throughout its thirty-three year history. The ostensible pretext for reorganizations has always been the same: to reduce duplication of effort and achieve a more efficient allocation of intelligence resources. While these claims are accurate in part, they veil a deeper truth: that reform is essentially an exercise of political power. As the sociologist Karl Mannheim noted, it is a fundamental predilection of bureaucracy to turn all problems of politics into problems of administration.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, the intelligence community is no different from other bureaucratic structures, concealing political decisions behind managerial rationale. The historian must be aware of this propensity, for seen in this light the frequent reorganizations of the DIA are interesting not only in the narrow sense of functional efficiency, but revealing as political conflicts between civilian and military factions over the control of information within the government. The stakes in these conflicts are substantial: as Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, a long-time member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, observed, "Knowledge is power, and the ability to define what others take to be knowledge is the greatest power." The history of the DIA is a compelling tale of the struggle for this power. The value of the story lays not only in the tale itself, but in what the chronicle reveals about the motives and actions of other actors in the American political system.

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<sup>9</sup> James R. Roherty, *The Decisions of Robert S. McNamara*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1970, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> Mannheim quoted in Laqueur, *A World of Secrets*, p. 93.

## Structure and Literature Review

**Chapter One** of the thesis demonstrates that the DIA was not, as some histories suggest, a consequence of the “missile gap” or the Bay of Pigs fiasco.<sup>11</sup> While both events contributed to the establishment of the agency, they were not decisive. Rather, the powerful forces of organizational centralization within the Defense Department produced the DIA. When viewed in this light, the agency may be properly seen not as an anomaly, but as the culmination of the historical trend to consolidate common activities and functions of the military departments under the auspices of the Secretary of Defense. Thus the first chapter offers a synopsis the evolution of the modern Defense Department from 1947 to 1960, detailing the consequences of increasing centralization on military intelligence. Although the military departments were able to protect their intelligence components from the forces of consolidation for some time, events in the late nineteen-fifties and nineteen-sixty -- notably the bomber and missile “gaps” and the U-2 Affair -- compelled the Eisenhower administration to examine the possibility of integrating military intelligence activities. In 1960 the President convened the Joint Study Group on the Foreign Intelligence Activities of the United States to study this prospect. The formation, deliberations, and recommendations of the Joint Study Group are detailed in Lyman Kirkpatrick, Jr.’s book *The Real CIA*. Kirkpatrick has been referred to as the “father of the DIA” because he served as chairman of the an inter-departmental Joint Study Group, whose recommendations for reform of the American intelligence effort served as the catalyst for the creation of the DIA. Of particular interest is Kirkpatrick’s contention that the DIA was an innovation consistent with the centralizing reforms of the 1958 Defense Reorganization Act.<sup>12</sup> The contention is supported and elaborated upon in the chapter. In the parlance of historians, amid the background of organizational centralization, the “missile gap” and the U-2 Affair were preconditions for the creation of the DIA; the report of Kirkpatrick’s Joint Study Group was the precipitant.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara inherited the Joint Study Group recommendations in 1961. He interpreted the proposals in the context of his requirements for authoritative National Intelligence Estimates for strategic and budgetary planning. McNamara viewed the creation of a potent military intelligence agency as a means to fulfill these requirements and exercise central control over the miscellaneous and sundry intelligence activities of the military departments. Where many studies of the DIA have concentrated on the agency’s endeavors to reduce redundancy and promote efficiency, this work judges these efforts to be ancillary, and focuses on the real objective of McNamara in establishing the agency: to centralize the production of strategic intelligence and manage military

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<sup>11</sup> Emblematic of this approach are Glenn P. Hastedt (ed.), *Controlling Intelligence*. London: Frank Cass and Co., 1991, pp. 35-37; Corson, *Armies of Ignorance*, pp. 386-91.

<sup>12</sup> Lyman Kirkpatrick, Jr., *The Real CIA*. New York: Macmillan, 1968, pp. 205-267.

espionage operations.<sup>13</sup> In this regard, the thesis refines and elaborates upon the insights of John Marks and Victor Marchetti, Lawrence Freedman, and John Prados. These authors highlight the proposed estimative mission of the agency; namely, that McNamara intended the organization to consolidate military representation on the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) in order to mitigate the perceived biases of the armed services in strategic intelligence assessments.<sup>14</sup> This design was vehemently contested by the military leadership, who were adverse to the diminution of the influence of the military departments in the formulation of strategic intelligence. They favored the creation of a weak military intelligence agency, which would coordinate rather than manage espionage activities. In this, their aim was to preserve the autonomy and discretion of the intelligence components of the military departments. Thus McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff embraced disparate concepts regarding the authority and mission of the proposed agency; each strove to implement its preferences accordingly.

Whereas past analyses of dispute between McNamara and the JCS over the DIA have viewed the conflict as a pedantic, sterile argument over bureaucratic ends, the **Chapter Two** demonstrates that the conflict was primarily political, concerned with organizational power and privileges. Simply put, McNamara was anxious to seize control over the military intelligence process; the JCS were loathe to relinquish it. In the end, in classic democratic fashion, a compromise was fashioned, wherein the prerogatives of the intelligence elements of the armed services were largely preserved, in exchange for the promise of future USIB reform.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence, the DIA was created as a fragile craft, subject to the powerful currents and tides generated by its potent masters, the Secretary of Defense and the JCS.<sup>16</sup>

Turning to the early years of the agency, there is, as previously noted, a dearth of historical writing on the DIA. An unpublished manuscript by the present in-house DIA historian Deane Allen, "The Defense Intelligence Agency: A 21-Year Organizational Overview," sheds some light on the early

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<sup>13</sup> The role of the DIA in promoting efficacy and eliminating duplication is emphasized in Defense Intelligence Agency, *History of the Defense Intelligence Agency*. 1985; Charles H Andregg, *The Management of Defense Intelligence*. Washington: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1968; and USC (94/2) Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (hereafter cited as the Church Committee). *Final Report: Book I*. Washington: GPO, 1976.

<sup>14</sup> Victor Marchetti and John Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*. Hodderand Stoughton: Coronet, 1974, pp. 117, 334; Lawrence Freedman, *U.S. Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat*. London: Macmillan, 1977, pp. 23-25; John Prados, *The Soviet Estimate: U.S. Intelligence Analysis and Russian Military Strength*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982, pp. 122-28.

<sup>15</sup> Arnold Kantor was the first to observe that the compromise was one-sided: "McNamara, who was more concerned about having to deal with conflicting intelligence reports -- none of which he trusted -- than with improving the quality of military intelligence -- which he despaired of -- gave control of the DIA to the Chiefs [JCS], and then proceeded to virtually ignore it." Arnold Kantor, *Defense Politics: A Budgetary Perspective*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 53-54.

<sup>16</sup> The Final Report of the 1976 Church Committee stated: "In retrospect, a strong case can be made that the DIA has never really had a chance. Strongly resisted by the military services, the Agency has been a creature of compromise from the outset." Church Committee. (I) p. 350.

affairs of the agency.<sup>17</sup> However, as the work is principally an organizational history, concerned with evolving structural and functional arrangements, its value to historians is limited. Similarly, Charles Andregg's account of the first six years of the organization is primarily a managerial study, highlighting functional consolidations and prospective efficiencies.<sup>18</sup> An insider's perspective on the agency can be found in the Patrick McGarvey's book, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*. McGarvey, a former DIA intelligence analyst, is highly critical of the agency, which he views as impotent and ineffective. The work is rich in anecdotes and reminiscences; powerful in its condemnation of bureaucratic self-interest masquerading as intelligence assessments.<sup>19</sup> The work is a memoir, rather than an institutional history, and as such is often fragmented and subjective. Yet it offers some illumination for **Chapter Three**, which navigates largely uncharted waters in examining the first year of the DIA's existence. This is a critical period for new organizations, for it is when identity is forged and responsibilities are assigned. The chapter explores the formidable constraints placed on the agency, both by fiat and circumstances, and the difficulties faced by General Carroll in surmounting them. It also recounts McNamara's efforts to implement USIB reform, wherein the DIA was an indispensable component, in spite of tenacious obstruction from the military departments. The consequences of the internal and external restraints on the agency are explored in the context of American intervention in Southeast Asia in 1961-62. Here the chapter follows in the footsteps of John Newman, whose book *JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue, and the Struggle for Power* chronicles the provenance of the celebrated 1967 order of battle controversy; a contentious dispute which culminated in the landmark case *Westmoreland v. CBS*.<sup>20</sup> The chapter explores the DIA's recurrent acquiescence to the manipulations of the field command. Finally, the chapter surveys the influence of Congressional oversight on the inchoate intelligence agency.

**Chapter Four** chronicles the role of the DIA in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Although the nuclear confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States has been the subject of numerous symposia, books, articles and theses, concurrent American intelligence operations -- with the notable exception of the September and October 1962 U-2 reconnaissance missions -- have received scant attention.<sup>21</sup> This neglect was principally the result of sparse and fragmented documentary evidence. However, recent events -- the opening of the Soviet Archives, the declassification of American records, and several conferences of participants -- have provided researchers with a wealth of

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<sup>17</sup> Deane Allen, "The Defense Intelligence Agency: A 21-Year Organizational Overview." Comment Edition. 28 September 1983. Unpublished manuscript obtained by author.

<sup>18</sup> See Andregg, *The Management of Defense Intelligence*, pp. 11-12, 26-46.

<sup>19</sup> Patrick McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*. New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972.

<sup>20</sup> John Newman, *JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue, and the Struggle for Power*. New York: Warner, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> The activities of the CIA and the National Photographic Interpretation Center before and during the crisis are recounted in Dino Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Random House, 1990.

evidence to reconstruct the crisis.<sup>22</sup> Thus the chapter employs these new primary sources to recreate and re-examine the actions of the American intelligence community throughout the crisis, for it is only in this broad context that the performance of the DIA may be accurately recounted and evaluated. Despite its omission from existing histories, the chapter argues that the influence of the DIA was decisive in the discovery of the missiles. Thereafter the influence of the agency swiftly waned. This is attributable to several factors, the most significant of which was the reassertion of prerogative by the military departments. The work argues that the swift erosion DIA influence was a revealing and prophetic incident. The flaws of the agency had come home to roost. Thus the poor performance of the agency for the remainder of the crisis was a direct result of the organizational impotence; the consequence of the bureaucratic compromise which created the agency.

**Chapter Five** examines the inability of the DIA to influence American intervention in Southeast Asia and the strategic intelligence process. The amalgam of political and bureaucratic interests which led the United States to intervene in Vietnam have been the subject of myriad histories of the conflict.<sup>23</sup> In the preponderance of these works the DIA is absent. This is for good reason: the agency had only marginal influence on policy deliberation. The chapter strives to discover why. Drawing heavily on previously overlooked primary sources, it argues that the inability of the agency significantly to affect policy was a consequence of both internal and external censorship. In this regard, both the military predilection toward optimism and the traditional subordination of intelligence to operational requirements and preferences influenced the agency and its superiors. The narrative demonstrates that the interests of the military leadership were more immediate -- by virtue of the placement and composition of the agency -- and typically prevailed over those of the Secretary of Defense. The chapter displays the often extraordinary lengths the armed services went to in order to preserve their preeminence over the DIA; resisting all attempts, however innocuous, to expand its authority and jurisdiction. The fate of USIB reform is a particularly revealing example. Although the agency was

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<sup>22</sup> The recollections of a senior Russian general and official Soviet documents may be found in Anatoli I. Gribkov and William Y. Smith, *Operation Anadyr: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Chicago: edition q, 1994. The most recent documents declassified by the United States government are collected in Mary McAuliffe (ed.), *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Washington: CIA, 1992. Excerpts and evaluations of the conferences of participants and scholars are offered in Blight and Welch, *On The Brink*; Bruce Allyn, James Blight, and David Welsh, *Back to the Brink: Proceedings of the Moscow Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992; James Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welsh, *Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse*. New York: Pantheon, 1993; and Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*.

<sup>23</sup> The most comprehensive bibliographic works are Lester Brune and Richard Burns, *America and the Indochina Wars, 1945-1990: A Bibliographical Guide*. Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1991; Louis Peake, *The United States in the Vietnam War, 1954-1975: A Selected, Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland, 1986; and Gary Hess, "Historians and the Vietnam War." *Diplomatic History* 18 (Spring 1994): 264-95. Relevant works on intelligence during the Vietnam conflict are Joseph A. McChristian, *The Role of Military Intelligence, 1965-1967*. Washington: GPO, 1974. Philip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: The History: 1946-1975*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988; Bruce Palmer, Jr., *The Twenty-Five Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1984; James Gibson, *The Perfect War: The War We Couldn't Lose And How We Did*. New York: Vintage, 1986. and Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986.

explicitly created to consolidate military representation of the Board, the resolute opposition of the military departments to this reorganization effectively prevented the agency from fulfilling its assignment. Previous studies of the DIA noted that the agency met considerable resistance from the military departments; chapter five reveals the hitherto undisclosed depth and span of this recalcitrance.

The 1970 Fitzhugh Report observed that the DIA is in the difficult position of trying to serve two masters whose intelligence needs are dissimilar.<sup>24</sup> **Chapter Six** recounts the efforts of the DIA to satisfy both the Secretary of Defense and the JCS during the controversial sustained bombing campaign of North Vietnam from 1965 to 1967.<sup>25</sup> As McNamara and his military advisors were divided over the effectiveness of the campaign, the DIA found itself caught between the irreconcilable desire of the military leadership for sanguine assessments and the increasing disillusionment of civilian policymakers. The agency was powerless to mitigate the conflict, as it lacked the authority and capabilities to effectively mediate. As the rift between its superiors grew, both came to distrust the DIA, each suspecting that the agency was overly sympathetic to the other. Thus, for a time, the agency was spurned by both those it was intended to serve. In recounting this tale, the chapter employs numerous declassified documents and several organizational histories from the Defense Department and the State Department, supplemented by interviews and oral histories. The interpretation is, to the best of my knowledge, novel.

**Chapter Seven** details the role of the DIA in perhaps the most infamous intelligence dispute of the Vietnam era, the order-of-battle controversy of 1967. First made public in 1975 by the former CIA analyst Sam Adams, the dispute centered on allegations that the American military command in Vietnam under the leadership of General William Westmoreland had deliberately misrepresented the strength of the enemy -- underestimating the number and capabilities of the communist insurgents to support official claims of progress in the conflict -- to his superiors in Washington.<sup>26</sup> The television network CBS produced a documentary in January 1982 entitled "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception" that embraced Adams' claims and asserted that General Westmoreland had conspired to keep the true dimensions of the communist insurgency from the President and the American public. In response, Westmoreland sued the network for defamation, resulting in the landmark case *Westmoreland v. CBS*.<sup>27</sup> Though Westmoreland eventually withdrew the lawsuit on 18 February 1984, a week before the case was scheduled to go to the jury, in subsequent years many journalists and scholars have taken

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<sup>24</sup> Department of Defense, Report to the President and the Secretary of Defense on the Department of Defense by the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel [Fitzhugh Report], 1 July 1970, pp. 32-33.

<sup>25</sup> A comprehensive account of the bombing campaign is provided in James Clay Thompson, *Rolling Thunder: Understanding Policy and Program Failure*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Adams, "Vietnam Cover-Up: Playing War With Numbers." *Harper's* (May 1975): 41-44, 62-73. Adams memoirs were published posthumously as Sam Adams, *War of Numbers: An Intelligence Memoir*. South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 1994.

<sup>27</sup> The lawsuit produced a wealth of primary source material that, curiously, remains largely untapped by historians. The sworn affidavits, depositions, trial testimony, declassified documents, cables, correspondence, and notes total over eighty thousand pages. They are reproduced in the microform collection *Vietnam, A Documentary Collection: Westmoreland v. CBS*, Walter Schneir (ed.). New York: Clearwater Publishing Co., 1985 (Hereafter cited as *Westmoreland*). The most balanced account of the trial is presented in Bob Brewin and Sydney Shaw, *Vietnam On Trial: Westmoreland vs. CBS*. New York: Atheneum, 1989.

up the general's cause, asserting that the conspiracy allegations are exaggerated: that the controversy was merely an honest difference of opinion between the CIA and the military intelligence community over the order-of-battle estimate.<sup>28</sup> Most recently, the respected military historian James Wirtz portrayed the incident as a largely pedantic disagreement between a recalcitrant Sam Adams and the rest of the espionage community. Wirtz maintains that Adams employed a faulty methodology to generate a spurious order-of-battle estimate; an estimate repudiated, Wirtz asserts, by the Tet offensive which validated Westmoreland's assessment.<sup>29</sup> In exploring the role of the DIA in the dispute, this thesis contests Wirtz's analysis by demonstrating that the conflict can be accurately viewed not as between Sam Adams and the CIA against the rest of the intelligence community, but rather as Westmoreland against the entire intelligence community. An examination of the assessments of the agency -- assessments that supported Sam Adams' claims -- provides much-needed context for interpreting the dispute. Moreover, the thesis demonstrates that the dispute was not over methodology, but jurisdiction. Instead of an honest disagreement, it may be more accurately characterized as a struggle over command prerogative. Finally, the thesis attempts to prove that far from repudiating Adams' estimate, the Tet Offensive of 1968 substantiated it, so much so that the DIA was forced to abandon the order of battle assessments championed by Westmoreland and his staff, despite considerable political pressure to the contrary. The expansion of the scope of inquiry beyond the CIA and military command in Saigon represents a new approach made possible by the exploitation of primary materials on a scale not previously attempted.

## Further Thoughts

In researching this work I attempted to adhere faithfully to Francis Bacon's celebrated exhortation to: "Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider." I must confess that upon embarking on this study, I held no strong convictions regarding the US intelligence effort. Like many Americans, I believed (and continue to believe) that the volatile international scene necessitated an efficacious intelligence apparatus for the modern democracies. I viewed the dispute as one of means rather than ends. I had neither animosity nor sympathy toward my subject. I therefore attempted to approach my topic with a combination of curiosity and detachment.

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<sup>28</sup> The most prominent works by journalists sympathetic to Westmoreland are Renata Adler, *Reckless Disregard: Westmoreland v. CBS et al; Sharon v. Time*. New York: Knopf, 1986; and Don Kowett, *A Matter of Honor*. New York: Macmillan, 1984. For a scholarly assessment see T. L. Cabbage, "Westmoreland v. CBS: Was Intelligence Corrupted by Policy Demands?" *Intelligence and National Security* 3:3 (July 1988): 119-180.

<sup>29</sup> See James J. Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991. Wirtz's judgment of the order-of-battle dispute is summarized in James Wirtz, "Intelligence to please? The order of battle controversy during the Vietnam War." *Political Science Quarterly* 106 (Summer 1991): 239-263.

Yet I walk away with some firmly-held convictions regarding the American intelligence effort. I hesitate to call them lessons, as the word connotes a sense of certitude I am loathe to embrace. However, it is the nature of man to generalize, to strive to draw rigid conclusions from equivocal experiences in an ephemeral world. I share these with the reader to make known my sentiments, which undoubtedly influenced this finished work. For, in the end, honesty is the last refuge of the historian. They run thus:

Ideas are important. They give life and shape to our needs and aspirations, influencing the course of men and nations. Ideas motivate and inspire; we neglect them at our peril. Therefore this thesis underscores the competing concepts regarding a consolidated military intelligence agency held by civilian policymakers and military professionals in 1961. It argues that the DIA was created as a compromise of between the disparate ideas of Robert McNamara and the military leadership over the future of military intelligence. The history of the agency, its successes and failures, has been the result of the dialectic between the opposing demands of both visions.

Structure matters, in intelligence organizations, as in other human institutions. Although in recent years it has become fashionable to argue that organization is subservient to personnel -- that a talented staff can overcome the constraints of bureaucracy ("it's not the organization that's important, but the people in it") -- I contend that the proposition is specious.<sup>30</sup> There is little doubt that individuals, through informal means, may occasionally surmount the obstacles of formal structure; nonetheless, we must concern ourselves not with the exception but with the rule. The rule is that people are in part products of their organizational position. Individual achievement is often dependent upon the authority and resources with which to act.<sup>31</sup> Organizational structure can assist or impede individual efforts and therefore the formal structure of the military intelligence community deserves attention and scrutiny.

Finally, leadership matters. Leaders must not only direct the daily operations of the agency, but project a compelling vision of the mission, culture, and importance of their organization while securing the required authority and resources. As the organizational theorist Norton Long remarked:

There is no more forlorn spectacle in the administrative world than an agency and a program possessed of statutory life, armed with executive orders, sustained in the courts, yet stricken with paralysis and deprived of power, an object of contempt to its

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<sup>30</sup> Illustrating this sentiment, Walter Laqueur remarks: "In last resort, more depends on the integrity, the self-confidence, and the strength of character of the analysts than their bureaucratic affiliation." Laqueur, *A World of Secrets*, p. 90. Curiously, military officers are frequently proponents of this perspective, despite the fact that their chosen profession is dominated by structure and hierarchy. Skeptics believe that their argument is specious: that they are more concerned with preserving the status quo than improving organizational performance. If they were removed from Washington and its political environs and given a field command under precarious circumstances, I suspect that they would quickly abandon this argument and acknowledge the importance of formal organizational structure.

<sup>31</sup> See James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. New York: Basic, 1989, pp. 23-25. Also see James M Keagle and David C. Kozak (eds.), *Bureaucratic Politics and National Security: Theory and Practice*. London: Lynne Rienner, 1988, pp. 6-8.

enemies and of despair to its friends. The lifeblood of administration is power. Its attainment, maintenance, increase, dissipation, and loss are subjects the practitioner and student can ill afford to neglect."<sup>32</sup>

This is the proper realm of leadership.

It is the contention of this thesis that the DIA was deficient in all three: ideas, structure, and leadership. The contradictions between the disparate civilian and military concepts of the agency were never fully resolved, creating enduring confusion over the mission and responsibilities of the agency. The awkward placement of the agency -- reporting to the Secretary of Defense "through" the JCS -- led it to be overly attentive to the concerns of the military leadership at the expense of civilian policymakers. Timid leadership repeatedly failed to secure the authority and resources needed by the agency to establish credibility within the intelligence community and the federal hierarchy. As a result by 1969 the DIA would be spurned by the very men and institutions that had created the agency only eight years before.

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<sup>32</sup> Norton Long, "Power and Administration." *Public Administration Review* 2 (1949): 357.

# Chapter One

## Antecedents

### Centralization and its Opponents

Unlike the Greek goddess Athena, the Defense Intelligence Agency did not emerge from its creator fully-formed. Rather, it was the imperfect product of historical forces, both idiographic and nomothetic. The most significant of these was the intrinsic weakness of the National Security Act of 1947, which laid the foundation for the modern Department of Defense. The Act created a military establishment marked by inefficiency, duplication of effort, and an absence of central authority. In response to these shortcomings, evident from the start, Congress enacted a series of amendments to the 1947 Act, designed to strengthen the power of the Secretary of Defense vis-a-vis the military departments. The armed services opposed such legislation, as they were averse to the consolidation of power in the civilian Office of the Secretary of Defense. Nowhere was their opposition more intense than in the realm of intelligence. The military departments had long coveted the autonomy of their intelligence organizations, and fought off all attempts to submit them to outside direction. The success of these efforts resulted in a American military intelligence effort that was fragmented and duplicative. The disarray of military intelligence was highlighted by the bomber and missile “gaps” of the nineteen-fifties and by the U-2 Affair of nineteen-sixty. These events led the Eisenhower administration to establish the Joint Study Group in 1960 to examine the operations and performance of the American espionage system. The Group judged that the military intelligence organizations lacked effective leadership and recommended the establishment of the DIA as a means to consolidate the diverse military intelligence operations of the armed services under the direction and authority of the Secretary of Defense. In effect, the bomber and missile “gaps” and the U-2 Affair finally prompted the military intelligence agencies to confront the powerful forces of centralization, historical currents that they had skillfully eluded in the past. The first section of this chapter examines the organizational predilection toward centralization in the Defense Department, while the second offers a synopsis of the evolution of the military intelligence community and explores how the military departments were able to secure their intelligence elements from the threat of consolidation. The third section sketches the organizational concerns of the Air Force, a powerful player in the government milieu that would greatly influence the course of intelligence reform. The final section investigates the 1960 Report of the Joint Study Group, the catalyst for the creation of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

## The Evolution of the Department of Defense, 1947-60

The origins of the Department of Defense are to be found in the National Security Act of 1947. Signed on 26 July, this legislation was the culmination of an arduous two-year struggle over the future of the American military establishment. The political contest pitted President Truman and the War Department (represented by the renowned generals Omar Bradley, George Marshall, and Dwight Eisenhower) against the Navy and its powerful allies in the United States Congress (notably, senators Carl Vinson and Richard Russell, both of Georgia). Basing their arguments upon their experiences in the Second World War, Truman and his allies were convinced that the armed forces of the United States should be consolidated and fully integrated. A single military structure, they argued, would reduce inter-service rivalry; thus augmenting coordination and facilitating efficiency.<sup>1</sup> The Department of the Navy and its benefactors viewed this proposal as unacceptable. Loathe to cede any of its considerable autonomy, the Navy (supported by its scion, the Marines) favored the retention of the current system of separate armed services. Its cavalier attitude is best conveyed in the words of Admiral Ernest J. King in 1946, who had the unique distinction of having served the nation in the dual capacity of Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic fleet and Chief of Naval Operations (the two posts were normally discrete) during the Second World War: "If the Navy's welfare is one of the prerequisites to the Nation's welfare -- and I believe that to be the case -- any step that is not good for the Navy is not good for the Nation."<sup>2</sup>

Spirited negotiations between the two factions ultimately produced an acceptable compromise. The final legislation drew together the War, Navy, and newly-formed Air Force departments under the auspices of the "National Military Establishment" (NME) and the authority of the Secretary of Defense. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, a titular coordinating committee established by an executive order of the President in 1942, was given Congressional sanction and assigned as "principal military advisors" to the President and the Secretary of Defense.<sup>3</sup> Although the departmental status of the military was downgraded, the separate identities of the armed services were preserved and their autonomy was to a large degree maintained. Although theoretically the Secretary of Defense was directed to exercise "general direction, authority, and control" over the military departments and take appropriate steps to eliminate duplication and overlapping, in reality he lacked the means to do so. He had little statutory power to compel the services to follow his lead. Lacking these means, he was dependent upon the goodwill of the armed services.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, a loose form of federalism prevailed

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<sup>1</sup> Roherty, *Decisions of Robert S. McNamara*, pp. 24-27.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur T. Hadley, *The Straw Giant. Triumph and Failure: America's Armed Forces*. New York: Random House, 1971, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> The provenance of the modern JCS can be traced to the pro forma Joint Army-Navy Committee of the nineteen-twenties. The committee was modified during the Second World War to mimic the British Chiefs of Staff Committee. The National Security Act of 1947 denied the JCS operational authority and a chairman. The 1949 Amendment appointed a non-voting chair.

<sup>4</sup> Henry L. Trewhitt, *McNamara*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971, pp. 60-65.

in the inchoate department, with a weak Secretary of Defense exercising a vague “general authority” over the stronger military services. As Truman’s shrewd political advisor Clark Clifford noted:

The flaws in this proposal were self-evident. It left real power in the hands of the services and gave the Secretary of the National Defense almost no real authority, but this was the best the President could get at the time, and he decided to accept it.<sup>5</sup>

The subsequent history of the Defense Department largely has been a tale of successive attempts to remedy the deficiencies of the original 1947 Act by strengthening the authority of the Secretary of Defense vis-a-vis the armed services. In the absence of strong central authority, the services became mired in customary petty bureaucratic infighting; often subordinating the national interest to organizational self-interest.<sup>6</sup> In an attempt to stem the feuding, President Truman appointed the former Wall Street investment banker James Forrestal as the first Secretary of Defense. A vociferous opponent of military unification as the Secretary of the Navy in 1946, Forrestal fought relentlessly and successfully to dilute the authority of the Secretary of Defense over the armed services under the provisions of the 1947 Act. In a shrewd political move, Truman offered the combative Forrestal the office he disdained. Forrestal, instrumental in creating the weak Secretary of Defense, had little choice but to accept. Upon assuming office in 1947, Forrestal swiftly discovered that the post was untenable: it lacked the authority and resources to effectively manage the sprawling military establishment. After a dramatic personal epiphany, in October 1948 Forrestal informed President Truman that the NME was unworkable and recommended substantive reform. In response, Congress and the Truman administration sought to strengthen the authority of the Secretary of Defense by enacting the 1949 amendment to National Security Act. Under this legislation the three military departments were eliminated as executive departments and the Department of Defense was created (replacing the NME) to embrace the services. Although the armed services continued to be administered by their respective Secretaries, they were now made directly responsible to the direction, authority, and control of the Secretary of Defense. Despite this legislation, managing the Defense Department remained a Herculean task. The strenuous demands of this post and a tempestuous personal life ultimately proved too much for James Forrestal. On the night of 22 May 1948 he committed suicide.<sup>7</sup> It was a tragic loss, and a portentous commencement for the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

In subsequent years additional reforms effected greater centralization in military activities and expedited the consolidation of power within the department into the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In 1953 the DOD was reorganized by President Eisenhower (with Congressional approval) with the intention of directing the focus of the Joint Chiefs of Staff away from their respective parent services,

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<sup>5</sup> Clark Clifford, with Richard Holbrooke, *Counsel to the President: A Memoir*. New York: Anchor, 1991, pp. 147-170.

<sup>6</sup> Trehitt, *McNamara*, p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *Driven Patriot: The Life and Times of James Forrestal*. New York: Vintage, 1992, pp. 446-68.

towards their national responsibilities. Nonetheless, the 1953 reorganization failed to appease many critics of the department. They believed that OSD required still greater power: it should possess comprehensive and indisputable authority over the armed services. In an organization saturated with waste and replication, critics claimed that the Secretary of Defense must be allowed to take *active* measures to promote efficiency and eliminate duplication.<sup>8</sup> For a time such criticism was disregarded; a 1957 Air Force proposal for greater consolidation was allowed to languish due to fierce resistance from the Navy.<sup>9</sup> Yet the launching of Sputnik on 4 October 1957 revived the argument for further centralization and served as a catalyst for the reforms of 1958.

Although the CIA had been warning the Eisenhower administration for over three years that the Soviets were planning a satellite launch, the American public, unaware of Russian technological advances, was shocked by the October Sputnik launch. It represented a clear challenge to the American Cold War belief in technological superiority. This creed was further shaken by the alarmist Gaither Report (named after the chairman of the study group, H. Rowen Gaither) of 7 November 1957, which predicted that the Russians would have 100 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) in place by early 1960. Amid growing public apprehension, and at the behest of President Eisenhower, Congress passed a new amendment to the National Security Act, the 1958 Reorganization Act. Based on Eisenhower's conviction that "separate ground, air, and sea warfare is gone forever," the planning and execution of strategy and operations were shifted from the military services to the "mechanisms of the Secretary of Defense and the JCS."<sup>10</sup> Operational command was centralized within the Office of the Secretary of Defense: "unified" and "specified" (U&S) military commands were established and the military departments were removed from the chain of command over operational forces.<sup>11</sup> The Act also granted the Secretary of Defense greater authority to delve into traditional service activities in order to direct military research and development. Overall, the 1958 Reorganization further shifted the balance of power in the Pentagon away from the services, toward the OSD and the collective JCS.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Keith C. Clark and Lawrence J. Legere, *The President and the Management of National Security*. New York: Praeger, 1969, pp. 168-175.

<sup>9</sup> Hadley, *Straw Giant*, p. 131.

<sup>10</sup> Roherty, *Decisions of Robert McNamara*, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> Although the 1958 Reorganization put the Secretary of Defense squarely in the military chain of command *de jure*, under the President and over the unified and specified commands, the *de facto* command line runs from the President to the Secretary *through* the JCS by DOD directive (DOD Directive 5100.1 Sec II(e) [31 December 1958]). Accordingly, the JCS are transmitters, not originators, of command orders. The concept appears muddled: How does one issue clear and effective orders to subordinates through a committee?

<sup>12</sup> Provisions of the National Security Act and amendments are given in Alice C. Cole, et al., (eds.), *The Department of Defense: Documents on Establishment and Organization 1944-1978*. DOD Historical Office. Washington: GPO, 1979; For portraits of the Secretaries of Defense see Roger R. Trask, *The Secretary of Defense: A Brief History, 1947-1985*. DOD Historical Office. Washington: GPO, 1985; C. W. Borklund, *Men of the Pentagon: From Forrestal to McNamara*. New York: Praeger, 1966; Douglas Kinnard, *The Secretary of Defense*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1980.

The most significant and controversial provision of the 1958 Reorganization Act was the McCormack-Curtis Amendment, which is section 202(c)(6) of the National Security Act (as amended). It states:

(6) Whenever the Secretary of Defense determines it will be advantageous to the Government in terms of effectiveness, economy, or efficiency, he shall provide for the carrying out of any supply or service activity common to more than one military department by a single agency or each other organizational entities as he deems appropriate.<sup>13</sup>

The McCormack-Curtis Amendment was adopted by the House of Representatives during floor action on the 1958 Reorganization Act on June 12, 1958. Prior to its adoption, its sponsor, Congressman John McCormack, stated to the House of Representatives that it was intended expressly to include the intelligence activities of the military departments.<sup>14</sup> The McCormack-Curtis Amendment was intended to give the Secretary of Defense the necessary authority to fulfill his legal responsibilities, as stated in Section 202(c)(1) of the National Security Act (as amended), "to take appropriate steps (including the transfer, reassignment, abolition, and consolidation of service functions) to provide in the Department of Defense for more effective, efficient, and economical administration and operation, and to eliminate duplication."<sup>15</sup> It allows the Secretary of Defense to effect further centralization by consolidating common service functions and placing them under the direct control of the OSD rather than the individual services. However, it is important to note that such consolidation could only be implemented in the name of greater efficiency and the elimination of duplication. Historically, Congress had resisted all attempts to integrate the American defense establishment, insisting that the military departments not be merged.<sup>16</sup> Thus they were wary of any proposal which might endow, inadvertently or otherwise, the Secretary of Defense with the unilateral power to coalesce the services. Consequently, the McCormack-Curtis Amendment was passed only after extensive debate during which many congressmen were persuaded to endorse the proposal due to their impression that it would bring about substantial savings in the procurement of common-use military items.<sup>17</sup> Future Secretaries of Defense, however, would interpret the amendment broadly (as

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<sup>13</sup> USC. Eighty-Seventh Congress, Second Session. House: Armed Services Committee *Report: Special Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations*. Washington: GPO, 1962, p. 6609. (Hereafter congressional sessions will be specified number of Congress / number of session.)

<sup>14</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Report*, p. 6597.

<sup>15</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Report*, p. 6597.

<sup>16</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings: To inquire into agencies that had been created or were being contemplated by the Office of the Secretary of Defense*. Washington: GPO, 1962, p. 6683.

<sup>17</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Report*, p. 6611.

its sponsors had), employing the amendment to justify further centralization within the Defense Department in the name of "greater efficiency" and the "elimination of duplication."<sup>18</sup>

Two years after the McCormack-Curtis Amendment was passed by Congress, Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates used the provision to create the Defense Communications Agency (DCA). Established on 12 May 1960, the DCA was authorized to act as the single manager for all military long-haul, point-to-point communications. Accordingly, the DCA was instructed to plan and execute the orderly conversion of the disparate communications networks of the military departments into an integrated Defense Department system, reducing costs in manpower and money in the future.<sup>19</sup> The creation of the common communications agency was a historic event: for the first time, the Secretary of Defense had consolidated a military activity without the explicit approval of Congress. It marked the emergence of a potent Secretary of Defense, wielding expansive powers and exercising broad discretion in the execution of his duties. It was the very antithesis of the frail executive James Forrestal had envisaged in 1947.

Therefore from 1947 to 1960 the trend within the Defense Department was toward the consolidation and centralization of military activities under the auspices of OSD. The power and authority of the Secretary of Defense was repeatedly strengthened vis-a-vis the military departments and the focus of the JCS was directed toward its joint responsibilities. Successive reorganizations, culminating in the 1958 Reorganization Act, gave OSD statutory control over virtually all Defense Department endeavors. Since the "support" and "command" lines ran directly to the Secretary of Defense, he was able to exert direct authority over nearly all the activities of the military departments. Yet in 1960 military intelligence eluded his grasp.

## Military Intelligence, 1947-60

In spite of the centralization which was occurring within the Defense Department, throughout the nineteen-forties and -fifties military intelligence remained autarkic. While the National Security Act of 1947 consolidated American civilian intelligence efforts under the aegis of the CIA, the military departments were allowed to maintain control of their individual intelligence components in recognition of their need for specialized tactical (that is, combat) intelligence. The presence of Soviet military forces in the heartland of Eurasia and nascent Cold War tensions reinforced the argument of the armed services that the retention of their independent intelligence agencies was necessary to ensure accurate combat intelligence and enemy "order of battle" information. The merits of this argument are considerable. Autonomous military intelligence components facilitate flexibility and insure responsiveness to the disparate intelligence requirements of dissimilar service missions. Despite the negative consequences of this pluralism -- notably fragmentation, duplication, and parochialism -- a

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<sup>18</sup> By 1992, successive Secretaries of Defense would use this amendment to sanction the transfer of most of the service activities to nine unified and specified commands and ten "superagencies." The military services eventually retained only training and logistic capabilities.

<sup>19</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Report*, pp. 6598-99.

strong case can be made for tolerating these costs for the sake of analytical competition, multiple advocacy, and the prevention of the suppression of dissent.<sup>20</sup> Pluralism, albeit duplicative and fractious, is an essential feature of liberal democracy. As the esteemed jurist Justice Louis D. Brandeis observed in 1926, the American federal system was created “not to promote efficiency but to preclude the exercise of arbitrary power.”<sup>21</sup>

However, one must also be aware (as the advocates of the bureaucratic politics model persuasively argue) that the military departments, like all bureaucracies, are driven by agency interests. The acquisition and maintenance of organizational power are preeminent among these interests.<sup>22</sup> Independent military intelligence components allowed each armed service to formulate enemy threat assessments which frequently served to justify the desired departmental budget and allocation of resources. “As they say in service argot, mission motivates estimates.”<sup>23</sup> The loss of control over their intelligence components was viewed as a direct threat to the autonomy of the military departments and therefore was to be resisted. Thus appeals to the sublime democratic principle of pluralism veiled simple organizational self-interest. The latter played a more prominent role in the resolute opposition of the services to the consolidation of their intelligence components.

The National Security Act of 1947 created the Joint Intelligence Group (JIG), a small interdepartmental body housed within the Joint Staff, ostensibly to provide greater military intelligence coordination. However its limited size, lack of clear authority, and the institutional antipathy it faced from the more powerful and established service intelligence agencies caused the JIG to be largely ineffective. William Corson concluded:

The JIG represented the military’s acceptance of an armistice-type organization in which the various intelligence services would agree to discuss problems of common interest without surrendering any of their perquisites, and cooperate with each other beyond the strict criteria of self-interest.<sup>24</sup>

The CIA was not able to evolve into the potent arbitrator of the intelligence community, as originally conceived. Opposition from the established military intelligence bureaucracies was too strong; the incipient agency was too weak. Ultimately, the CIA became simply another intelligence agency competing for the attention of policymakers (as the 1948 Dulles-Jackson-Correa report concluded).<sup>25</sup> In the absence of central authority, the military intelligence community remained an agglomeration of fiercely independent bureaucratic entities which looked to their parent service for

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<sup>20</sup> Laqueur, *A World of Secrets*, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> *Myers v. United States*, 272, United States 52, 193 (1926). Cited in Arthur Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency*. Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1973, p. vii.

<sup>22</sup> David C. Kozak, “The Bureaucratic Politics Approach: The Evolution of the Paradigm,” in Keagle and Kozak, *Bureaucratic Politics and National Security*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Hadley, *Straw Giant*, p. 184.

<sup>24</sup> Corson, *Armies of Ignorance*, pp. 386-387. Also see Andregg, *The Management of Defense Intelligence*, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Laqueur, *A World of Secrets*, p. 73.

guidance rather than to the Secretary of Defense or the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). The military fiercely fought off all attempts to centralize the intelligence effort. An Admiral who personally witnessed this resistance recalled:

The resistance, in a good many cases, came from personal views or from people who were in positions where they could see their importance undermined and the control of certain areas given up. From a logical point of view, certainly nobody could gainsay its advantage, but it's like a bunch of children playing ball. Everybody wants to be the captain and, in a good many cases, this was regarded as the first step in doing away with individual intelligence agencies, that this was the over-all answer, and that they would then lose what position they had in the intelligence community.<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, an American intelligence system developed that, in the words of former CIA deputy director Admiral Rufus Taylor, resembled a "tribal federation."<sup>27</sup> Each service separately collected, produced, and distributed intelligence for their own use. Each service was also responsible for supplying its intelligence products to the OSD and other involved government entities. This arrangement was characterized by inefficiency and duplication of effort, fostering, in the eyes of its critics, an "extremely parochial approach in each service's analyses of enemy capabilities."<sup>28</sup> The CIA simply lacked the bureaucratic power to overcome these centrifugal forces. Dispute among the disparate agencies was common. This organizational conflict regularly inhibited the formulation of unified intelligence estimates (or threat assessments) -- a commodity increasingly demanded by Washington policymakers.<sup>29</sup>

Tensions between the intelligence organizations were particularly conspicuous in deliberations over the most ambitious American intelligence product: NIEs. Intended to be the most authoritative statement on any given subject by United States intelligence, NIEs are "a strategic estimate of the capabilities, vulnerabilities, and probable intentions of foreign nations which is produced at the national level as a composite of the views of the intelligence community."<sup>30</sup> Produced under the auspices of the DCI, these estimates were considered to be the most influential documents in the formulation of national security policy; hence, they were frequently the subjects of controversy among the espionage agencies.

In the early nineteen-fifties, DCI Gen. Walter Bedell "Beedle" Smith overhauled the NIE process. Although the estimates remained under the aegis of the DCI, responsibility for administration was delegated to the newly-established Board of National Estimates (BNE). Composed of retired military officers, former diplomats, and academics, BNE defined the terms of inquiry and drafted the estimates.

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<sup>26</sup> Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel B. Frankel oral history interview, no date, by John T. Mason, p. 268, United States Naval Institute.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor quoted in Marchetti and Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, p. 109.

<sup>28</sup> Marchetti and Marks, *CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, p. 116.

<sup>29</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, *History of the Defense Intelligence Agency*, no page numbers.

<sup>30</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of Military Terms*, p. 268.

Staff work -- research, corroboration, and coordination -- was performed by the Office of National Estimates (ONE), which replaced the CIA's Office of Research and Evaluation. It was hoped that this reorganization would mitigate organizational rivalry and expedite compromise.<sup>31</sup> Commenting upon the new system, the former intelligence analyst William Bundy (an official with ONE from 1951 to 1959) remarked:

The real contributors to the process were State, the military services, and the CIA as coordinator. Beetle [DCI Gen. Walter "Beedle" Smith] established the principle that they would not waffle on an agreement. If someone didn't agree, OK, but Smith was not going to fudge his language to produce mush. The Estimate was the Estimate of the director of central intelligence. Disagreement could be footnoted. It did not happen most of the time, but on the Soviet Strategic Estimate the army and air force would always disagree with each other. Their appropriations hinged on it. Human nature hasn't been repealed, and G-2s [the intelligence chiefs of the armed services] were seldom powerful enough not to reflect their service point of view. If the Estimate said the Soviets were building six hundred heavy bombers, the army would disagree; if it said two hundred, the air force would disagree.<sup>32</sup>

The JIG was not in a position to adjudicate these disputes among the military intelligence organizations. In addition to suffering from insufficient authority and resources, it had more compelling responsibilities. For the JIG found itself in the derisory situation of having to serve two onerous masters -- the OSD and the JCS. The needs of the two bodies were dissimilar: the JCS tend to be more concerned with battlefield (that is, tactical) intelligence, while the OSD requires national (that is, strategic) intelligence. These forms of intelligence differ primarily in level of application, although they may also vary in terms of scope and detail. Despite some overlap, strategic intelligence tends to be more capacious: it transcends the exclusive competence of a single service or agency.<sup>33</sup> Hence the needs of the Secretary of Defense for political and economic strategic intelligence are quite different from the tactical intelligence needs of the operating armed forces and the collective JCS. Furthermore, the intelligence processes necessary to provide both forms of finished intelligence are disparate. The requirements of tactical intelligence are communications-intensive: demanding capable, reliable, and secure communications systems; while strategic intelligence tends to be labor-intensive: requiring objective judgments from assiduous analysts.<sup>34</sup> The JIG simply lacked the authority and resources to satisfy the requirements of both groups.

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<sup>31</sup> Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA and American Democracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989, pp. 65-72; John Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986, pp. 191-197.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with William Bundy, 21 July 1983. Quoted in Ranelagh, *The Agency*, pp. 192-93.

<sup>33</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of Military Terms*, p.386, 268.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Andriole, "Basic Intelligence," in Gerald W. Hoppole and Bruce W. Watson, *The Military Intelligence Community*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1986, p. 100.

The deficiencies of the JIG were symptomatic of the larger weaknesses of the JCS system, whose flaws became readily apparent after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. The conflict revealed the JCS machinery to be ponderous and slow, prone to dissension and discord, ill-suited for the bold command decisions essential during wartime. General Douglas MacArthur regarded the system with contempt, while President Truman frequently despaired of it. Truman was particularly dissatisfied with the vital communications intelligence (COMINT) he was receiving through the Air Force Security Agency (AFSA).<sup>35</sup> In 1952 his mounting frustration led him to commission a survey of the American COMINT effort, directed by Herbert Brownell, a special assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force and Harvard-educated lawyer. After an exhaustive six-month review, the Brownell Committee concluded that inter-service rivalry was hindering efforts to consolidate COMINT, implicating both the JCS and the armed services. Consequently, on 4 November 1952, Truman removed signals intelligence (SIGINT) activities (that is, COMINT and ELINT efforts) from the jurisdiction of the JCS and the military departments, centralizing them under the direct authority of the Secretary of Defense in the newly-created National Security Agency (NSA). The director of the NSA was granted extensive operational control over all aspects of SIGINT -- collection, processing, evaluation, and distribution -- and made directly responsible to the Secretary of Defense, who was appointed as the executive agent responsible for SIGINT.<sup>36</sup> The JCS were furious with the arrangement: they believed that their operational jurisdiction had been circumvented and their authority diluted (both assertions were, of course, true). Yet their protests could not obscure their culpability. The JCS were to a great extent responsible for the wartime shortcomings of SIGINT, for they had devoted far too much of their energy to equivocation and safeguarding service autonomies while neglecting the intelligence needs of civilian policymakers. Despite the fact the JIG proved to be ineffectual, the JCS continued to support the organization.

As a result of the failures of the JIG, in 1953 the Office of Special Operations (OSO) was created within the OSD as part of a departmental reorganization. This office was headed by an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations who sat on the National Security Council and was responsible for providing intelligence staff support directly to the Secretary of Defense and his staff. The OSO was enjoined to serve as a point of coordination for Defense intelligence activities and a liaison with civilian intelligence agencies.<sup>37</sup> It was intended that the OSO would replace the JIG in serving the intelligence needs of the Secretary of Defense, thus allowing the JIG to concentrate on the tactical intelligence requirements of the JCS. Yet the OSO found itself in much the same position as the JIG: it was dependent upon the services for raw intelligence but lacked a clear mandate and therefore the power to impel the services to provide this intelligence and to cooperate in joint projects. Like the JIG, the OSO had little success in mediating disputes between the armed services, particularly those concerning threat assessments. Thus, the difficulties surrounding military contributions to the NIEs process endured.

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<sup>35</sup> Mark Perry, *Four Stars*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1989, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> James Bamford, *The Puzzle Palace*. New York: Penguin, 1982, pp. 1-81.

<sup>37</sup> Andregg, *Management of Defense Intelligence*, p. 10.

This dilemma was exacerbated in the mid-nineteen-fifties. The decade was dominated by the dispute within the American intelligence community over the “bomber gap,” later to become the “missile gap.” At heart, the “gaps” were disagreements between the intelligence agencies over Soviet strategic capabilities. A complete examination of this contentious affair is beyond the scope of this chapter; it has been treated at length elsewhere. For our purposes it is sufficient to note that while many arguments have been put forth in support of the Air Force’s overestimates of Soviet nuclear strength (the “gaps”) -- including mirror-imaging, “worst-case” assessments, and the ambiguous nature of the evidence -- most judicious analyses have concluded that the Air Force was engaged in a deliberate exaggeration of Russian strategic capabilities in order to justify increased funding to the department and its strategic programs.<sup>38</sup> The respected military historian Lawrence Freedman concludes:

There seems little doubt that the Air Force from the start was determined to prove the existence of a Soviet [strategic] program of massive proportions, whatever violence the arguments employed did to evidence or logic.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, the intelligence components of the Army and Navy were issuing estimates which predicted a meager Soviet missile program. In a move which appeared to be based on political rather than empirical considerations, the CIA adopted a position of compromise and predicted a modest Soviet buildup, midway between the Air Force and Army/Navy estimates.<sup>40</sup> In effect, the agency “split the difference.” By embracing this diplomatic posture, the CIA once again showed itself to be incapable of taking decisive action to settle inter-agency disputes over critical NIEs. Thus the dispute was prolonged. It was also exacerbated by the fact that it was made public in 1956, during Congressional hearings on the fiscal 1957 budget. Thus, the quarrel within the intelligence community was to acquire political dimensions. In the 1960 Presidential election, the Democrats employed the “missile gap” as a rhetorical rapier to attack Republican defense policies.

A 1958 reorganization of the Defense Department had done little to improve this situation: the reform of military intelligence was largely superfluous. Since a DOD directive had placed the JCS in the military chain of command, the JCS assumed responsibility for the intelligence support of the U&S Commands. Thus the JIG became the J-2 of the Joint Staff. Its manpower and mandate were not substantially altered, however, and it was therefore forced to delegate much of its U&S Commands support responsibilities to the armed services.<sup>41</sup> The JIG frequently failed to resolve disparities between service intelligence estimates (as evidenced in the bomber and missile “gaps”); conflicts

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<sup>38</sup> The “missile gap” is analyzed in myriad works. Among the best are Freedman, *The Soviet Strategic Threat*, pp. 70-89; Prados, *The Soviet Estimate*, pp. 65-116; Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983, pp. 155-57; and Laqueur, *A World of Secrets*, pp. 144-58.

<sup>39</sup> Freedman, *Soviet Strategic Threat*, p. 79.

<sup>40</sup> Freedman, *Soviet Strategic Threat*, p. 80; Confidential interviews, Air Force general and senior CIA official.

<sup>41</sup> Andregg, *Management of Defense Intelligence*, p. 10.

which proved intractable at higher level forums. The highest of these, the USIB, had no more success than the JIG. In the late nineteen-fifties, the deliberations of the USIB, an interdepartmental working group established in 1958 to review NIEs and establish intelligence collection requirements and priorities, were marked by long and bitter controversies over the conflicting bomber and missile estimates.<sup>42</sup> The resolution of these conflicting estimates into a putative NIE was arduous at best. Often, in order to gain the assent of all agencies involved in the estimate, it was necessary to allow individual agencies to file opposing footnotes within the body of the estimate. Consequently, the finished estimates were frequently filled with myriad dissenting footnotes, which effectively undermined the cogency of the document and therefore reduced its influence on senior policymakers.<sup>43</sup> Not surprisingly, the last years of the Eisenhower administration were marked by widespread discontent with NIEs and military intelligence.

This disenchantment, coupled with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko's public claims that American intelligence agencies were exacerbating East-West tensions over Berlin, prompted President Eisenhower to propose a review of the entire American intelligence effort in 1959. At his behest, the Bureau of the Budget (BOB) increased its review of the size and the scope of U.S. intelligence activities. Moreover, the BOB proposed two studies designed to thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of the present intelligence system, yet the intransigence of the military to these studies resulted in their postponement and eventual cancellation.<sup>44</sup>

The U-2 Affair of May, 1960, served as a catalyst to revive calls for a review of the American intelligence effort and set in motion a chain of events which culminated in the establishment of the DIA in 1961. The downing of a secret American U-2 reconnaissance aircraft over the Soviet Union and the subsequent capture of its pilot Francis Powers resulted in widespread criticism of the covert surveillance activities of the United States.<sup>45</sup> The failure of the intelligence community to make the "cover story" credible and thereby validate "plausible deniability" convinced the Eisenhower administration that the time had come to examine the possibility of consolidating the general intelligence activities of the military departments (defined rather clumsily as all "non-SIGINT, nonoverhead, non organic activities").<sup>46</sup> It was thought that this consolidation might improve coordination within the espionage community in order to prevent the occurrence of a similar incident and facilitate the formulation of NIEs. Many senior civilian officials believed that the consolidation of

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<sup>42</sup> USIB replaced the Intelligence Advisory Board (established in 1947) and the United States Communications Intelligence Board (established in 1946). In NIE disputes Air Force officers were renowned to be the most vicious bureaucratic combatants. One participant observed: "In estimate battles with SAC you put your hands over your balls because that is where would hit you." Confidential interview with BNE official.

<sup>43</sup> Prados, *The Soviet Estimate*, p. 122.

<sup>44</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Real CIA*, pp. 205-206; and McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 210.

<sup>45</sup> Arthur Lundahl of the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) recalled that the months following the downing of Power's U-2 were "full of finger-pointing and turbulence." Quoted in Seymour Hersh, *The Sampson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*. New York: Random House, 1991, p. 74.

<sup>46</sup> Church Committee. (I) p. 325.

military intelligence was long overdue: that intelligence, like the command and support functions, should be removed from the service domains and made more responsive to the authority of the OSD.<sup>47</sup>

Following the U-2 Affair President Eisenhower established an interagency study group, named the Joint Study Group on the Foreign Intelligence Activities of the United States, to examine the American intelligence effort and make recommendations to improve its performance. The Joint Study Group (JSG) operated under the auspices of the Director of Central Intelligence and was chaired by the CIA Inspector General Lyman Kirkpatrick, Jr. Kirkpatrick was an intense, driven man, crippled by polio and confined to a wheelchair. Appointed as Inspector General in 1953 and charged with investigating policy and performance, his tenure at the post was marked by controversy, culminating in 1961 when Kirkpatrick authored the CIA's controversial in-house post-mortem of the Bay of Pigs operation. The demands of the independent office were such that Thomas Powers remarked, "It was probably inevitable that no man would leave the CIA with more personal enemies than Lyman Kirkpatrick."<sup>48</sup> The Joint Study Group he oversaw was composed of representatives from the State Department, the White House, the DOD, the BOB, and the CIA.<sup>49</sup> The group examined U.S. intelligence activities throughout the summer and fall of 1960, paying particular attention to military intelligence as its terms of reference directed it to explore:

The present military intelligence coordination machinery and its relationship to the intelligence community -- with particular attention to possibilities for closer integration under the authority of the DOD Reorganization Act of 1958.<sup>50</sup>

In mid-October, 1960, the Joint Study Group indicated to the administration that they believed that the American espionage community required greater centralization, particularly the military intelligence agencies, "including greater integration of intelligence activities and the elimination of unnecessary duplication."<sup>51</sup> This finding surprised few of the President's senior advisors; most were convinced that a reorganization of the intelligence apparatus was long overdue. Yet there was considerable disagreement within the administration over the best means by which to effect the impending JSG recommendations. President Eisenhower personally believed the answer was to create a large military central intelligence agency within the Joint Staff. This belief was based on his conviction that the JCS should be given more power with which to focus on their joint "national" responsibilities. Eisenhower hoped that this solution would mitigate the tendency of the JCS to identify their service interests with the national interest. Nonetheless, he acknowledged to his close advisors that military

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<sup>47</sup> Prados, *The Soviet Estimate*, p. 123.

<sup>48</sup> Powers, *Man Who Kept the Secrets*, p. 119.

<sup>49</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Real CIA*, p. 216.

<sup>50</sup> Joint Study Group, "Terms of Reference," 12 July 1960 (No declassification date), p. 3. DDERS: 1980-341-a.

<sup>51</sup> National Security Council, "Considerations and Objectives Involved in Achieving Closer Integration of Foreign Intelligence Activities Within the Department of Defense," 21 October 1960 (Declassified April 29, 1988), p. 10. DDERS: 1988-2274.

intelligence reform would be problematic, asserting "the hardest thing to destroy in this world is entrenched bureaucracy and [the military] intelligence agencies are among the worst."<sup>52</sup>

At the request of the President, his staff examined two alternative proposals for intelligence reform: vesting coordinating responsibility of *all* intelligence activities (including those of the armed services and the Defense Department) in the DCI or installing coordinating responsibility for the Defense Department in a new government agency or official. There was considerable debate within the administration over whether new legislation would be required to implement these alternatives, or whether the existing legislation (the National Security Act, as amended) would suffice.<sup>53</sup>

The debate ended in October 1960, when the National Security Council (NSC) concluded that the ability of the DCI to "exercise strong, centralized direction" within the Defense Department was limited to national (that is, strategic) intelligence. Since the DCI did not possess statutory authority over departmental intelligence, he had no control over the service intelligence efforts. As the DCI was unable to reorganize and direct the military intelligence community, the NSC suggested an alternative:

Under the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958, the Secretary of Defense is empowered to take the necessary steps (other than a merger of the services) to provide for efficient administration and "to eliminate duplication" within Defense. [Quotations in original document]<sup>54</sup>

It is important to note the emphasis on redundancy. In effect, the memorandum suggests that the Secretary of Defense is legally empowered to enact virtually any reorganization (in this instance, that of intelligence) provided that the ostensible justification is "to eliminate duplication." Recall that Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates had used this provision of the National Security Act (the so-called McCormack-Curtis Amendment), to establish the Defense Communications Agency on May 12, 1960. Curiously, there was little Congressional or military resistance to its creation. It is reasonable to assume that the implications of this consolidation were not lost on civilians in the OSD -- that the Defense Department could be further reorganized and centralized under existing legislation. The above memorandum is indicative of the shift in consensus that occurred in late 1960 among senior officials in the Eisenhower administration: that the authority for further reorganization need not come from outside the Department of Defense (that is, Congress), but that it could come from within (that is, the OSD). Whereas in 1958 civilians in OSD had turned to Congress for the legislative authority to enact Defense Department reorganization, in late 1960, many believed that OSD possessed the necessary authority to enact reform on its own. This was an important shift in perspective, for the new administration would inherit this thinking.

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<sup>52</sup> Goodpaster, "Memorandum of Conference With the President," 11 October 1960 (Declassified December 18, 1978), p. 3. DDRS: 1979-168-a.

<sup>53</sup> NSC, "Considerations and Objectives Involved in Achieving Closer Integration of Foreign Intelligence Activities Within the Department of Defense," pp. 9-10.

<sup>54</sup> National Security Council, "Closer Integration of Foreign Intelligence Activities Within the Department of Defense," 25 October 1960 (Declassified April 29, 1988), pp. 2-3. DDRS: 1988-2775.

Ironically, an advisory committee set up by President-elect Kennedy immediately after the presidential election of 1960 to examine the prospects for the further reorganization of the Defense Department, the Kennedy Committee on the Defense Establishment, reached the contrary conclusion. In its 5 December 1960, report to the President-elect, the committee, led by Senator Stuart Symington, put forth its assessment that previous legislation had failed to give the OSD the executive power needed to exercise the full control over the Defense Department. Noting that there was considerable disagreement within the government and academia as to whether present legislation provided a statutory basis for the Secretary of Defense to exert complete authority over the entire Defense Department, including the traditional activities of the armed services, the committee's final report asserted: "It is the conclusion of this Committee that the doctrine of civilian control will be compromised as long as any doubts exist on this vital point."<sup>55</sup> The report censured the military departments, remarking, "the present multiple layers of control and overlapping among military programs and operations [is] caused by steadily increasing inter-service rivalry." "In short," the report concluded, "there is a clear need for a defense interest rather than particular service interest."<sup>56</sup> The Symington Committee recommended the passage of radical legislation to eliminate the separate armed services and buttress the powers of OSD in order "to make the Secretary of Defense the civilian official in the DOD with unquestioned authority and control over all elements of the DOD at all levels." [Emphasis in original document.]<sup>57</sup> In submitting these recommendations for extreme reform, the Kennedy Committee on the Defense Establishment rejected the traditional pluralistic structure of the Defense Department in favor of the single manager concept, the dominant organizational paradigm in business and industry in the early nineteen-sixties. In so doing, the motive of the committee was not wholly philanthropic; political considerations played a vital role. Committee member Clark Clifford (subsequently the transition advisor to Kennedy) later remarked:

We went much further in the direction of unification of the services than was politically feasible, but this was deliberate: both Symington and I, remembering the brutal battles of 1946-49, felt that a group as tangential to the process as ours could make an impact only if it consciously overstated its recommendations. To get half a loaf, as I suggested in our first meeting, we needed to ask for a whole loaf.<sup>58</sup>

As hoped, the President-elect was strongly influenced by the report of the committee. In his search for a Secretary of Defense he would seek a strong executive to "restart the engines of reform" within the Defense Department.

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<sup>55</sup> United States Senate. Committee on the Defense Establishment (Symington Committee), *Report to Senator Kennedy on the Defense Establishment*. 5 December 1960. Washington: GPO, 1960, p.4. Stuart Symington chaired the committee; other members were Clark Clifford, Thomas Finletter, Roswell Gilpatric, Fowler Hamilton, and Marx Leva. Apparently, a law degree was the prerequisite for admission.

<sup>56</sup> Symington Committee, pp. 6-7.

<sup>57</sup> Symington Committee, pp. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 330.

## Apprehension at the Air Force, 1960

While talk of military reform swept through Washington, one military department prepared for retrenchment. In 1960, the Air Force believed itself to be under siege. Though the previous decade had been a prosperous one for the service, both in terms of appropriations and prestige, nascent trends were ominous. The “missile gap” had damaged the Air Force’s credibility, and once-benevolent supporters were casting a skeptical eye on its intelligence estimates and budget requests. Moreover, changes in intelligence collection systems, American nuclear forces, and strategic deterrence doctrine threatened the position of the Air Force as the dominant service in the American defense establishment.

In the late nineteen-fifties the Air Force lost a consequential battle over control of the innovative U-2 project to the CIA. The loss was significant, for the Air Force had long regarded strategic reconnaissance as its sole prerogative, an essential activity in support of ordnance targeting. General Curtis LeMay, the commander of Strategic Air Command (SAC) -- ward of the nation’s nuclear arsenal -- fought the CIA (in the persons of DCI Allen Dulles and his special assistant Richard Bissell) for jurisdiction over this experimental plane, contending that the relation between reconnaissance and targeting was so intimate that the tasks could not be effectively separated, and therefore should remain under military (that is, Air Force) control.<sup>59</sup> The irascible LeMay had commanded the Twenty-first Bomber Command at the end of the Second World War, and was responsible for planning the conventional and fire-bombing of Japan. Appointed Commander of SAC in 1948, he was an ardent advocate of air power. Prominently displayed on the walls of his office at SAC headquarters was a quote from a 1949 speech of the former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Mid-Century Convocation: “For good or ill, air mastery is today the supreme expression of military power, and fleets and armies, however necessary and important, must accept subordinate rank.”<sup>60</sup> The quote embodies the general’s firm convictions. Like fleets and armies, LeMay viewed national intelligence as ancillary to the strategic intelligence requirements of the Air Force.<sup>61</sup> Whereas the CIA saw in the U-2 vast opportunities for gathering not only military, but economic and political intelligence on other nations, the Air Force envisaged the aircraft primarily as reconnaissance platform to service its targeting needs.<sup>62</sup> The CIA ultimately prevailed in this contest for control of the plane, largely because Allen Dulles provided the funding for the project (estimated by the Air Force to be at least \$22 million) from the DCI’s “black” (that is,

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<sup>59</sup> As General LeMay frequently told his SAC crews: “There are only two things in this world, SAC bases and SAC targets.” Quoted in Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, p. 265.

<sup>60</sup> Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p. 43.

<sup>61</sup> LeMay’s conviction that strategic intelligence should primarily be employed in support of SAC targeting is illustrated in the joke among aviators: “Moses came down the mountain followed by LeMay with the ‘Big Pig’ (i.e. the Basic Intelligence Planning Guide) and a SAC supplement.” Quoted in Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, p. 265.

<sup>62</sup> See Desmond Ball and Jeffrey Richelson, *Strategic Nuclear Targeting*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986; William E. Burrows, *Deep Black: Space Espionage and National Security*. New York: Random House, 1986, pp. 64-66; Powers, *Man Who Kept the Secrets*, pp. 107-109.

covert) treasury.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, Air Force Chief of Staff General Nathan Twining and Allen Dulles signed an agreement that the project would be directed by the CIA; SAC's role was limited to support and technical assistance. The project bore fruit quickly, due in no small part to Bissell's strategic vision and administrative prowess. An operational wing of four U-2 planes was deployed in Turkey in May 1956; the first flight over the Soviet Union was authorized by Eisenhower the following month. By the time of the U-2 Affair of May, 1960, over two hundred flights had been flown over the Soviet heartland.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the success of the U-2 project, many in the Air Force were convinced that a dangerous precedent had been established. They feared that civilian control of strategic reconnaissance might result in the neglect of military requirements. The CIA's proclivity to satisfy the intelligence requirements of civilian policymakers before those of military planners and theater commanders was well known. Thus the military was loathe to place vital intelligence assets in the hands of the civilian agency, whose objectives and, more importantly, "consumers" (that is, the specific policymakers who are the audience for a given intelligence product) were dissimilar.<sup>65</sup> The officers feared that SAC readiness might suffer, and so leave the United States vulnerable to a Soviet first strike. This fear was not an apparition: a series of RAND studies, commissioned by the Air Force, had made SAC vulnerability the critical defense issue of the mid-fifties.<sup>66</sup> The topic became one of public debate after the Gaither Report was leaked to the press in 1957, fueling speculation that the Soviets were on the verge of first-strike capability and thereby abetting advocates of the "missile gap." Given the military's preoccupation with the alleged Soviet strategic buildup, it is not surprising that the Air Force regarded civilian control of reconnaissance with apprehension and foreboding. When the successor system to the U-2, the Discoverer/Corona satellite, (also originally an Air Force project taken over by the CIA) came of age in the early nineteen-sixties, the Air Force felt that it could no longer stand idle and initiated what would become a brutal bureaucratic war of attrition with the CIA for control of the American technical intelligence collection effort. Yet that struggle lay in the future. In 1960, the Air Force could only watch the CIA's efforts with a mixture of jealousy and dread.

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<sup>63</sup> For an account of the evolution and abuse of secret funding see Tim Weiner, *Blank Check: The Pentagon's Black Budget*. New York: Warner, 1990.

<sup>64</sup> Jeffrey-Jones, *CIA and American Democracy*, pp. 107-108; Laqueur, *A World of Secrets*, pp. 144-45.

<sup>65</sup> Historically, priority has been placed on getting timely and accurate intelligence to those at the highest levels of US government (that is, senior civilian policymakers). The result is that the needs of the military theater commanders, often more immediate and compelling, are often given secondary consideration. This is particularly true in the case of SIGINT, PHOTOINT, and imagery analysis. This tendency for intelligence to "congeal at the top" has received scant attention in contemporary literature. Yet this preoccupation with strategic intelligence at the expense of tactical has very real dangers, not the least of which is to handicap field commanders, exposing them to dependence and control from distant superiors. For this insight, I am particularly thankful to Capt. Richard Bates (Ret.), who patiently guided me through the subject. Interview, 12 May 1992.

<sup>66</sup> The most influential of these studies, championed by the nuclear theorist Albert Wohlstetter were [1953] RAND Report R-244-5; [1954] RAND Report R-266 "Selection and Use of Strategic Air Bases"; and [1956] Staff Reports R-290 "Protecting US Power to Strike Back in the 1950's and 1960's." See Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, pp. 102-154.

As technological advances threatened the role of the Air Force in strategic reconnaissance, so too were they rendering vulnerable the service's traditional hegemony over American nuclear forces. The Navy's successful test fire of a nuclear-capable missile from a submerged submarine in July of 1960 heralded the triumph of the Navy's Polaris program and the end of the Air Force's monopoly on strategic nuclear weapons. With the successful test fire, the Navy immediately became a formidable competitor for strategic appropriations. Well aware of the magnitude of this threat, the Air Staff did not stand by idly. In a bold bureaucratic maneuver in the spring of 1959, the Air Force sought to preempt its rival by proposing that a single strategic command composed of a joint staff be established under SAC to integrate all American strategic force planning and operations, including, of course, the Polaris program. The ostensible rationale for the proposal was to eliminate the possibility of target duplication among military planners, but the Army and Navy were quick to see the true intent of the Air Staff: to maintain Air Force dominance over US nuclear power. The Army and Navy mounted a determined resistance, arguing that the realm of target planning and service coordination properly belonged to the JCS, and thus strategic command functions should be performed under its aegis.<sup>67</sup> A fierce inter-service melee ensued, wherein the JCS found itself deeply divided and unable to formulate a workable compromise. Ultimately the matter was decided by the personal intervention of President Eisenhower, who endorsed the Air Staff's proposal over the vehement protests of Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Arleigh Burke. Subsequently, on 16 August 1960, Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates publicly announced the creation of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff (JSTPS). The JSTPS was assigned the task of developing a National Strategic Target List and devising a Single Integrated Operating Plan (SIOP): essentially the nation's blueprint for general nuclear war.<sup>68</sup> There was little doubt that the JSTPS was a creature of the Air Force: its director, General Thomas Powers, was the commander of SAC (although Rear Admiral Edward M. Parker was chosen as his deputy), it was located at SAC Headquarters in Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, and 228 of the assigned 269 personnel came from the service. Thus the Air Force narrowly preserved its preeminence in strategic nuclear matters.

Yet cause for celebration proved short-lived. The November 1960 presidential election brought a new democratic administration into power, one determined to separate itself from the alleged failed military policies of the past. These declarations were not merely rhetorical; rather they signified a profound distinction in strategic thinking. The incoming administration viewed the Eisenhower strategy of "massive retaliation" with contempt, perceiving this "all or nothing" approach to nuclear deterrence to be strategically inflexible and politically naive. Instead, the Kennedy disciples believed that a more diversified force structure was desirable to cope with the wide range of possible nuclear and

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<sup>67</sup> The Army sided with the Navy in the conflict because it was concerned about the possibility of losing control of its tactical nuclear weapons, at the time deployed in forward areas, notably West Germany.

<sup>68</sup> Ball and Richelson, *Strategic Nuclear Targeting*, p. 18; Thomas Powers, "Choosing a Strategy for World War III." *The Atlantic* (November 1982). The creation of JSTPS is treated in Strategic Air Command. Office of the Historian, *The Development of Strategic Air Command, 1946-1986*. Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, 1986, p. 90. Also see McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years*. New York: Vintage, 1988. pp. 321-22; Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, pp. 263-70; and Hadley, *Straw Giant*, p. 138.

non-nuclear conflicts, in order to provide Washington policymakers with a broader choice of options. They therefore espoused the “flexible response” doctrine that then was being advocated by Army generals Matthew Ridgway, James Gavin, and Maxwell Taylor.<sup>69</sup> This policy required a substantial buildup of conventional forces in order to cope with the brush-fire conflicts which were commonly believed to be the wars of the future. To the Air Force, the implications of this change in strategy were lucid: funding for the Army’s conventional forces would increase, probably at the expense of the Air Force’s nuclear programs. The adoption of the new doctrine meant that the atomic arsenal of the Air Force would no longer be the nation’s primary deterrence force; the arsenal was relegated to being co-equal with Army and Navy forces. To the Air Force the implications were clear: it was destined to fight petty program battles for scarce appropriations. The balance of power at the Pentagon was shifting away from the Air Force. Many of its officers viewed the prospect with alarm, and began to search for means to restore the preeminence of the service. They would ultimately discover respite in the Report of the Joint Study Group.

## The Report of the Joint Study Group, 1960

On December 15, 1960, the Report of the Joint Study Group (also called the Kirkpatrick Report, after its chairman) was submitted to the Eisenhower administration. As expected, the report was critical of the military intelligence system, branding it “duplicatory and cumbersome.” It highlighted the failure of the JIG to serve as a “focal point” for the Secretary of Defense and to effectively coordinate national intelligence estimates.<sup>70</sup> The report noted that the failures of military intelligence were indicative of the disarray of the American espionage effort in general. The Joint Study Group concluded that this disorder was the result of the absence of central authority within the intelligence system. The report dwelled on the failure of the USIB to direct intelligence operations and integrate the estimative process, characterizing its role as “deliberative” rather than “coordinating.” The report suggested that the Board was incapable of exerting greater influence over the intelligence community because the representatives of the military departments, who composed six of the Board’s ten members,

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<sup>69</sup> See Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet*. New York: Harper, 1960.

<sup>70</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Joint Study Group on the Foreign Intelligence Activities of the United States Government,” 15 December 1950 (Declassified 1 February 1977) p. 24. DDRS: 1989-3120 through 3130. The JSG met 90 times, received 51 briefings, and interviewed 320 individuals. The final report ran over 140 pages, covering a broad range of topics from Collection Resources to the Costs of Foreign Intelligence; the declassified version is heavily sanitized.

opposed a potent USIB and blocked all efforts to augment its authority and jurisdiction.<sup>71</sup> Since the military faction was formidable, often forming a majority, it was typically successful in its endeavors to limit the power of the USIB over the intelligence organizations, and thus the military departments effectively preserved the autonomy of their intelligence components against encroachment from exterior direction. In order to rectify the deficient system, the report recommended that the DCI exert greater authority over foreign intelligence activities, advised and assisted by a reorganized USIB. The Joint Study Group proposed that the membership of the USIB would be reduced from ten to four; the lean USIB would be composed of the DCI, and representatives of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the JCS (with ad hoc representation from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Atomic Energy Commission).<sup>72</sup> Under this proposal, military representation on the Board would be reduced from six to two, as the roles of the intelligence chiefs of the armed services, the director of the NSA, and the J-2 were downgraded from participant to observer; thereafter they would be represented by the JCS member. Thus the influence of military would be diluted on the USIB, enabling the Board to assume a more dynamic management role. The USIB was to be the principal coordinating mechanism to assist the DCI in coordinating American intelligence operations.<sup>73</sup>

Although a potent USIB was the centerpiece of the Joint Study Group, the report offered additional recommendations aimed at centralizing the military intelligence effort, by strengthening the authority of the JCS in operational matters and establishing within OSD a "focal point for exerting broad management review authority" over all Defense Department intelligence assets.<sup>74</sup> This focal point would coordinate defense intelligence operations, consolidate requirements and evaluation, and represent the department on a revitalized USIB. The chairman of the Joint Study Group, Lyman Kirkpatrick, Jr., remarked:

The report had not specifically, in so many words, recommended the creation of the Defense Intelligence Agency, but had made recommendations directed toward streamlining the military intelligence system in order to reorganize it, as the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958 had streamlined and modernized the command and operations system.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> In 1960 the USIB was composed of the following regular members: the Director of Central Intelligence; the Director of Intelligence and Research, State Department; a representative of the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; a representative of the Director of the Atomic Energy Commission; the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations; Director of Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Air Force; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Army; the Assistant to the Chief of Naval Operations for Intelligence, Navy; and the Director of the NSA. The latter six were judged to be military members. Other government departments and agencies were included according to subject at the discretion of the chair.

<sup>72</sup> Joint Study Group, p. 114.

<sup>73</sup> Joint Study Group, p. 98.

<sup>74</sup> Joint Study Group, pp. 31-33. Other significant recommendations included NSA reform, the establishment of a photographic center of common concern (NPIC), and the formation of an autonomous Intelligence Community Staff under the aegis of the DCI.

<sup>75</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Real CIA*, p. 225.

Kirkpatrick accurately places the report of the Joint Study Group in historical perspective: it was not an anomaly, but rather it represented the latest in a long series of attempts to effect greater centralization within the Defense Department. The military intelligence components had managed to escape past consolidations, due not to negligence, but to the resolute bureaucratic resistance of the services to any attempt to encroach upon their sacrosanct intelligence elements. They were motivated neither by pride nor contempt, but by simple organizational self-interest and the sincere belief that autonomous military service intelligence elements were intrinsic to maintaining American military strength. However in early 1961, it appeared that they could resist the tides of change no longer. The National Security Council endorsed the recommendations of the Joint Study Group on 18 January 1961, and called for the implementation of its forty-eight recommendations as swiftly as possible. Outgoing Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates provided the JCS with a copy of the Joint Study Group report in January 1961 and asked the military leaders to consider specific ways and means of consolidating their intelligence functions, particularly in the strategic field, in accordance with its recommendations.<sup>76</sup> Yet the JCS were not able to complete their evaluation of the report before the Kennedy administration entered office on 20 January 1961, thus leaving the future of the Joint Study Group's recommendations in doubt. Would the new administration endorse the report's findings? The military was uncertain, yet prepared for the worst. As the new administration replaced the old, the Pentagon readied itself to battle for the most jealously-guarded military fiefdom, that of intelligence.

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<sup>76</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, p. 6814.

## Chapter Two

### Creation

#### A Creature of Compromise

Following the recommendations of the Joint Study Group a reorganization of military intelligence was ineluctable. The issue of contention was one degree: to what extent would the military espionage community be centralized? Based on his review of American intelligence operations, management philosophy, and the strategic and budgetary requirements of his office, the new Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara favored a radical reorganization, culminating in the creation of a powerful consolidated defense intelligence agency. The military leadership, encumbered by tradition and riven by inter-service rivalries, desired the establishment of a weak coordinating body, beholden to the venerable military departments. The dialectic between two concepts ultimately produced the Defense Intelligence Agency. The synthesis was not equable, however, for the interests of the JCS prevailed over the aspirations of the Secretary of Defense, as this chapter shall demonstrate. The first two sections of the chapter explore the motives and objectives of Robert McNamara and his civilian staff; the third their evaluations and ambitions for the military intelligence effort. Therein the prominence of strategic intelligence in their designs will be highlighted. The fourth section investigates the perspectives and initiatives of the military leadership. The fifth examines the conflict between the two factions over the proposed agency; the last, its resolution.

#### Robert S. McNamara and Active Management

In his search for a Secretary of Defense, President-elect John Kennedy was strongly influenced by the report of the Symington which called for a dynamic chief executive to head the cantankerous department. Upon the recommendation of Robert Lovett, the Wall Street banker who served as the Assistant Secretary of War for Air under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy appointed Robert S. McNamara, the supremely rational technocrat, to be the eighth Secretary of Defense. In 1960, McNamara was the foremost practitioner of the new management technique which has come to be known as "active management," applying its methodology with spectacular success first at the Air Force during the Second World War under Charles Thornton, and later at the Ford Motor Company.

His achievement at Ford was unparalleled: he and his fellow disciples of modern analytical methods (who would eventually become known as the "Whiz Kids") transformed Ford from an aging, inefficient dinosaur into a streamlined, competitive giant in the automotive industry. In the process, McNamara emerged as the preeminent Whiz Kid and rose quickly within Ford, eventually becoming the president. He relinquished this position after a mere month to accept the office offered to him by the President-elect: the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Kennedy was able to lure McNamara away from his lucrative position at Ford by offering him a challenge of Herculean proportions: that of converting the Defense Department from a paragon of waste and inefficiency into an efficient and cost-effective department. McNamara accepted the office on the conditions that he be allowed to choose his own men to staff the Defense Department and that he be allowed to study the controversial Symington Committee Report and personally decide if the radical reorganization of the DOD it recommended was necessary. Kennedy agreed and gave his new Secretary of Defense a single directive: "to determine and provide what we needed to safeguard our security without arbitrary budget limits, but to do so as economically as possible."<sup>1</sup> This directive was a consequence of Kennedy's campaign strategy. During the presidential election Kennedy had harshly criticized the Eisenhower administration's defense policies, utilizing the "missile gap" claims to support his assertions that America had lost its strategic superiority and implying that Eisenhower had "gone soft" on communism. Thus, upon winning the White House, Kennedy was pledged to overhaul the Defense Department and restore America's strategic superiority. McNamara was charged with fulfilling this commitment.

McNamara relished the challenge. The Second World War and the Cold War had transformed the Defense Department from a modest military institution into a voracious leviathan; a sprawling autonomous organism, seemingly beyond the control of one man. If there was ever a man to meet this challenge it was Robert McNamara, for, above all, Robert McNamara was a man of control. He was, in many ways, the precursor of the modern business manager, men not associated with line production (as the managers of old tended to be), but with cost accountancy.<sup>2</sup> As an outsider, McNamara challenged the prevailing powers -- first in Detroit, then in Washington -- with ruthless determination, rigid discipline, and intellectual certitude. An apostle of modern financial techniques, he brought a formidable new weapon into the bureaucratic melee: statistical analysis. Numbers were his life-blood. They defined him. With statistics he believed he could bring coherence to confusion, summon order out of chaos. They were his means of control. For McNamara, insofar as was possible, everything was to be quantified; made amenable to analysis, manipulation, and systematic interpretation. Emotion and intuition were reviled. Reason and empiricism were honored. In McNamara's universe, order and logic always prevailed.

McNamara set out to conquer the Pentagon in much the same way that he had triumphed at Ford: hire the best staff, commission detailed studies, generate relevant databases, correlate and assess, decide

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<sup>1</sup> Robert S. McNamara, *The Essence of Security: Reflections in Office*. New York: Harper and Row, 1968, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> See David Halberstam, *The Reckoning*. New York: Avon, 1986.

and implement. His assumption was that the art of war was little different from the production of goods. It was simply a matter of the proper quantification, the proper analysis. As McNamara himself stated:

I am sure that no significant military problem will ever be wholly susceptible to purely quantitative analysis. But every piece of the total problem that can be quantitatively analyzed removes one more piece of uncertainty from our process of making a choice. There are many factors which cannot be adequately quantified and which therefore must be supplemented with judgment seasoned by experience. Furthermore, experience is necessary to determine the relevant questions with which to proceed with any analysis.<sup>3</sup>

The remark is revealing. To McNamara's way of thinking, only quantitative analysis is certain, other means are equivocal and ephemeral. Military experience is not valued on its own; rather it serves as a poor substitute in the absence of statistics. One suspects that if McNamara could have fully quantified military matters, he would have preferred to discount military professionalism all together. (Indeed, by the mid-1960s the military brass was openly accusing him of this longing.)

In combination with statistical analysis, McNamara believed that the introduction of a new form of management would allow him to achieve an unprecedented level of control in the Defense Department. The management strategy he sought to implement has been described as "active management." Two of McNamara's disciples, Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, summarized it as "decision making based on explicit criteria related to the national interest, as opposed to decision making by compromise among various institutions and parochial interests."<sup>4</sup> Essentially, the concepts of rationality and civilian control were taken to their ultimate application. With regard to the latter, James M. Roherty characterized "active management" thus:

It puts the Secretary of Defense firmly in control of the overall process of decision-making which can be summarized as follows: a policy framework is set by the Secretary of Defense; much of the data base is provided by the secretary; judgments are made by the secretary. In a word, power is concentrated in the Secretary of Defense under a philosophy of active management.<sup>5</sup>

McNamara's predilection to introduce this form of management, the one which served him so well at Ford, into the Pentagon was reinforced during the transition period. Immediately after accepting the offer of the office from the President-elect in late 1960, McNamara consulted defense experts and former DOD officials on the current state of the Pentagon. Outgoing Secretary of Defense Thomas

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<sup>3</sup> Quote from Trewhitt, *McNamara*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969*. New York: Harper and Row, 1969, p. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Roherty, *Decisions of Robert McNamara*, pp. 70-71.

Gates warned him that the "missile gaps" were illusory and that a consolidation of the military intelligence function might be desirable. When contemplating reorganization, Gates advised his successor to seriously consider the recommendations of the Joint Study Group and to examine a Pentagon study titled "The Air University Black Book of Reorganization Papers." The latter, echoing the views of many senior officials late in the Eisenhower administration, contended that the Secretary of Defense had extensive authority under the National Security Act, of which much had not yet been exploited.<sup>6</sup> Both were critical in influencing the new Secretary of Defense not to seek new legislation for further reorganizations of the Defense Department (thus tabling the Symington Committee Report) and to implement his "active management" concept. McNamara would later state:

From the beginning in January, 1961, it seemed to me that the principal problem in efficient management of the Department's resources was not the lack of management authority. The National Security Act provides the Secretary of Defense a full measure of power. The problem was rather the absence of the essential management tools needed to make sound decisions on the really crucial issues of national security.<sup>7</sup>

The McNamara management philosophy was a radical departure from the traditional bureaucratic bargaining method of policy formulation which had reigned in the Pentagon since the department's inception. As such, it was certain to foster resentment and spark controversy.

## The Whiz Kids

Although Kennedy had agreed to the provision that McNamara be allowed to choose his own staff, he did "suggest" certain candidates. One of the suggestions was the New York lawyer Roswell L. Gilpatric for the position of Deputy Secretary of Defense. Gilpatric had served on President-elect's transition studies on the defense establishment, the Symington Committee and the Jackson Committee (the latter was primarily policy-oriented), and had favorably impressed the Kennedy men. Like McNamara, Gilpatric had served in the Air Force, first as an Assistant Secretary (Material) and then as Undersecretary of the Air Force during the Korean War. Although he returned to private practice after the war, he remained active in national security politics, and was a member of the Rockefeller Panel Report of 1958 which censured the JCS system.

Originally a supporter of the system of separate armed services, Gilpatric's views had changed during his tenure at the Pentagon. His positions in the Air Force during the Korean War had allowed him to witness first-hand the deleterious effects of inter-service rivalry on the war effort. He recalls

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<sup>6</sup> Kinnard, *Secretary of Defense*, p. 86.

<sup>7</sup> McNamara, *Essence of Security*, p. 88.



that during the conflict JCS deliberations over appropriations for rival major weapons systems were marked by such bitter feuding that, in one instance, funding was decided by the flip of a dime.<sup>8</sup> Experiences such as this ultimately caused him to become a proponent of the unification of the armed services. Subsequently, Gilpatric was persuaded by former Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett that this objective was unrealistic in the political climate of the nineteen-fifties and therefore the only practical means for civilians to exert greater authority over the services was through the control of appropriations. He held this view in 1960, when he was approached by McNamara. Gilpatric quickly decided that active management was a step in the right direction.

Within two weeks of accepting the offer from Kennedy, McNamara selected Gilpatric to be his Deputy Secretary of Defense, beginning a close collaboration which would last for over four years. McNamara viewed the Deputy Secretary as a junior partner: that he should share the trust and authority of the Secretary as he must often stand in his stead. Gilpatric performed well in this role and, not surprisingly, became a close confidant of McNamara. In fact, many viewed Gilpatric as McNamara's alter-ego: where McNamara was detached and distant, Gilpatric was amiable and affable. There was an element of "good cop" versus "bad cop" in the symbiosis, yet the practical result was that Gilpatric became the informal mediator of disputes within the department. It was a role for which Gilpatric was well-suited: his congenial manner concealed an astute sense of judgment combined with keen political instincts. McNamara, at times lacking in sociable temperament and political savvy, derived great benefit from the counsels of Gilpatric.

In the McNamara management concept, the Comptroller of the DOD was a critical office, as it became a repository of vital military information. After much deliberation, McNamara rejected the traditional appointment of an accountant to the post. Instead he offered the position to Charles J. Hitch, the director of the Economics Division at the RAND (Research and Development) Corporation, the Air Force brain trust. Hitch reluctantly accepted. It was an appointment of great significance for two reasons. First, Hitch introduced the new science of systems analysis to the Pentagon which had been pioneered at RAND. Based on the work of Edward Paxon, it was essentially a refinement of the operational research studies of the Second World War, commissioned to assess the efficacy of selected weapons and to recommend their most effective use. McNamara himself had employed this technique in the Statistical Control Division of the Air Force (then a component of the Department of the Army) during World War II. After the war, McNamara and his disciples modified and applied the methodology in work for Ford, but the theorists at RAND continued to apply the concepts of statistical control to modern warfare. Systems analysis was the next logical step in the evolution of the methodology. Whereas operational research focused on a specific weapon, systems analysis had a more expansive framework: it explored the foundations of the American military establishment, examining the missions of the armed services to ascertain the types of weapon systems required and to determine those most effective. Cost/benefit analysis reached new heights. In effect, the statisticians evolved from efficiency experts to become military planners in their own right.<sup>9</sup> To implement this methodology in the Pentagon, Hitch persuaded Alain C. Enthoven, a former operations research analyst at RAND, to

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<sup>8</sup> Anecdote from Hadley, *Straw Giant*, p. 112. Confirmed in interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>9</sup> Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, pp. 86-87.

accept the newly-created post of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis. Under Enthoven's administration, the Office of Systems Analysis (OSA) became a bastion of civilian power in the McNamara Pentagon. Due to the close collaboration between Hitch and Enthoven, OSA achieved a virtual monopoly on information concerning the American military effort. This allowed its analysts to generate statistical studies that were difficult for the armed services to challenge, as the departments at the time were data-starved and statistically unsophisticated. Enthoven later wrote that McNamara's Pentagon "operated under the theory that information was power." By controlling access to military information, OSA eventually became the preeminent bureaucratic player in the McNamara Defense Department.

The second consequence of the Hitch appointment was that a group of young civilian intellectuals, many of them RAND graduates, followed the new comptroller into the Pentagon. Filling many of the lower level appointments, they were confident and brash, eager to gather data and test novel theories. It was no surprise that the new "whiz kids" quickly ran afoul of the military brass.<sup>10</sup> Anecdotes of confrontations between these young civilians and military officers are legion.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, they proved to be an important source of information for the new secretary and his staff. Their persistent, probing inquiries frequently led them to uncover data which was not communicated through formal channels. In fact, they formed an clandestine intelligence system for the civilians in OSD.

McNamara appointed Cyrus Vance, another New York lawyer and the former counsel to the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee, to be the General Counsel of the DOD. After a brief review of the National Security Act and related amendments, Vance agreed with McNamara's appraisal that further reorganization could be effected within the department under existing legislation. Aware of the thorny legal issues involved in any proposed reforms (under the provisions of the McCormack-Curtis Amendment), McNamara assigned the General Counsel responsibility for reorganization. Thereafter, Vance established an office under his auspices devoted solely to restructuring the Pentagon. It was named the Office for Management Planning and Organizational Studies (OMPOS) and Solis Horwitz, a Kennedy election consultant on foreign relations and defense policy, agreed to serve as its director. Its small staff was composed of military officers on loan from the services. In the early days of the administration, McNamara and Vance charged OMPOS with ensuring that all elements of the Defense Department functioned in accordance with the 1958 Reorganization (that is, served the operational needs of the Secretary of Defense and the JCS). Priority was initially to be given to the two functions which then were not operationally controlled by the JCS: communications and intelligence.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Names commonly associated with this group include Harold Brown, Daniel Ellsberg, Malcolm Hoag, and Harry Rowen.

<sup>11</sup> Military men claim many of the incidents were sparked by the arrogance of the young defense intellectuals. There is much truth to these claims. Two examples are illustrative: In an argument with one general over US nuclear war plans, one Whiz Kid retorted, "General, I have fought just as many nuclear wars as you." Enthoven, who appeared to consciously seek to inflame the military and thus earned special enmity, once interrupted a senior USAF general in Europe who began to brief him, stating "General, I don't think you understand. I didn't come here for a briefing. I came to tell you what we have decided." Quoted in Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p. 254.

<sup>12</sup> Transcript, Solis Horwitz oral history interview, 18 March 1966, by Joseph O'Connor, pp. 13-17, JFK Library.

## McNamara and the Defense Intelligence Agency

Given the prominence of the “missile gap” allegations in the 1960 election, it is not surprising that after officially assuming office in January 1961, McNamara and his deputy Gilpatric immediately set out to review the military intelligence effort and examine the veracity of the claims. They swiftly discovered that the judgment of Thomas Gates had been accurate: the “gap” was spurious: the invention of Air Force intelligence. Though the Air Force claimed that the Soviets possessed hundreds of ICBMs as part of an aggressive strategic buildup, after a personal review of the photo-intelligence derived from the Discover/Coronal satellites, McNamara and Gilpatric concluded that only four ICBMs deployed at Plesetsk in Northern Russia were actually operational.<sup>13</sup> McNamara first revealed this discovery to reporters at an off-the-record session at the Pentagon on 6 February 1961. His rejection of the “missile gap” caused quite a stir in Washington at the time, due to its prominence as an election issue.<sup>14</sup>

McNamara’s examination of the “missile gap” and the state of military intelligence left him disturbed and reinforced his nascent conviction that military intelligence was tainted by budgetary influences.<sup>15</sup> He believed that past intelligence estimates often had been prejudiced by political considerations; that facts had been orchestrated to reinforce bureaucratic positions.<sup>16</sup> In McNamara’s view, intelligence was essentially a quantifiable matter, ideally limited to a careful compilation of the numbers of weapons and equipment on each side. He was skeptical of any efforts by the intelligence agencies to go beyond this quantitative base and into interpretive dimensions, such as predicting enemy actions and intentions. To McNamara, intelligence of the latter sort was simply conjecture, frequently inaccurate as the “missile gap” episode demonstrated. He therefore became convinced of the need to eliminate service bias from intelligence products, particularly threat assessments, to prevent a reoccurrence of the bomber and missile “gaps.” McNamara thought it essential that senior policymakers be provided with objective intelligence, in order to make rational decisions on issues of national security:

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<sup>13</sup> Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, pp. 286-90; Prados, *The Soviet Estimate*, pp. 109-110; Laqueur, *A World of Secrets*, pp. 150-52. It took some time for this finding to be reflected in formal intelligence products. A June 1961 NIE concluded that the Soviets might possess 50-100 ICBMs (100-200 by 1962), despite a vigorous Army and Navy dissent that an accurate count was “no more than a few.” It was only in a September revision of this NIE that Russian ICBMs were assessed to be four, finally shattering the chimera of an aggressive Soviet buildup which had prevailed for almost a decade and putting to rest the missile gap myth.

<sup>14</sup> Gilpatric attributes this indiscretion to the political naivete of the Secretary of Defense. For McNamara’s part, he immediately knew that he had made “a terrible mistake.” He later recalled: “They [the reporters] broke the damn door down. They went out and the headline on the late afternoon edition of the [Washington] *Evening Star* says, ‘McNamara declares no missile gap.’ And the next day, perhaps tongue in cheek, the Republicans asked that the election be rerun.” Quoted in Michael R. Beschloss, *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev, 1960-1963*. New York: Edward Burlingame Books, 1991, p. 65.

<sup>15</sup> Trehitt, *McNamara*, p. 21; Personal interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>16</sup> Ernest Volkman, *Warriors of the Night: Spies, Soldiers, and American Intelligence*. New York: Morrow, 1985, p. 113.

McNamara's review of CIA intelligence operations buttressed this conviction and left him even more disenchanted with the American intelligence effort (which he characterized as "smoke and mirrors"). However, he was impressed with the work of ONE under the stewardship of the former Yale professor Sherman Kent. McNamara admired the academic orientation of its staff and judged that it consistently produced objective analyses based on empirical evidence. More importantly, McNamara felt that ONE supported its conclusions irrespective of bureaucratic and political pressures. McNamara attributed this steadfast impartiality to the leadership of Sherman Kent. As Gilpatric observed, "Kent had intellectual integrity and McNamara immediately recognized it."<sup>17</sup> Although McNamara believed that most organizational intelligence was self-serving, he judged ONE products to be essentially unbiased. To the new Secretary of Defense, ONE was a bulwark of objectivity in the maelstrom of prejudice.

Accordingly, McNamara was impressed with the Report of the Joint Study Group. Its assessment that intelligence estimates were distorted by organizational biases ran parallel to his own findings. After reflecting on the recommendations for some time, the Secretary was intrigued by the Joint Study Group's collective, if idealized, vision of a reorganized intelligence community: A strong DCI providing central direction, a potent USIB vigorously managing the daily operations of the sundry espionage agencies. Under this scenario, the authority and influence of ONE, the staff component of the USIB and BNE, would be enhanced significantly; the power of the military departments would abate commensurately. McNamara welcomed this prospect, as he respected the endeavors of ONE and now believed that the influence of the military departments in the NIE process should be diluted, because he thought "the findings of the different G-2s were not reliable; they tended to be based on service needs rather than evidence."<sup>18</sup> The Secretary of Defense believed this was neither deliberate nor perfidious; rather it was the result of the natural tendency to allow personal and institutional bias to influence judgments. It was his task, as the director of the department, to assay to eliminate this tendentiousness from strategic intelligence assessments. McNamara later recalled:

... I did believe that parties of interest frequently look at their operations through rose, what I call "rose colored glasses." That started in World War II, it has been true in every human enterprise that I've ever been part of -- business, academic, military; and I've always sought to have the evaluation of one's actions made by a person other than the actor.<sup>19</sup>

Thus McNamara viewed the Joint Study Group's recommendations to strengthen the USIB as an opportunity to reduce the evaluative capabilities of the armed services and thereby diminish service bias from national intelligence products. He believed that the implementation of the recommendations and

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<sup>17</sup> Personal interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>18</sup> Personal interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Schneir (ed.), *Vietnam: A Documentary Collection -- Westmoreland v. CBS*. New York: Clearwater Publishing, 1985. (Hereafter referred to as *Westmoreland*). Deposition of Robert S. McNamara, fiche no. 331, pp. 87-88.

the resulting reduction of the role of the military departments in strategic intelligence would ultimately produce "more objective analysis in the intelligence function."<sup>20</sup> Thus, McNamara endorsed the recommendations of the Joint Study Group.

His motive in this was clear: to improve the quality of national intelligence products. This was important to McNamara for two reasons: the first strategic, the second budgetary. With regard to the former, upon assuming office McNamara commissioned an ambitious "general reassessment of our military forces in relation to our national security policies and objectives."<sup>21</sup> Sparked partially by John Kennedy's campaign attacks on the "massive retaliation" doctrine of the Eisenhower administration and partially by McNamara's natural inquisitiveness, this was nothing less than a wholesale re-examination of American strategic thinking. NIEs played a crucial role in this strategic reappraisal. As assessments of current international situations and predictors of future developments, NIEs are the foundation of any critical examination of American military strength. This is because military strength is inherently a relative perception: comprised of subjective judgments concerning enemy capabilities and intentions and American vulnerabilities.<sup>22</sup> The conflict within the intelligence community over crucial NIEs concerning Soviet strategic capabilities (NIE-11-4s) which marked the "missile gap" era precluded such a strategic reassessment. With Russian capabilities in doubt, American military strength was indeterminable. Thus McNamara was acutely aware of the need to develop a consensus within the intelligence community concerning the Soviet strategic threat concomitant with his general reassessment of U.S. military posture. Conflict within the USIB needed to be mitigated and the accuracy and reliability of its estimates refined. The recommendations of the Joint Study Group appeared to be an effective means to this end.

Second, with McNamara's encouragement, Hitch and Enthoven were developing a revolutionary methodology to link long-range military planning to short-term budgeting. Eventually known as the Planning-Programming-Budgeting System (PPBS), the procedure was intended to replace the past practice of setting arbitrary budget ceilings for the armed services (within which the services had broad spending discretion) with a more rational process. In the succinct phrase of its progenitors, PPBS was intended to determine "How much is enough?"<sup>23</sup> To this end, the system employed military-economic studies to compare alternative means of achieving national security objectives based on cost-effectiveness. Military decisions on force structure, strategic programs, and weapons systems would be evaluated on economic criteria and subjected to systems analysis within rolling five-year planning cycles, instead of *per annum*. An essential requirement for the introduction of PPBS was authoritative, long-range NIEs: estimates that were not readily available in early 1961. McNamara and his staff attempted to rectify this situation. Roswell Gilpatric recalled:

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<sup>20</sup> Personal interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>21</sup> McNamara, *Essence of Security*, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> Freedman, *Soviet Strategic Threat*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>23</sup> See Enthoven and Smith, *How Much Is Enough?* pp. 124-56.

Well, first of all, McNamara set out to broaden and redirect the flow of intelligence between the Pentagon and the CIA. He was not satisfied simply with the standard type of NIE, and he made it a point to go over, as we did on several occasions, and sit down with Allen Dulles and try to find out how things really happened: Who did what to what in the CIA . . . . We didn't have DIA then, and we had the army, navy, and air force all writing their pet hobbies as far as particular estimates. And then the agency insisted at that stage on never going very much beyond the sort of short time limits of prediction. It took McNamara quite a while to get them to conform and time phase their estimates with his five-year planning cycle [required by PPBS]. Five years, they didn't want to give that kind of estimate. So he spent a lot of time on that. He began, in his characteristic fashion, to ask small questions.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the success of PPBS was directly linked to the ability of the intelligence community to concur on durable threat assessments. Again, the recommendations of the Joint Study Group appeared to enhance the ability to the USIB to produce the desired assessments.

After considering the recommendations and debating their merits with Solis Horwitz at OMPOS, in early February 1961 McNamara arrived at the conviction that the aims of the Joint Study Group could best be achieved through the establishment of a consolidated *Defense Intelligence Agency*. In the creation of the DIA McNamara saw the opportunity both to remove the evaluative and interpretative capabilities from the armed services and to replace the three oft-feuding service members on the USIB with a single representative from the new agency (supplanting the JCS representative proposed by the Joint Study Group). The former would consolidate the estimative function, eliminating redundancy and increasing efficiency; the latter would reduce military representation on the USIB, mitigating bureaucratic conflict and thereby allowing it to take a stronger management role within the intelligence community. McNamara believed that the cumulative effect of these measures would foster the creation of authoritative NIEs, the assessments so crucial to his strategic reappraisal. This was Robert McNamara's *primary objective* in establishing the DIA: the reduction of service bias in national intelligence products. He would later write:

I believed that removing the preparation of intelligence estimates from the control of the military services would reduce the risk that service biases -- unconscious though they might be -- would color the estimates. [Emphasis his own]<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Transcript, Roswell Gilpatrick oral history interview, 5 May 1970, by Dennis O'Brien, JFK Library.

<sup>25</sup> Personal correspondence with author, 16 February 1990. Also see USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, p. 6710.

At risk of simplification, McNamara hoped to force the Pentagon to speak with one voice, as opposed to many. The proposed agency would be potent and autonomous; in the words of Roswell Gilpatric, "a self-contained operating group with an independent identity."<sup>26</sup> Initially, the Secretary of Defense was inclined to establish the DIA under the auspices of the OSD, rather than the JCS, as such an organizational arrangement was consistent not only with the historical propensity to centralize common military functions under the authority of the Secretary of Defense but also with McNamara's personal desire to assert firm control over the new agency. Well aware that OSD had been poorly served by both the JIG and the J-2, McNamara was determined to make the DIA responsive to the intelligence needs of the Secretary of Defense. By establishing the agency under his office, McNamara could ensure that the DIA would first be responsive to the strategic intelligence requirements his office; the tactical needs of the JCS and the military departments would be ancillary. "McNamara was just not satisfied with the intelligence product he was getting," Roswell Gilpatric recalled. "He wanted someone with primary allegiance to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, not the armed services."<sup>27</sup>

It must be recognized that McNamara's motives in this were not entirely altruistic. The removal of the military departments from the USIB would enhance the influence of the representative of the Secretary of Defense, and thereby increase McNamara's power over the Board. Moreover, as previously noted, McNamara's "active management" philosophy sought to restrict decision-making to a handful of top executives: namely, the Secretary of Defense and his civilian deputies. Hence, authority was to be centralized in the OSD. To achieve this, McNamara employed a time-honored method which had served him well at the Ford Motor Company: control access to information. By concentrating data and evidence -- intelligence -- in the OSD and its subordinate components, the Secretary could justify controversial decisions as based upon superior information. Since this information would be unavailable to opponents, dissent would be effectively mitigated. To many in the military this method of management was at best, undemocratic; at worst, Machiavellian. The advice of career military officers could be shunted by inexperienced bureaucratic managers. Consequently, military leaders tended to the view the establishment of a central military intelligence agency directly under the OSD as yet another insidious method of concentrating knowledge and power in the hands of imperious civilians.

McNamara hoped that the DIA would eliminate, or at least drastically reduce, duplication within the military intelligence effort. As previously noted, under the National Security Act, as amended, the Secretary of Defense has the legal authority to initiate military reorganization so long as the ostensible justification is "to eliminate duplication." This was the thrust of the McCormack-Curtis amendment: reform in the name of efficacy. Not surprisingly, Pentagon memoranda and the statements of defense officials stress the "elimination of unnecessary duplication" to "provide more effective, efficient, and economical administration in the Department of Defense" as the central objective in establishing the DIA.<sup>28</sup> The statements were a legal necessity. However, this work argues that these objectives, economy and efficiency, were in fact peripheral: for McNamara, efficacy was subordinate to NIE

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<sup>26</sup> Personal interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>27</sup> Personal interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>28</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Report*, p. 6605.

reform. Authoritative threat assessments were essential for his strategic reappraisal and the success of PPBS. This thesis is supported by the McNamara's subsequent decisions: as the dissertation will detail, the Secretary later acquiesced to questionable JCS proposals for nominal improvements in the areas of "efficiency" and "elimination of duplication," yet he was intransigent in his advocacy of measures designed to reduce military influence on national intelligence products. Nevertheless, the "elimination of duplication" dominated Pentagon rhetoric and documents on the proposed agency, leading many to mistakenly conclude that greater efficacy was McNamara's *paramount* purpose in establishing the DIA. As will be shown, this rhetoric was disingenuous.

On 8 February 1961 McNamara formally endorsed the recommendations of the Joint Study Group and directed the JCS to submit within thirty days a concept proposal, draft Defense Department directive, and time-phased implementation schedule for the creation of "a Defense Intelligence Agency which may include the existing National Security Agency, the intelligence and counterintelligence now handled by the military departments, and the responsibilities of the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary, Special Operations."<sup>29</sup> He instructed the JCS to ensure that the organizational charter was drafted with the proviso that the director of the DIA should be one of the two military representatives on the USIB; an indication of the importance he attached to this reform. Despite McNamara's predilection to establish the agency under the auspices of OSD, he allowed the JCS to consider alternative locations within Defense Department, provided that new legislation was not required for placement. This stipulation effectively ruled out placing the DIA within the Joint Staff, for its size was strictly limited by Congress. McNamara's directive preempted the belated efforts of the JCS to formulate their own response to the JSG recommendations, requested by former Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates. Now military leaders were forced to react to the Secretary's initiative.

## The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Military Intelligence Agency

After receiving the recommendations of the Joint Study Group from outgoing Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates in early January, the JCS distributed copies to the military departments for comment. Thereafter, each service prepared its own response to the proposals. The Army and the Air Force submitted concept papers to the JCS on 6 January and 17 January 1961, respectively. The Navy failed to submit a concept proposal, apparently as a sign of its resolute opposition to the consolidation of military intelligence operations. On 18 January the director of the Joint Staff (J-2) first met with representatives of the military departments to discuss the recommendations and concept papers. After several meetings, the Joint Staff and the armed services agreed to endorse a series of minor reforms, including proposals to integrate the separate current intelligence efforts of the services and the formation of a joint military intelligence requirements facility. The military departments, however, opposed the consolidation of military membership on the USIB recommended by the Joint Study

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<sup>29</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Establishment of a Defense Intelligence Agency," 8 February 1961 (Declassified at request of author) p. 1.

Group and expressed their desire to maintain the present system of individual representation. All concurred that the reforms should be implemented in a deliberate manner in order to avoid unnecessary disruption of existing intelligence operations. In order to safeguard service prerogatives, the participants proposed that this agency be supervised by a Military Intelligence Board (MIB) composed of the intelligence chiefs of the armed services. The Secretary of Defense would delegate authority to the MIB to make decisions in the name of the JCS on intelligence matters with a majority votes. Significantly, the military organizations disagreed over the proposed location of the new intelligence agency. The Air Force and the Joint Staff proposed that the agency be housed within the Joint Staff; the Army, Navy, and Marines preferred that it be established under the auspices of the JCS.<sup>30</sup> The dispute over the location of the agency appeared minor *prima facie*, but veiled a deeper matter of import.

The Army and Navy were apprehensive of the motives of the Air Force in intelligence reform. They suspected that the Air Staff viewed the recommendations of the Joint Study as an opportunity to expand their influence over strategic intelligence. Since the majority of military intelligence analysts were affiliated with the Air Force -- due to the the hegemony of the department in strategic targeting -- the many in the other armed services feared that the Air Force would dominate a consolidated military intelligence agency. This trepidation was reinforced by the fact that Air Force officers were among the most vocal proponent of the integration of military intelligence. Admiral Samuel D. Frankel, the DIA's first chief of staff, recalled:

Long before the Defense Intelligence Agency was established, there were a few spokesmen in the Air Force who had sponsored this type of thing, and by the way they went about it the Army and Navy appeared to suspect that the Air Force wanted to capture the intelligence field and that it would be used for the aggrandizement and more power by the Air Force. This went on all the time. . . . So that when the DIA was first established, there was a lingering suspicion that this was something which the Air Force had brought about.<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, these skeptics perceived the Air Force to proposal to house the new intelligence agency within the Joint Staff as a bureaucratic gambit to gain control over not only the intelligence agency, but the Joint Staff as well. In particular, the Navy, with the bitter taste of the creation of the JSTPS (and the consequent usurpation of Polaris targeting by the Air Force) still lingering in its collective mouth, viewed the Air Force proposal with cynicism. The admirals, led by Chief of Naval Operations Arleigh A. Burke, regarded the motives of the Air Force as purely hegemonic. It was a conviction they would not soon forsake.

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<sup>30</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. [JCS 2031/154]. "Report by the J-2 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Control and Coordination of Military Intelligence by the JCS," 31 January 1961 (Declassified at request of author) pp. 1103-09.

<sup>31</sup> Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel B. Frankel, p. 452.

This is how matters stood when the JCS received McNamara's directive on 8 February 1994. The military leaders were shocked at the level of integration the Secretary desired. McNamara wanted to establish a strong central intelligence organization with potent authority; the JCS preferred a weak agency with restricted jurisdiction. The McNamara proposal was anathema to many military men because it threatened the domains and autonomy of the service intelligence components. Military leaders thought that some form of consolidation was an ineluctable consequence of the Joint Study Group report, yet they were determined to dilute the outcome in order to preserve their influence over the intelligence process. They promptly decided to submit the present reform plan, essentially unaltered, to the Secretary of Defense in spite of the fact that it was far more modest than the proposals he had suggested. (McNamara's stipulation that the creation of the new intelligence agency must not require additional legislation resolved the remaining issue of contention among the military, as it effectively excluded the Air Force proposal to house the intelligence organization within the Joint Staff from consideration, much to the relief of Army and Navy officers.) The JCS appeared to adopt a policy of restrained opposition to the ambitious reform program of the Secretary of Defense. The risk in this strategy was manifest, and explicitly stated to the JCS in a memorandum from the Director of J-2 (Intelligence), Joint Staff:

In some specific areas of intelligence activity, such as counterintelligence and technical intelligence, it is possible that the Joint Chiefs of Staff may wish to submit a reclama on certain aspects of the concept enunciated by the Secretary of Defense in his memorandum. However, the risks inherent in making any reclama should be carefully considered, since efforts to minimize the degree of integration contemplated might well result in a decision to place the DIA outside the jurisdiction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>32</sup>

On 2 March 1961, the JCS submitted the concept paper and draft Defense Department directive requested by McNamara to the OSD.<sup>33</sup> The military leadership formally proposed that a *Military Intelligence Agency (MIA)* with limited authority and discretion be established under their direct control.<sup>34</sup> They recommended that the director, deputy director, and chief of staff be military officers from separate services on active duty; appointed by and accountable to the JCS. The proposed agency would serve as "coordinating and planning" body for military intelligence, responsible for suggesting areas wherein the integration or cooperation of service activities might be profitable. The JCS recommended that the agency be established on a flexible time-phased implementation schedule, in order to avoid a disruption of the intelligence efforts of the services. Apart from the creation of a

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<sup>32</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> The first cut was Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCS 2031/159], "Establishment of a Military Intelligence Agency," 27 February 1961 (Declassified at request of author). The final submission was Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCSM-117-61], "Establishment of a Military Intelligence Agency," 2 March 1961 (Declassified at request of author).

<sup>34</sup> The difference in names is significant. Within the Pentagon, the term "defense" had connotations associated with civilian authority; "military" was unambiguous. The distinction is illustrative of the disparate perceptions of both parties regarding the mission of the agency.

central intelligence collection requirements facility and a current intelligence center, decisions on the precise activities of the MIA were to be held in abeyance until further studies could be undertaken. To ensure that the MIA was responsive to the needs of the armed services, the JCS proposed:

To assist and advise the Director, MIA, in establishing and operating the Agency, and to facilitate the achievement of the objectives stated above there shall be established, immediately upon the approval of the concept, a Military Intelligence Board. This board, which will be chaired by the Director, MIA, will consist of the Service Intelligence Chiefs, the J-2 Joint Staff, and upon transfer of the NSA to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director, NSA.<sup>35</sup>

As the above excerpt suggests, the JCS recommended that the NSA be immediately placed under their direct control and that the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Special Operations) be abolished, its functions transferred to the Joint Staff. On the important issue of USIB representation, the JCS concluded:

It is essential that the Director, MIA, be designated a member of the United States Intelligence Board (USIB), and that the other Department of Defense representatives continue as members until such a time as the integration of military intelligence and counterintelligence functions has progressed to such a degree that Service participation on the USIB is no longer useful.<sup>36</sup>

It is difficult to regard the JCS proposal as anything other than cynical and self-serving. Even a cursory review of the JCS memorandum reveals the true nature of the MIA: it was intended to be a powerless coordinating forum in an effort to preserve the intelligence prerogatives of the JCS and armed services. The very name of the organization -- the Military Intelligence Agency -- signified the resolve of the armed services to maintain primacy. The proposal was not directed at true integration, but superficial consolidation. The agency was to be assigned what one senior military intelligence officer called "mundane and trivial" responsibilities (that is, the coordination of current intelligence publications and collection requirements).<sup>37</sup> Its director was to control only the sparse resources assigned to MIA; his authority over other military intelligence components was confined to "review and coordination." As a practical matter, he would have no power over the Joint Staff, the service intelligence components, and the NSA, for they were beyond his executive jurisdiction. In fact, the

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<sup>35</sup> JCSM-117-61, Appendix, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> JCSM-117-61, Appendix, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Confidential interview, retired Navy admiral and former DIA official. McNamara was particularly alarmed that the mission of the agency stipulated: "The military departments shall continue to acquire, produce, and disseminate military intelligence and counterintelligence as required in the fulfillment of their assigned departmental missions, and shall participate in joint intelligence activities as required." He feared that the services would continue to conduct business as usual. See JCSM-117-61, Appendix, p. 10.

director would not be able to exert full control over his own agency; his administration of the meager MIA was to be supervised by the MIB, an agent of the armed services. The inescapable conclusion is that the authority of the Director of the MIA was titular.

Furthermore, the JCS proposal for USIB reform would actually increase military representation on the USIB -- in contradistinction to the recommendations of the Joint Study Group -- by preserving full service membership while adding a representative from the MIA. Although the JCS proposed to eliminate the service participation on the USIB in the indefinite future, when it was no longer "useful," the stipulation was sufficiently ambiguous as to cause many in OSD to doubt that the reform would ever be willingly implemented. The JCS proposal for direct control over the NSA appeared to be a blatant bureaucratic power play. McNamara had instructed the JCS to consider the functions of the NSA only within the context of a expansive consolidation of Defense Department intelligence activities; a consolidation which the JCS ultimately spurned. Nonetheless, they seized the opportunity to attempt to gain operational control over the NSA, an organization they had long coveted, presenting a dubious rationale on suspect legal grounds.<sup>38</sup> (It should be recalled that control of the AFSA, the NSA's predecessor, was removed from the JCS as a result of its disregard for civilian intelligence requirements during the Korean War. The JCS offered no assurances that such neglect could be prevented.)

Thus the ambitious vision of a reorganized military intelligence system of Robert McNamara met the cold reality of the entrenched interests of the military departments. Where McNamara desired consolidation, the services preferred confederation. Where McNamara wanted control, the services proposed coordination. Each embraced a competing paradigm: McNamara, that of a potent central manager of military intelligence operations, dedicated to the production of accurate and durable National Intelligence Estimates, responsive to the strategic and budgetary planning requirements of the Secretary of Defense; the JCS, that of a meager coordinating agency, devoted largely to the integration of minor intelligence functions, subordinate to the military departments. Each side possessed legitimate concerns about the compatibility of intelligence products to the discrete needs of their organizations. However, it must be recognized that each side tenaciously pursued a political agenda, designed to fortify its own bureaucratic position and influence the intelligence process in accordance with its needs and preferences. The organizational theorist David Kozak astutely remarked:

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<sup>38</sup> The JCS argued that the NSA should be placed under their control to "preclude precipitous reorganization of military intelligence activities at the initiation of hostilities." The argument presumes that reorganization would be both imperative and expeditious, and neglects the more immediate intelligence requirements of peacetime. National Security Council Intelligence Directive No. 6 prescribes that the Secretary of Defense will be the executive agent of the government for the conduct of COMINT/ELINT activities and for the maintenance and operation of NSA. The directive allows the Secretary of Defense to delegate, in whole or in part, his authority over the Director, NSA. However, the legality of *permanent* assignment of this authority to JCS is questionable, for it circumvents the spirit of the directive: that of civilian control over American COMINT/ELINT activities.

Organizational change is neither a technical nor neutral exercise -- it is the object of intense political pressure, conflict, and turmoil. Reorganizations have political purposes: They are not undertaken simply to conform to abstract principles; they are proposed and adopted not for therapeutic reasons, but for political reasons with political purposes.<sup>39</sup>

Thus the sound and fury which marked the conflict over the reorganization of American defense intelligence concealed pragmatic political considerations.

## Conflict

The struggle over the future of defense intelligence was made public in late March in a two-part series by the respected military correspondent Hanson Baldwin in the *New York Times*. In pieces sympathetic to the military, Baldwin outlined the McNamara proposals and argued that the potential gains of centralization "are far outweighed" by the possible risk. Echoing the criticism of many military officers, Baldwin asserted that historically intelligence was a function of command (despite the fact that the 1958 Reorganization had removed the military departments from the chain of command), and therefore a service prerogative. He also expressed the fear that the proposed consolidation, by strengthening the role of OSD, would allow political considerations to unduly influence the intelligence process. Baldwin concluded:

It is the trend of human nature -- hard to resist -- to interpret facts with preconceived prejudices. It must be guarded against to the utmost in our intelligence work. The proposed merger of our service intelligence sections would facilitate the error rather than reduce it. The old American principle of checks and balances is as applicable to intelligence collection and evaluation as it is to administration.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, Baldwin failed to observe the high costs of this pluralism: profligate inefficiency and redundancy. The articles were notable not for force of argument, but as an indication that the military would employ all means available to press their case.

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<sup>39</sup> David C. Kozak, "The Bureaucratic Politics Approach: The Evolution of the Paradigm," in Keagle and Kozak, *Bureaucratic Politics and National Security*, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> *New York Times*, "Intelligence I: Merger of Separate Service Agencies Is Being Proposed To Curb Rivalries," 27 March 1961 (6:3); and "Intelligence II: Major Dangers Scented In Merger of Services," 28 March 1961 (9:1).

A shrewd bureaucrat, McNamara immediately recognized the MIA proposal for what it was: a paper tiger. On 3 April 1961, McNamara sent a memorandum to the Chairman of the JCS General Lyman Lemnitzer which requested detailed answers to a series of questions concerning the proposed MIA. His motive in this was two-fold: the first managerial: to gather as much information as possible before making a decision; the second political: to subtly alert the military leaders that he knew the game, that he was aware of the issues and prerogatives involved in the reorganization of military intelligence and could not be easily misled. Thus he confronted the JCS on the proposed MIA: Why the change in name? What is the distinction between military and defense intelligence? Why place the agency under the command of the JCS? What are the actual functions of the agency and the precise authority of its director? How long exactly will it take the agency to assume full control of its assets? What are the real functions of the MIB? How soon can Defense Department representation on the USIB be reduced from six to two?

McNamara was not impressed with the responses he received from the JCS in a 13 April memorandum.<sup>41</sup> The answers confirmed the suspicions of the the Secretary of Defense and his staff: the director of the MIA would have little power over the intelligence elements of the Joint Staff and the armed services, as his authority was confined to "monitoring closely those intelligence activities that would remain under the Services. This coordinating role of the director would be directive in nature."<sup>42</sup> McNamara correctly feared that the JCS concept was intended to lay the foundation for a "confederation" of defense intelligence activities, wherein the autonomy and discretion of the separate military organizations for the most part would be preserved, rather than the true "consolidation" he desired. This fear was exacerbated by the fact that many vital decisions regarding the MIA -- the precise resources to be transferred to MIA, the timetable for such transfers, the tenure of the MIB, and an effective date for the reduction of military representation on the USIB -- were to be held in abeyance until after the MIA was established. McNamara believed that the JCS were stonewalling. His competent deputy Roswell Gilpatric, who repeated warned the Secretary that the most effective tactic of the military leaders to resist disagreeable civilian policies was bureaucratic footdragging, agreed. Given the brief tenure of civilian policymakers in the Defense Department (whose average time in office was just over two years) and the possibility of a new administration (presumably, with new defense policies) every four years, the military could often obstruct the implementation of policies that they opposed through procrastination and torpid execution. They simply outlasted their civilian foes. "Civilians come and go," Frank Collbohm, the founder of the prestigious Air Force think-tank the RAND Corporation, once remarked. "The Air Force stays forever."<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Gilpatric advised the new Secretary of Defense: "The JCS consistently prevail by simply digging in their heels."<sup>44</sup> The lesson was not lost on Robert McNamara, a veteran of the internecine bureaucratic wars at the Ford Motor Company.

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<sup>41</sup> The queries and responses are given in Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCS 2031/166], "Establishment of a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)," 13 April 1961 (Declassified at request of author), pp.1199-1214.

<sup>42</sup> JCS 2031/166, p. 1205.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p. 56.

<sup>44</sup> Personal interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

The merits of the competing McNamara and JCS proposals were hotly debated in the Pentagon, where the bureaucratic infighting was exceptionally fierce.<sup>45</sup> The dispute simmered throughout the spring of 1961, abiding amid the political fallout from the Bay of Pigs incident of April. Despite claims to the contrary, the failed invasion of Cuba was neither the catalyst for the creation of the DIA nor did it play a decisive role in its organization.<sup>46</sup> Its import should not be exaggerated. "A brick through the window," McGeorge Bundy, the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, would later refer to the incident among friends, implying that the damage was easily repaired.<sup>47</sup>

By May, two issues had emerged as pivotal to the controversy over the military intelligence organization: the placement of the proposed agency and the substance of USIB reform. The first was significant because the location of the intelligence agency would greatly affect the character of its operations. If established under the auspices of the JCS, the agency was likely to be primarily concerned with operational requirements of the Joint Staff; if established under the Secretary of Defense, the agency was likely to serve the policy planning needs of the OSD. The second was important because the reduction of military representation on the USIB was vital to McNamara's endeavors to mitigate service bias in threat assessments and enable the Board to take a more active management role in military intelligence operations. The military leaders, particularly Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh Burke and the Chairman of the JCS General Lyman Lemnitzer, were inimical to both USIB objectives.

In early June McNamara and Gilpatric moved to resolve the contentious matter of the location of the proposed agency. After considerable debate, McNamara acceded to the JCS stipulation that the DIA

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<sup>45</sup> Corson, *Armies of Ignorance*, pp. 387-88.

<sup>46</sup> For contrary claims see Glenn P. Hastedt (ed.), *Controlling Intelligence*. London: Frank Cass and Co., 1991, pp. 35-37; Corson, *Armies of Ignorance*, pp. 386-91; Jeffreys-Jones, *CIA and American Democracy*, p. 123.

In the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy asked General Maxwell Taylor to perform a post-mortem on the failed operation. Taylor concluded: "Although intelligence was not perfect ... we do not feel that any failure of intelligence contributed to the defeat [of the rebels]." Quoted in Luis Aguilar, *Operation Zapata: The "Ultrasensitive" Report and Testimony of the Board of Inquiry on the Bay of Pigs*. Frederick, MD: Aletheia, 1981, p. 42. Nonetheless, the President was disappointed with the actions of the CIA before and during the operation. He subsequently asked Arthur Schlesinger to evaluate the performance of the intelligence community in the fiasco. However, the Schlesinger inquiry excluded military intelligence. See White House, "Memo to the President: CIA Reorganization," 30 June 1961 (Declassified 12 May 1983) DDRS: 1988-2808. In conversations in the spring of 1961 with JFK on intelligence matters, Schlesinger does not recall any remarks on the DIA. Personal interview with Arthur Schlesinger, 20 July 1992. McNamara claims that the Bay of Pigs had no impact on deliberations over the DIA. Personal correspondence with Robert McNamara, 16 February 1990. Gilpatric agrees with his former boss, calling the failed invasion "an aberration; a separate issue." Personal interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992. The incident may have had a marginal impact; confirming the decision to establish the agency.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*. New York: Random House, 1969, p. 86.

report to the Secretary of Defense *through* the JCS, rather than report directly to the OSD.<sup>48</sup> In this context, “through” means that the JCS can not wield operational command in its own right; rather, it issues orders in the the name of the Secretary of Defense or the President. Yet this is mere bureaucratic obfuscation: for practical purposes, the chain of command would run from the Secretary of Defense to the JCS to DIA.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the DIA would operate under the direct supervision of the JCS. It was an momentous concession, with important consequences. McNamara must have realized that the concession would impair his ability to control the agency and consequently its responsiveness to his policy requirements. In a 6 July 1961 memorandum to President Kennedy, McNamara justified the decision thus: “the DoD [Department of Defense] intelligence function is inextricably linked to the strategic planning functions of the JCS and to the combatant responsibilities of the unified commanders. On the balance, I have concluded that the best solution is to place DIA under the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”<sup>50</sup> A senior military officer involved in the debate concurred, remarking that the decision was based on “practical, rather than political considerations.”<sup>51</sup>

High-ranking civilian officials, however, have subsequently stated that this justification was specious; that the concession was motivated largely by political concerns. They observe that given the intensity of the military opposition to intelligence reorganization, this operational arrangement was the only tenable means for McNamara to gain the support of the JCS in this endeavor. They suggest that McNamara conceded functional control of the DIA to the JCS in exchange for their support in his effort to reform the USIB.<sup>52</sup> The argument is plausible. There is little doubt that this concession represented a significant departure from McNamara’s previous position that the agency be established directly under his aegis. It is unlikely that the Secretary would surrender this stipulation in

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<sup>48</sup> The proposal was contained in the JCS draft DOD directive of 2 March 1961: “The chain of command shall run from the Secretary of Defense, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the Director, MIA. Guidance to the Director, MIA, shall be issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.” JCSM-117-61, Annex A, p. 11. Lest there be any confusion on operational matters, the directive stated: “the Military Intelligence Agency is hereby established as an agency of the Department of Defense under the direction, authority, and control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.” JCSM-117-61, Annex A, p. 11. This text was retained in the final directive of 1 August 1961.

Some commentators, notably those of the Church Committee, have erroneously identified this arrangement as a “compromise,” on the mistaken belief that the original JCS proposal called for the agency to be set up directly under the Joint Staff. Seen in this faulty light, the “through” arrangement appears to be a compromise. However, this interpretation is contrary to the evidence presented above. I have called McNamara’s decision a “concession,” rather than a “compromise,” in the interest of accuracy.

<sup>49</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, p. 6763.

<sup>50</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, “Memorandum to the President: The Establishment of a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA),” 6 July 1961, p. 3. DDRS: 1986-85.

<sup>51</sup> Personal interview with Lt. General William Quinn, 8 May 1992.

<sup>52</sup> Confidential interviews with former Defense Department officials. This *quid pro quo* was acknowledged by McNamara in a congressional appearance six days after the formal establishment of the agency. Noting the historic opposition of armed services to all previous efforts at centralization, one congressman asked the Secretary of Defense if an earlier claim that the JCS “wholeheartedly” supported the new agency was true. McNamara replied, “Yes. One of the reasons, of course, is that we propose that this new agency operate under the direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff so *they will have full opportunity to shape its operation.*” [Italics added] See USC (87/1) Senate Government Operations. *Hearings: National Policy Machinery*. Washington: GPO, 1961, p. 1123.

the absence of a commensurate concession from the military leaders. USIB reform was the only matter that possessed equable importance to McNamara. *A quid pro quo* appears probable.

Irrespective of the verity of this claim, there is no doubt that McNamara personally insisted that the new organization be called the *Defense Intelligence Agency*, to ensure that there would be no confusion that it was intended to serve both civilian and military requirements. He assented to the JCS proposal to establish a MIB, but he confined it to an advisory role on an interim basis. He rejected the military proposal to place the NSA under the control of the JCS, preferring to keep American SIGINT activities under his authority and direction.<sup>53</sup> Although the location of the agency was now decided, the thorny matter of the resources and functions of the agency remained unresolved.<sup>54</sup>

By mid-June 1961, the deliberations over the DIA had attracted the attention of Dr. James Killian of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB). The PFIAB (formerly the President's Board of Consultants on Foreign Intelligence Activities [PBCFIA] during the Eisenhower administration) was a deliberative body composed of distinguished private citizens which met periodically to report to the President on the performance of the U.S. intelligence community. Kennedy's distaste for formal policymaking structures had initially caused him to disregard the Board; consequently, it was "lying moribund and ignored, waiting for formal termination" in the early months of the new administration.<sup>55</sup> Yet the Bay of Pigs incident endowed the Kennedy administration with new-found respect for the national security apparatus, and the PFIAB was revived and given far-reaching oversight responsibilities.<sup>56</sup> Dr. Killian, the President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, had been the chairman of the PBCFIA under President Eisenhower and followed the inquiries of the Joint Study Group with interest. Since the establishment of a central military intelligence mechanism had been a prominent recommendation of the Joint Study Group, in early June Killian asked the Secretary of Defense for an appraisal of progress to date. In response, McNamara presented a briefing on the putative outlines of the DIA to the PFIAB on 30 June 1961. The Board was favorably impressed with the rudimentary plan and recommended its early adoption.

The PFIAB recommendation provided impetus to settle the remaining disagreement over the DIA. In a memorandum dated 5 July 1961, Gilpatric formally informed the military departments and the JCS of the decision of the Secretary of Defense regarding the final form of the DIA, enclosing a DOD draft

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<sup>53</sup> Though McNamara decided to keep the NSA under his purview, he did establish a study group (which included representatives from the JCS) to examine the ELINT requirements of the Unified and Specified Commands to suggest guidelines for the delineation of responsibilities between the NSA and the service cryptologic agencies. Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Theater ELINT Centers (U)," 7 July 1961 (Declassified at request of author) pp. 1-2. In August, McNamara ordered a far reaching reorganization of the NSA to strengthen the control of its director over defense ELINT and cryptologic resources. Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Memorandum to the President," 21 August 1961 (Declassified at request of author) p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Personal interview with Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>55</sup> Quote from Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 315.

<sup>56</sup> The official post-mortem of the Bay of Pigs incident, the Taylor Report (named after its chairman General Maxwell Taylor), asserted that the failure of the invasion was due in part to the absence of formal decision-making bodies which might have reviewed and criticized the operation. See Aguilar, *Operation Zapata*, pp. 170-220.

directive for the establishment of the agency for comment. In the memorandum Gilpatric reiterated the decision to have the DIA report to the Secretary of Defense through the JCS. He wrote:

The principal objectives in establishing a DIA are to obtain unity of effort among all components of the Department of Defense in developing military intelligence and a strengthening of the over-all capacity of the Department of Defense for the collection, production, and dissemination of intelligence information.

Although perhaps of lesser priority, but certainly not of lesser importance, are the objectives of obtaining a more efficient allocation of scarce intelligence resources, more effective management of all DoD intelligence activities, and the elimination of all duplicating facilities, organizations and tasks.<sup>57</sup>

This revealing excerpt buttresses a point made earlier in the chapter, namely that McNamara's primary objective in establishing the DIA was the consolidation of military intelligence products; efficiency was a secondary concern. It is therefore not surprising that the DOD draft directive listed the first function of the agency as follows: "Develop and produce all DoD intelligence estimates and DoD information for the United States Intelligence Board. Such estimates may indicate differences in analysis and evaluation."<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the draft directive stipulated that the director of the DIA be one of the two military members on the reorganized USIB. It also provided that the DIA would represent the Defense Department on all USIB subcommittees. In spite of substantial concessions to the JCS on other matters, notably the operational arrangement of the agency, McNamara clearly sought to preserve his primary objective to reduce military representation on the USIB.

The draft DOD directive failed to designate the precise functions and responsibilities of the DIA. In spite of several months of heated debate between the OSD and the JCS, the matter appeared irresolvable. It was a peculiar dilemma: McNamara and his staff were driving to establish an organization despite the fact that there was no accord regarding the mission and activities of the agency. The heart of the dispute between the military and civilians -- what would DIA do? When would it do it? and most importantly, Who would decide? -- endured. The Gilpatric memorandum shed no light on this matter, cryptically remarking:

The Defense Intelligence Agency will assume control over certain DOD intelligence functions and will coordinate and supervise the execution of those DOD intelligence functions not transferred to DIA. It is envisaged that some DOD intelligence activities, such as personnel, and industrial security and intelligence training, will probably be retained in the military departments. While other intelligence functions, such as technical intelligence and counterintelligence may be transferred in whole or in part to DIA, for the time being they will continue to be conducted by the military departments. The draft Directive, of necessity, cannot treat how these and other

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<sup>57</sup> The Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Establishment of a Defense Intelligence Agency," 5 July 1961 (Declassified at request of author) p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> OSD, "Establishment of a Defense Intelligence Agency," p. 7.

details of DIA are to be implemented. At the time the Directive is signed, a mechanism will be provided for resolving such problems to the end that DIA may become fully operational as soon as possible. Mr. McNamara and I regard this objective as a matter of highest priority.<sup>59</sup>

The response of the JCS to the Gilpatric memorandum was cool. In a reply of 13 July 1961, they agreed to the above provisions, yet evaded an explicit elucidation of the resources and responsibilities DIA would assume and refrained from providing a precise definition of its relationship to other military intelligence organizations. Once again the JCS equivocated, arguing that specific proposals “would be premature and could prejudice the outcome of the studies to be made after the establishment of the DIA.”<sup>60</sup> The bureaucratic shell game continued. Nevertheless, the military leaders presented no explicit objections to the draft directive.

## Compromise

On 1 August 1961 Secretary of Defense McNamara signed DOD Directive 5105.21, “The Defense Intelligence Agency” (effective 1 October 1961), a slightly altered version of the Gilpatric draft of 5 July 1961. The directive called for the establishment of the DIA as an agency of the Department of Defense under the provisions of the National Security Act of 1947 and the McCormack-Curtis amendment. It should be recalled that the amendment stipulated that functions and activities of the armed services could be consolidated only in the name of promoting efficiency and the reducing redundancy. Accordingly, the accompanying press release emphasized that the purpose of the agency was to achieve a “more efficient allocation of critical intelligence resources and the elimination of duplicating facilities.”<sup>61</sup> However, the specific means that would be employed for this end were imprecise. The directive prescribed the following operational arrangement:

The chain of command shall run from the Secretary of Defense, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Director, DIA. Guidance to the Director, DIA, shall be furnished by the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff acting under the authority and direction of the Secretary of Defense, and the United States Intelligence Board.

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<sup>59</sup> OSD, “Establishment of a Defense Intelligence Agency,” p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Quote from Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 40.

<sup>61</sup> Church Committee. (I) p. 349.

The DIA was assigned the following responsibilities:

- A. The organization, direction, management, and control of all Department of Defense intelligence resources assigned to or included within the DIA.
- B. Review and coordination of those Department of Defense intelligence functions retained by or assigned to the military departments. Over-all guidance for the conduct and management of such functions will be developed by the Director, DIA, for review, approval, and promulgation by the Secretary of Defense.
- C. Supervision of the execution of all approved plans, programs, policies, and procedures for intelligence functions not assigned to DIA.
- D. Obtaining the maximum economy and efficiency in the allocation and management of Department of Defense intelligence resources. This includes analysis of those DoD intelligence activities and facilities which can be fully integrated or co-located with non-DoD intelligence organizations.
- E. Responding directly to priority requests levied upon the Defense Intelligence Agency by the USIB.
- F. Satisfying the "intelligence" requirements of the major components of Department of Defense.<sup>62</sup>

The directive stipulated that the first function of the agency was to "develop and produce all DoD intelligence estimates and DoD information and contributions to National Intelligence Estimates for the United States Intelligence Board."<sup>63</sup> The directive provided that the Director of the DIA would be one of the two Defense Department representatives on the USIB. Of the remaining seventeen functions, most were vague and enigmatic (e.g. "H. Conduct coordinating and planning activities to achieve the maximum economy and efficiency in the management of all Department of Defense activities"). The only tasks explicitly defined were those suggested in the JCS proposal of 2 March 1961: the establishment of a single Defense Department Collection Requirements Registry and Facility, the integration of current intelligence production, and the creation of an Indications Center. Of course, the ambiguity over specific functions and responsibilities was intentional; after all, this was the focus of remaining disagreement. Gilpatric had stated in 5 July 1961 memoranda that a "mechanism will be provided for resolving such problems." He outlined this mechanism in a memorandum accompanying the 1 August directive.

Despite his initial desire to delineate the functions and responsibilities of the DIA and the armed services prior to creation, in the end McNamara acceded to the military demand that these matters be decided on the basis of studies conducted after the creation of the agency. In the 1 August

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<sup>62</sup> Department of Defense Directive 5105.21, "Defense Intelligence Agency," 1 August 1961 (Declassified at request of author) pp. 2-3.

<sup>63</sup> Department of Defense Directive 5105.21, pp. 3-5.

memorandum McNamara announced that a study group would be promptly established to conduct these examinations. The group was instructed to review military intelligence operations, determine optimal organizational responsibilities, and recommend the transfer of select intelligence functions to DIA. Several functions were specifically targeted for possible consolidation into DIA: technical intelligence, counterintelligence, intelligence mapping and charting, military attaches, and espionage training. The study group was to operate under the jurisdiction of OMPOS (who would safeguard the interests of the Secretary of Defense), advised and assisted by the MIB (who would protect service prerogatives). After completing these studies, the group was instructed to devise a detailed activation plan for the DIA, stipulating the precise functions that the agency would assume from the armed services and establishing a reasonable timetable for implementation. This activation plan was to be formulated by 1 October 1961, and submitted through the JCS to the Secretary of Defense for approval.<sup>64</sup>

Since this study group was tasked to fill in the details of the DIA directive (in effect, constructing the agency upon the foundations McNamara provided), the composition of the group -- military, civilian, or a hybrid -- became of crucial importance. Many in OSD thought that McNamara should appoint civilian policymakers and academics to the group. They believed that the military simply could not be trusted to reform itself. McNamara surprised his staff by deciding that the study group would be composed solely of military officers; officers that would ultimately form the leadership of new agency. It is curious that McNamara allowed the future director of an agency to decide the tasks, assignments, and structure of his own organization. This contradicted the fundamental bureaucratic canon to divide labor and responsibility and defied the tenets of McNamara's own active management philosophy. It appears the decision was a combination of the practical and the political: practical in that the Secretary of Defense could only gain the support of the military for this endeavor if he let them participate in the planning; political in that McNamara believed that he could appoint military officers to the planning staff who were sympathetic to his views on consolidation and who could overcome the pressure from the armed services. This gamble (and a gamble it was) hinged on the man McNamara chose as the first Director-Designate of the DIA, General Joseph Carroll.<sup>65</sup>

A highly respected Air Force officer, Carroll began his intelligence career with the FBI and became a leading assistant to J. Edgar Hoover. After the Second World War he was transferred to the Air Force and, in 1947 set up its first security and counter-intelligence section, the Office of Special Investigations. Commissioned as a colonel, he quickly rose to the rank of lieutenant general, serving as chief of staff of the United States Air Forces in Europe and deputy inspector general for security of the Air Force. From 1958 to his appointment as DIA director in 1961, he was the Inspector General of the Air Force, responsible for investigating suspected security violations. He personally oversaw the 1960 inquiry into the defection of two NSA analysts, Bernon F. Mitchell and William H. Martin, to the Soviet Union. One high-level Defense Department official at the time called the defections

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<sup>64</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Administrative Requirements for the Establishment of a Defense Intelligence Agency," 1 August 1961 (Declassified at the request of author) pp. 1-3.

<sup>65</sup> On 9 August 1961, CJCS Lemnitzer submitted the names of 7 flag officers to McNamara for consideration as Director, DIA (two Army, two Navy, three Air Force). The nominations were a mere formality, however, as McNamara had already decided on Carroll. For nominees see Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCSM 538-61], Lemnitzer to McNamara, "Nominations for the Position of Director, DIA," 9 August 1961, folder "CCS 5229 (2 August 1961)," box 114, JCS files, National Archives.

“possibly the worst security breach since Klaus Fuchs gave the Russians the secret of the atom bomb.”<sup>66</sup> A lawyer by training and a devout catholic, Carroll was widely admired for his personal integrity and professional commitment.

Though formally appointed as DIA Director on 12 August 1961, McNamara had approached Carroll in July 1961, to sound out his qualifications and views.<sup>67</sup> The Secretary was impressed by general’s background and commitment to the national interest. McNamara believed Carroll’s civilian background and professional integrity allowed him to transcend the parochial service perspectives. Moreover, McNamara felt Carroll’s reputation for impartiality and bureaucratic savvy would enable him to overcome the remaining opposition within the military departments to the new agency. The Secretary swiftly decided that Carroll was the man he wanted to run the DIA. So great was McNamara’s confidence in Carroll and his abilities that he gave him virtually free reign over the drafting of the activation plan. Gilpatric recalls that the director was given this unprecedented *carte blanche* authority because, “McNamara felt Joe Carroll could resist service foot-dragging to guard their prerogatives.”<sup>68</sup> Although under the provisions of the 1 August 1961 memorandum, McNamara was to select the deputy and chief of staff from the JCS short list, as a sign of confidence in the new director he deferred the selection to Carroll. To strike an initial balance between the departments Carroll chose an Army general for the former and Navy admiral for the latter.<sup>69</sup>

Lieutenant General William Quinn was Carroll’s choice for deputy director. A former West Point football star, Quinn specialized in tactical intelligence. He served in G-2 (the intelligence element) of the Seventh Army during the Second World War, where he helped plan the allied invasion of Normandy. After the war he served as director of the Strategic Services Unit, an ephemeral precursor of the CIA. With the outbreak of hostilities in Korea in 1950, Quinn was transferred to the theater, where he achieved considerable fame as the commander of 17th Infantry Regiment (nicknamed the “Buffaloes”). During the late nineteen-fifties, he was shuffled between a variety of Washington positions, eventually ending up in 1959 as Chief of Information for the Army. Roswell Gilpatric knew Quinn from his tenure with the Air Force during the Korean War and recommended him to McNamara as DIA Director. Yet McNamara was more comfortable with Carroll, for the Secretary knew him personally, and therefore chose him as director. In the end, Quinn took place in the bureaucratic race, becoming Carroll’s deputy. To round out the command staff, Rear Admiral Samuel

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<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Bamford, *Puzzle Palace*, pp. 134-149.

<sup>67</sup> For details of appointment see Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, “Appointment of Director, Defense Intelligence Agency,” 12 August 1961 (No declassification date). Reported in *New York Times*, “Intelligence Job Given To General,” 13 August 1961 (37:1).

<sup>68</sup> Personal interview with Roswell L. Gilpatric, 23 July 1992. McNamara instructed Carroll: “I am holding you personally responsible for the expeditious establishment of DIA and for the development of all plans necessary to its activation. Office of the Secretary of Defense, “Specific Responsibilities of the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency,” 12 August 1961 (Declassified at request of author) p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> The tenure of the director was four years; the deputy director three years; the chief of staff two years. For details of the Quinn and Frankel appointments see Office of the Secretary of Defense, McNamara to Lemnitzer, 29 August 1961, folder “CCS 5229 (2 August 1961),” box 114, JCS files, National Archives. Also see *New York Times*, “Two Named To Intelligence Posts,” 30 August 1961 (10:2).

Frankel was chosen as the chief of staff. A Russian expert, Quinn served with the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) during World War II. After the war, he was loaned to the CIA's Office of Research Estimates (ORE), where he set up the Eastern Europe and USSR desks. Frankel subsequently served in sundry intelligence-related positions, including deputy director of ONI. He occupied this position in 1960, when he was approached by Carroll and offered the post of DIA chief of staff. Given the opposition of the Navy to the centralization of intelligence, Quinn's recollection of his response to the offer is revealing:

I must say that probably like all the other intelligence officers in the Army and Navy, I didn't think it would work. I thought that the establishment of another super intelligence agency would just put more people in at the top, and that instead of costing less it would probably cost more, and that each military intelligence agency was bound by law to serve its own service, and this might degenerate into a watering-down of intelligence and not calling the shots as they were seen. This was my feeling.

After I talked with General Carroll, it was quite evident to me that his was no parochial viewpoint. He was a general in the Air Force, but he was an American patriot who had undertaken this job with the enthusiastic purpose to accomplish the reason why it was established . . . Another word about General Carroll: I have never worked with a more highly principled and more ethical man in my life. Very thorough, a lawyer be training, I believe he was, a very outstanding lay person in the Catholic Church, and, in all respects, a considerate, quietly intense patriot as we like to feel we have them.<sup>70</sup>

It initially appeared that McNamara's gamble paid off. Carroll was able to convince many military officers who were opposed to the consolidation of intelligence in principle to support (or at the very least, acquiesce to) the establishment of the DIA. Even military officers who were otherwise critical of McNamara and his policies praised his appointment of and deference to General Carroll, conceding that the Secretary of Defense "had a great vision to ensure that the Department he was responsible for had adequate intelligence for tactical and strategic purposes."<sup>71</sup>

In early August, Carroll, Quinn, and Frankel, assisted by three colonels (representing the Army, Air Force, and Marines) and a Navy captain, gathered in a small OMPOS office in the Pentagon to formulate the activation plan of the DIA. Quinn recalls that they began with little more than "a pad and pencil." Despite this humble beginning, in succeeding days Carroll and his staff assembled a detailed inventory of all Defense Department intelligence and counterintelligence assets and conducted a series of studies designed to give them a comprehensive overview of the military intelligence apparatus: performance, methods, and requirements.<sup>72</sup> An additional study contrasted the military effort with that of the CIA.<sup>73</sup> In the middle of August Carroll added nine officers to the staff to

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<sup>70</sup> Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel B. Frankel, pp. 444-46.

<sup>71</sup> Confidential interview, senior Army intelligence official.

<sup>72</sup> Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, "DoD Intelligence and Counterintelligence Inventory," 23 August 1961 (Declassified at request of author) pp. 1-3.

<sup>73</sup> Personal interview with Lt. Gen. William Quinn, 8 May 1992.

examine current intelligence, production and estimates, and collection requirements.<sup>74</sup> The project was supervised by OMPOS (future Lyndon Johnson aide Joseph Califano acted as liaison) and the MIB (formally activated 15 August 1961 on ad hoc basis).

In conducting these studies of military intelligence, Carroll and his staff frequently consulted with the armed services. Relations between Carroll and the military departments were cordial; little delay or stonewalling to requests for information was reported. Nevertheless, opposition to the establishment of the DIA persisted within the Army and Navy.<sup>75</sup> The Director of OMPOS Solis Horwitz, who was designated as McNamara's principal staff advisor on the establishment of DIA, remembered:

... there was considerable opposition. Everybody was afraid ... the opposition came, generally, from all over. The intelligence function had traditionally been in the military departments. Everybody yelled, "Oh, it's a function of command!" Well, you know it took us a long time to get it through to these people and really to get it clear in our own mind. "Well, gentlemen, we agree with you. What you're overlooking is that command is not over in this side of the house [that is, the military departments]; it's over here [that is, the Secretary and JCS]. And that's why we want to move it over here." Well, this is the type of opposition you got. I think, basically, that they didn't want to change. By virtue of being in the intelligence business, the military departments were still in the operational business, and they wanted to continue to be in the operational business.<sup>76</sup>

Only the Air Force -- perennially seeking to expand its power and influence -- truly endorsed the creation of the DIA, as it was quick to realize the opportunity the agency presented the young department to enhance its prestige vis-a-vis the older military services. Not only did the DIA offer the Air Force the chance to increase its influence over national intelligence processes and products, but it allowed the service to transfer many of its intelligence officers from SAC to DIA. Such transfers effectively reduced the number of intelligence analysts assigned to the Air Force, and enabled the service to claim, somewhat disingenuously, that it had reduced its personnel requirements accordingly. Although the alteration was nominal, it was timely, for the Air Force was under pressure from Congress to limit the explosive growth of its intelligence staff in recent years.<sup>77</sup> Both inducements led

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<sup>74</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, "Plan for Activation of the Defense Intelligence Agency," 29 September 1961 (Declassified at request of author) p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Of the two services, the Navy was most antagonistic to DIA. It is difficult to gauge the depth of opposition, as military officers tend to mitigate the dispute; referring to the service's position as "less joint-inclined." Many acknowledged that Naval resistance took the form of footdragging, yet were quick to sidestep the implications, qualifying the assertion with phrases like: "however, not in the sense of being detrimental to the agency."

<sup>76</sup> Transcript, Solis Horwitz oral history interview, pp. 17-18.

<sup>77</sup> Confidential interview, senior DIA official. He wryly observed that although the intelligence analysts assigned to the Air Force Intelligence Center were transferred to DIA, they remained in the same building in Arlington Hall Station, many at the same desk. They simply changed the sign on the desk from "Air Force" to "DIA."

the Air Force to champion the DIA and account for the preponderance of Air Force officers in management positions throughout the early years of the agency.

Carroll and his staff completed their studies of military intelligence in early September and, based on these studies, thereafter formulated a number of recommendations which served as the activation plan for the DIA.<sup>78</sup> Central to these recommendations was the premise that the most effective procedure for the transfer of intelligence functions to DIA was to remove a single intelligence activity from the military departments or the J-2 and relocate it within DIA. Subsequently, this "core" component would be supplemented with similar components from other departments until the DIA possessed and performed the intelligence function in its entirety. An unfortunate consequence of this process was that the DIA developed unevenly, for functions and their corresponding components were assimilated at disparate rates. Another important premise of the recommendations was that the DIA would command unlimited recruiting and transfer powers. As Admiral Frankel observed:

The idea was the in effecting the Defense Intelligence Agency, the services would each contribute the best qualified people in all the military intelligence fields. The director of the Defense Intelligence Agency consulted the other intelligence agencies' directors, made known his requirements, and I must say that they responded with their best people. General Carroll, at least at the beginning, interviewed every one of the people who were proposed to him, together with General Quinn and myself, to be sure that he was getting top-notch people, and he did. General Carroll had the full backing of the Secretary of Defense and of the White House in everything that he did.<sup>79</sup>

Both premises were the foundation of the "Plan for the Activation of the Defense Intelligence Agency," completed by Carroll and his staff in six weeks, and forwarded to the JCS on 18 September 1961. The JCS concurred with the plan, with minor modifications, and forwarded it to the Secretary of Defense for approval. McNamara endorsed the plan on 29 September 1961. In its final form, the DIA activation plan embraced the worthy goal of the full integration of military intelligence functions and resources, albeit in a deliberate, evolutionary manner. Given that this would take some time to achieve, for the present the DIA was ordered to assume military planning, coordination, and management functions. The plan established the DIA as two directorates composed of five offices. The agency was initially structured as follows:

The Directorate of Acquisitions (DIAAQ), composed of:

The Office of Requirements (DIAAQ-1);

The Office of Collection Management (DIAAQ-2);

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<sup>78</sup> Personal interview with Lt. General William Quinn, 8 May 1992.

<sup>79</sup> Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel B. Frankel, pp. 447-48.

The Directorate of Processing, composed of:

The Production Planning Group (DIAAP-1);

The Estimates Office (DIAAP-2); and

The Current Intelligence and Indications Center (DIAAP-3).

The Directorate of Acquisitions was established as the central military repository of collection requirements. Defense Department agencies were to submit intelligence requirements to the Office of Requirements, where they would be evaluated, prioritized, and assigned to the agency or service with the appropriate capabilities to fulfill the request. These latter activities were to be supervised by the Office of Collection Management. The Directorate of Processing was designated as the locus of national intelligence production within the Defense Department. Therein, the Production Planning Group was responsible for conducting a comprehensive examination of the evaluative intelligence components of the armed services in order that this function could be transferred to DIA, in the form of the long-promised Production Center, by the middle of 1962. The remaining offices, Estimates and Current Intelligence and Indications, were J-2 elements that were simply transferred in their entirety from the Joint Staff to DIA. The Estimates Office was tasked with representing the DIA in USIB meetings and advising the Director of the DIA on military contributions to NIEs and SNIEs. The Current Intelligence and Indications Center maintained a 24-hour Alert Center to monitor international developments and provided current all-source intelligence bulletins to all concerned national agencies.<sup>80</sup>

It is noteworthy that the two substantive intelligence activities that the DIA initially assumed -- collection requirements and current intelligence and indications -- were those proposed in the original JCS concept paper of 2 March 1961. This was indicative of the triumph of the military leadership. In fact, the final activation plan for the DIA was a testament to the perseverance of the JCS. The "compromise" which created the agency clearly favored the JCS. In the end, nearly all the operational preferences of the military departments and the JCS were adopted: the DIA was established, albeit in an indirect fashion, under the auspices of the JCS; the service intelligence chiefs were formally empowered through the MIB to advise and assist the Director of the DIA; the staff of the agency was largely composed of military men, based not on a career program (which would risk severing the link between the intelligence officer and his parent service, thus mitigating departmental loyalties<sup>81</sup>), but rotational tours of duty; and the devolution of intelligence functions to the DIA would be gradual and measured. Lest there exist any uncertainty over the deliberate pace of reform, in a memorandum of 3 October 1961 to McGeorge Bundy, Gilpatric commented:

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<sup>80</sup> "Plan for Activation of the Defense Intelligence Agency," pp. 3-5; and Memorandum from the Director Designated, DIA, to the Secretary of Defense through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Plan for the Activation of the Defense Intelligence Agency," 18 September 1961, 39 pages, folder "CCS 5229 DIA (5 July 1961) Sec 2," box 113, JCS files, National Archives. Also see Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 91-104.

<sup>81</sup> A significant omission from the activation plan was provisions for the cross-servicing of civilian personnel. See Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 59.

General Carroll has been instructed that in the event any conflicts arise between meeting the planned activation dates of DIA organizational components and the effective conduct of Defense intelligence activities, in no case will a planned activation date take priority.<sup>82</sup>

There is considerable merit to this provision, as the continuity and the quality of the intelligence process must be safeguarded. Yet there is also a more subtle aspect of gradual implementation: it allowed the services to continue to manage reform to ensure that their protected interests were not threatened. Thus McNamara's vision of radical reorganization was abandoned for incremental reform. Consequently, the DIA never achieved nor profited from the organizational impetus that accompanies drastic change. As one former official remarked: "DIA was born old. McNamara just gathered the drones and put them all in one building."<sup>83</sup>

By design the DIA was a weak creature. The agency was, and here one must risk the unpardonable truth, largely impotent; its authority fictional; its resources meager. The agency had little statutory jurisdiction over the military departments, who would continue to exercise considerable discretion in their espionage activities. The JCS had succeeded in creating the DIA in their image: as a weak deliberative body. Aside from executing several minor budgetary functions, the DIA conformed to McNamara's original vision only in that the agency would consolidate military representation on the USIB. McNamara was to discover, much to his chagrin, that although the military departments had agreed to this reorganization in principle, they would contest it in practice. This revelation, however, was still some time away, and in its absence McNamara formally approved the activation of the Defense Intelligence Agency on 1 October 1961.

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<sup>82</sup> Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Roswell Gilpatric to McGeorge Bundy, 3 October 1961 (No declassification date) p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Prados, *The Soviet Estimate*, p. 179. The Church Committee elucidated upon this point: "As a consequence [of starting the DIA slowly], the Agency never had the impetus which many other newborn government entities have enjoyed and profited from. Dominated and staffed in large part by the professional military, it is not surprising that DIA has come to concentrate on the tactical intelligence demands of the services and their field commands." Church Committee. (I) p. 350.

## Chapter Three

### Adversity The Arduous Early Months

As should be apparent from the previous chapter, on paper the DIA was a feeble entity, dependent upon the military departments and the JCS for intelligence assets and personnel. It was up to Carroll and McNamara to breathe life into the agency, to make it a viable espionage organization. Carroll, motivated by his profound conviction that defense intelligence operations could be substantially improved, essayed to secure sufficient resources for the agency. McNamara, driven by budgetary and strategic requirement, strove to implement USIB reform. The campaign of the two men was thwarted on three fronts, primarily by the temerity and intransigence of the military departments. The first section of the chapter details the endeavors, for the most part in vain, of the director of the DIA to acquire the necessary men and material to make the agency tenable. It also explores the deleterious effects of the absence of a putative mission on the inchoate organization. The objectives of the Secretary of Defense in the reform of the NIE process is explored in the second section. The motives of his allies and opponents are recounted, as are their tactics, and the bureaucratic stalemate which ensued. The third section investigates the role of the DIA in the formulation of the Viet Cong order of battle estimate, which pitted the agency against a powerful field command. The failure to the DIA to press its assessments and to assert its authority would have significant repercussions on the American military effort in Southeast Asia. After chronicling the defeat of the agency on these fronts, the fourth section surveys congressional concerns over the agency, as expressed in a House Armed Services inquiry in the spring of 1962. The chapter concludes with an appraisal of the first months of the DIA.

## Constraints, 1961-62

Although formally activated on 1 October 1961, on that date the DIA was little more than a skeleton of an organization. Though McNamara had authorized the transfer of 500 personnel (250 military and 250 civilians) from the military departments to the agency, in the early months of October the actual staff was sparse, consisting of under 25 officers.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the physical presence of the agency was confined: the DIA was located in approximately 2000 square feet of borrowed space at the Pentagon. At the start of the month only two elements were operational: the Office of Collection Management and the Production Planning Staff. In line with the "core" component strategy which Carroll and the DIA planning staff had embraced, in mid-October the Estimates Office was partially activated; its staff for the most part drawn from the J-2 Estimates Division. On 1 November the Office of Requirements became operational. The office was composed entirely of the Air Force Requirements Division, located at Arlington Hall Station in Virginia.<sup>2</sup> On 5 November 1961, the largest element of the DIA became operational, the Current Intelligence and Indications Center (CIIC). The "core" component of the CIIC was the Air Force Warning Division, supplemented by the Current Intelligence Division of the J-2 and the corresponding elements of the armed services. As a DIA analyst observed, in effect, the Air Force's current intelligence facility absorbed its Army and Navy counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Thus, by late November the first stage of the activation strategy -- the transfer of "core" components to DIA -- was complete. Yet the second stage of the strategy -- building around these cores -- proved to be problematic, for the armed services delayed in transferring additional functional elements and their staff to the agency. As a result, the early months of the agency were marked by a dearth of qualified personnel.

There were several causes for this shortage of staff. First, the activation plan made no provisions for the cross-servicing of civilian personnel to DIA from the military departments. After some early confusion, an informal agreement was reached whereby the armed services loaned or detailed civilians to the agency. These civilian staffers were temporarily processed by OSD's Civilian Personnel Office. Yet the processing procedures were cumbersome, and lengthy transfer delays were frequent. Second, the service intelligence elements were often understaffed (especially those from J-2) prior to their transfer to DIA. Third, General Carroll's preoccupation with security, based in part upon his counterintelligence background and his recent investigation into the two NSA defectors (Bernon F. Mitchell and William H. Martin), caused him to personally review the transfer of all personnel to DIA. The obvious consequence of such fastidious vetting was long delays in clearing individuals for assignment to DIA.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, ASD (Manpower), "Initial Staffing for Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)," 16 October 1961, folder "CCS 5229 Defense Communications Agency (5 July 1961) Sec 2," box 114, JCS files, National Archives. The DIA was assigned 54 officers from the Army and Navy respectively, and 64 from the Air Force.

<sup>2</sup> OSD, ASD (Manpower), "Initial Staffing for Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)," 16 October 1961.

<sup>3</sup> George Allen, *The Indochina Wars, 1950-75*. Unpublished manuscript. Exhibit No. 1829, fiche nos. 879-881, *Westmoreland*, p. 171.

<sup>4</sup> Interviews, former DIA officials. Also see Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 75.

Fourth, the armed services were slow to identify qualified officers available to DIA for the planning staffs.<sup>5</sup> This was particularly true of the Navy, which still tended to view the DIA as a creature of the Air Force.

The last point can not be overstated. With the bitter taste of the JSTPS and the loss of control over strategic nuclear targeting still in its mouth, the Navy viewed the DIA as a bureaucratic ploy by the Air Force to gain control over the strategic intelligence process. One former Director of Naval Intelligence believes naval opposition to the DIA emanated from three sources in equal measure: traditional resistance to change, opposition to inter-service efforts, and enmity toward the Air Force and its affiliates. The suspicion of Naval officers was confirmed by the proliferation of aviators in top DIA management positions: the director, the head of CIIC, and the chief of Intelligence Production were Air Force officers. Consequently, the Navy was convinced that the DIA was a creature of the Air Force and fought the expansion of its authority. The admiral remarked, "The Navy fought against the establishment of the DIA tooth and nail, lost the battle, but fought on."<sup>6</sup> For example, the Navy refused to allow DIA CIIC analysts to brief their senior staff.<sup>7</sup> The recalcitrance of the Navy's brass, led by CNO Admiral Arleigh Burke and Chief of Staff Admiral Rufus Taylor, to accept the DIA was illustrated in their refusal to transfer top Naval intelligence analysts to DIA posts.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the Burke and Taylor frequently transferred their poorest analysts to the agency.<sup>9</sup> The Navy also refused to fill DIA billets assigned to flag officers with Navy flag officers; instead nominating officers of lesser rank for the posts. For a short time Carroll tolerated this stonewalling. Finally, in exasperation, he offered

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<sup>5</sup> A perennial problem for DIA is assessing the seniority (that is, the date of rank) of officers from different services; exemplified in the comparatively rapid advance of Air Force officers over their naval counterparts. Naval officers often feel victimized, as it is not uncommon for a Navy captain to have a date of rank exceeding ten years over an Air Force colonel; although nominally both are of equal rank. This dilemma was evident from the founding of the agency. Chief of Staff Admiral Samuel B. Frankel recalled: "I remember talking to General Carroll after we'd had many discussions on dates of rank, where the Navy was really low on the totem pole, and I said, 'General, I've finally figured out how the Air Force establishes dates of rank.' He said, 'I wish you would tell me.' I said, 'It's quite simple. When a senior Air Force general dies, he bequeaths his date of rank to somebody whom he likes.'" Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel B. Frankel oral history interview, p. 455.

<sup>6</sup> Confidential interview, former Director of Naval Intelligence.

<sup>7</sup> The Army finally relented in the spring of 1961 and allowed an Air Force officer with the DIA to brief the its senior staff. The Navy remained intransigent; it is unclear when they finally assented to DIA briefings. Confidential interview, former DIA Editorial and Briefing unit officer.

<sup>8</sup> Burke and Taylor were heirs to the long naval tradition of virtual autonomy. Like their contemporaries, Admirals Arthur Radford (CJCS 1953-57) and Thomas Moorer (CNO 1967-70), they were contemptuous of the joint system. Regarding the latter officers, retired Admiral Eugene Carroll remarked: "I guess you could call Moorer and Radford the old guard. Both of those guys are just pure Navy. Hell, they'd rather bomb Omaha [Headquarters of SAC] than Moscow. They just absolutely hate the Air Force; they spend every minute they can can trying to fight the Air Force. They did everything they could to circumvent the joint system. It's become a tradition in the Navy." In the interest of fairness, here is Moorer's response: "That's just bullshit." Quoted in Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 209.

<sup>9</sup> Regarding these inept analysts, a former CNI remarked that, "We [the Navy] gave them to DIA ready to be courtmartialled; we were always surprised when they weren't." This practice persisted for over a decade.

the billets to the Air Force, who eagerly filled them. Thus the Air Force captured many of the senior positions in the fledgling DIA, and the Navy's claim that the DIA was a creature of the aviators came to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Thus understaffing was the most pressing problem which confronted Carroll and his staff in the early months of the agency, impairing the ability of the agency to respond to the intelligence requirements of the OSD and the JCS. Rather than confront the services over this footdragging, Carroll decided to bide his time and wait for the promised transfers. Years later the first Director of the DIA ruminated that he should have taken a more direct approach to overcome service impediments, that he should have assumed his full authority under the agency charter to force the military departments to comply with his personnel needs.<sup>10</sup> Yet such speculation was idle: Joe Carroll was first and foremost a team player, a man who did things by the book. Despite his considerable integrity, he was not the type of man who would directly challenge his superior officers. That would have been entirely out of character. A colleague remarked, "Joe Carroll possessed an innately cautious state of mind."<sup>11</sup> Instead, he chose to consult all parties involved, go through formal channels, and submit all the paperwork. It was, in the words of his chiefs of staff, a "long-drawn-out decision process."<sup>12</sup> In the end Carroll thought simple persistence would wear down the services, that he would eventually be provided the manpower and resources needed to make the DIA work. In this he miscalculated: Carroll failed to perceive the depth of the opposition, the determination of his adversaries, and the formidable mass of the bureaucracies lined up against him. To prevail against the combined weight of the military departments an officer would have to possess exceptional fortitude and a strong streak of independence, bordering on rebelliousness. While Joe Carroll undoubtedly possessed the former attribute, he lacked the latter. After all, one does not become a general during peacetime by going against the grain.

Thus the DIA never gained true organizational momentum following its establishment. Instead of hitting the ground in stride, it limped forward. A rare opportunity was lost in these early months. The first days of any organization are a critical time, for it is then when an agency is largely defined and given shape. The metal is still hot: pliant and malleable. It is the ideal time for leaders to convey institutional objectives and seize the personnel and resources necessary to achieve these objectives. It is a time when precedents are established, both within the agency (as standard operating procedures are designed) and outside (where its relationship to other bureaucratic entities is decided). In organizations, as in human beings, identity for the most part is forged in the early years.

Organizational theorists point out that a clear sense of mission is an essential component of successful agencies.<sup>13</sup> In the DIA, the concept of mission was muddled and nebulous. This was largely a consequence of the origins of the agency: in order to forge a consensus among the powerful interests within the DOD for the establishment of the agency, each institution was granted a stake in DIA. For OSD, it was authoritative NIEs; for the JCS, it was jurisdictional control; for the services,

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<sup>10</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 52.

<sup>11</sup> Confidential interview, senior DIA official.

<sup>12</sup> Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel B. Frankel oral history interview, p. 453.

<sup>13</sup> For a synthesis of contemporary organizational thinking see Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 18-123.

it was the preservation of departmental control over tactical intelligence.<sup>14</sup> In trying to be all things to all parties, the DIA sacrificed much of its own identity. Even its primary objective was a matter of uncertainty. The DIA directive stated “the organization, direction, management and control” of assets assigned to it and the “review and coordination” of the remaining military intelligence functions, but this was vague and capacious. In concrete and practical terms, *what was the agency established to do?* Even the command staff was uncertain: Carroll thought the primary task of the agency was the production of strategic intelligence for Washington policymakers, Quinn believed it was to unify the collection requirements of the military intelligence community, Frankel argued that it was to integrate and supervise the defense intelligence budget.<sup>15</sup> The mission of the DIA was never explicitly addressed by civilian policymakers and military leaders; disparate opinions endured. Given this lack of unanimity over the central tasks of the agency, it is not surprising that there was little sense of mission among the staff of the DIA.

The search for defining operational objectives was also frustrated by a lack of autonomy. In fairness to Carroll and his staff, it should be noted that here they had little room for maneuver. The MIB supervised agency decisionmaking, effectively protecting realms which the services considered vital. The deliberate manner in which the agency was established allowed the military departments to impede the development of DIA simply by citing concerns (accurate or not) over the degradation of the military intelligence effort during the process of transferal. The service intelligence efforts were given clear priority. Moreover, the agency’s dependence upon the services for resources and personnel further weakened Carroll’s bureaucratic hand. The DIA directive provided that the director had full control *only* of those military intelligence resources *directly* assigned to the agency; he exercised vague “managerial responsibility” over the remainder.<sup>16</sup> In practical terms, this stipulation denied Carroll jurisdiction over the bulk of military espionage operations. He had few cards to play. His dilemma was illustrated by the fact that it took the DIA over *three years* to become fully operational in all assigned functional areas. Such delay is remarkable, perhaps unprecedented. When the early months of the DIA are compared with those of other successful intelligence agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or the NSA, the differences are striking. Both agencies were established with clearly defined objectives that were well-understood. Both agencies were provided with the necessary labor and capital to fulfill their central tasks. Most importantly, both organizations have relatively

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<sup>14</sup> Graham Allison observes: “Considerable misinterpretation is a standard part of the functioning of each government. Any proposal that is widely accepted is perceived by different men to do quite different things and to meet different needs. Misperception is in a sense the grease that allows cooperation among people whose differences otherwise would hardly allow them to coexist.” Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1971, p. 178.

<sup>15</sup> Carroll from interviews with former DIA officials; Quinn from personal interview with author, 8 May 1992. Frankel from Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel B. Frankel oral history interview, pp. 438-43. In every interview I conducted I asked the interviewee what he perceived the *primary* purpose of the agency to be. The diversity of response was astonishing. Even among former top officials there was a disturbing lack of unanimity. The DIA, like the succubi of lore, was all things to all men.

<sup>16</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 91.

undisputed jurisdiction within their respective functional areas. Consequently, both developed sufficient institutional independence to create and maintain a unique identity, a distinctiveness which greatly contributed to their later success.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, the DIA was denied this autonomy and discretion. Its authority was vague; its jurisdiction disputed. Its command staff operated under heavy constraints with sparse discretion. In fact, a JCS memorandum of 16 November 1961 informed Carroll that, "Within purview of JCS Policy Memo No. 132, the Defense Intelligence Agency will be considered as an element of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."<sup>18</sup> In addition to explicit restraints such as this on its jurisdiction, the military departments engaged in a subtle maneuver to undercut the authority of the new agency. Soon after the DIA was established, the armed services requested that the DIA charter be revised, ostensibly to correct emerging deficiencies. However, an officer directly involved in this effort stated that the expressed intent of the services in this endeavor was to limit the authority of the DIA over the intelligence activities of the armed services. He ironically observed that several officers involved in this attempt to dilute the nascent power of the DIA had served on General Carroll's planning staff which had drafted the DIA charter. After serving on the joint team, they returned to the military departments to circumvent the very directive they had helped create.<sup>19</sup> As a result of these efforts, within two years the original directive underwent six revisions, each weakening authority of the DIA vis-a-vis the military services. Moreover, supplements, interpretative memoranda, memoranda of agreement, and other orders and prescriptions followed, which further defined and limited the reach of the intelligence agency.<sup>20</sup> Given this want of independence, it is not surprising that the DIA never developed the distinctive character and mission that are intrinsic to successful government agencies.

## Strife over the Reform of Strategic Intelligence, 1961-62

As General Carroll and his staff struggled to make the DIA a viable intelligence organization, Secretary McNamara and his aides fought to reform the NIE process. Under their guidance, on 16 October the DIA Estimates Office was partially activated. Composed primarily of the J-2 Estimates Division, the office was charged with providing estimative support to the OSD, JCS, U&S Commands, and the military services. The DIA historian, Deane Allen, observed:

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<sup>17</sup> Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 97-98, 115-180. Also see Stanford J. Ungar, *FBI*. Boston: Little Brown, 1976; and Bamford, *Puzzle Palace*.

<sup>18</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency [DJSM-1387-61], DIA Director to Vice Director of the Joint Staff, 16 November 1961, folder "CCS 5229 Defense Communications Agency (5 July 1961) Sec 2," box 114, JCS files, National Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Confidential interview, former DIA official.

<sup>20</sup> Cited in Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 43-44.

The scope of DIA's responsibilities was more controlled and inclusive than the service's former relationship with J-2's Estimates Division had been. The DIA mission emphasized the Secretary of Defense relationship and dropped that part of the J-2 estimates mission that provided for "the policy direction of joint target studies and projects." The DIA Estimates Office provided a central control point for the production of finished intelligence by "reviewing and coordinating as directed, the intelligence estimative functions retained by, or assigned to, the military departments," and providing intelligence for OSD contractors.<sup>21</sup>

Thus the Estimates Office was intended primarily to be a tool of the Secretary of Defense. McNamara wasted little time in utilizing this instrument. On 5 October the Secretary of Defense, with the approval of President Kennedy, charged the Director of the DIA (through the Office of Estimates) to assume responsibility for representing the Defense Department on USIB committees. The fact that the Secretary took the proposal to Kennedy for concurrence is revealing. Due to the President's confidence in McNamara, military matters were rarely referred to Kennedy for approval. The fact that McNamara sought Presidential approval in this instance suggests that the move was motivated by bureaucratic considerations: McNamara wanted the military to know that in implementing this reform he had the full backing of the President. There was no effective appeal. It is also notable that despite the slow activation pace of most DIA functions, the implementation of this directive was relatively swift.<sup>22</sup> There is little doubt that McNamara was eager to get the Office of Estimates quickly involved in the NIE process.

This eagerness may be attributed to two factors. First, and most importantly, McNamara and his assistants were ardent for the office to generate the strategic intelligence necessary for the new Planning-Programming-Budgeting System which was to be implemented in early 1963.<sup>23</sup> A primary purpose of the system was to clarify the long-range defense requirements of the United States, and reduce what OSD perceived to be arbitrary decisions by the military departments on weapon system development. On 10 November 1961, the Comptroller Charles Hitch sent a memo to Director Carroll detailing the role of the Office of Estimates in PPBS. Deane Allen summarized the instructions thus:

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<sup>21</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>22</sup> The following dates were set for effective membership on the USIB: On 4 November 1961 the DIA was to replace the J-2 representative on the Watch Committee and the Current Intelligence Bulletin Panel; on 5 November 1961 the DIA was to assume responsibility for current military intelligence on the Critical Communications Committee, Berlin, Cuba, and Arab-Israeli Situation Committee, Cold War Situation Group; and on the latter date the DIA was given observer status on the Joint Atomic Energy Committee and the Guided Missile and Astronautics Intelligence Committee. In the majority of instances the J-2 was allowed to "retain membership on these committees and participate with respect to substance -- estimative inputs within its competence and availability of personnel." JCS [JSM-1202-61], "Staff Relationships and Procedures Between Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Defense Intelligence Agency in Current Intelligence," 6 November 1961, folder "CCS 5229 Defense Communications Agency (5 July 1961) Sec 2," box 114, JCS files, National Archives, p. 8. Also see Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> McNamara's former Special Assistant, Adam Yarmolinsky, identified PPBS as being the most significant consideration to which all others were ancillary. Interview with author, 13 October 1992.

the intelligence estimates prepared in DOD were not adequate for planning purposes. They needed to extend five to ten years into the future to compensate for long leadtimes for weapon systems development; assess the future enemy military posture in terms of weapon systems and types of forces rather than in terms of weapons and their performance characteristics; assess economic feasibility and limitations of an enemy's future weapon systems and the consequent alternatives open to him; and develop a yardstick by which to measure economic costs. In short, DOD required the Agency to program intelligence support according to long-range projections of Soviet alternative force structures and costing.<sup>24</sup>

Second, McNamara was impatient for the Office of Estimates to produce strategic intelligence in support of the new counterforce / no-cities nuclear doctrine which the administration recently embraced. After assuming office, the Secretary was dismayed to learn that the American nuclear plan (SIOP-62) drawn up by the JSTPS in December 1960 provided the President with a single option: an all-out preemptive nuclear first-strike against the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China. Population per se was not targeted, yet military and industrial complexes in cities received multiple warheads. JSTPS calculated that if the entire US nuclear force was launched, over 285 million Russians and Chinese would be killed and more than 40 million would be seriously injured. Appalled by the immorality and rigidity of such a doctrine, McNamara turned to the alternative counterforce doctrine advocated by the RAND analysts William Kaufman and Marvin Stern; a doctrine both Enthoven and Hitch supported. This strategy stressed a limited initial strike aimed at the destruction of enemy military forces (rather than the more capacious "war-making capabilities" of SIOP-62), avoiding cities and preserving a ready reserve force of nuclear weapons to be employed as a bargaining lever to seek a favorable resolution and an end to hostilities. McNamara tasked the JCS with exploring the possibility of this doctrine as Project Number One of the "Ninety-Six Trombones" inquiries.<sup>25</sup>

The military balked at this strategy. The concepts of "controlled response" and "negotiating pauses" integral to counterforce were anathema to military thinking. Many senior military officers believed that nuclear weapons should only be employed on a massive scale. Nevertheless, in May 1961, McNamara directed the JCS to incorporate the concept of counterforce targeting into a revised SIOP-63. The new SIOP was to offer five options, progressing from a limited nuclear launch to a comprehensive strike. In effect, the idea of Flexible Response was incorporated into the nuclear realm. The Air Force, however, was intransigent: the Air Staff refused to modify the targeting of its Minutemen ICBMs, arguing that the new doctrine was unfeasible. In the face of such a brazen challenge, Marvin Stern, the Assistant Director for Strategic Systems in the DOD, canceled Minuteman funding for one month, pending a commitment from the Air Force to re-target the

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<sup>24</sup> Cited in Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 100.

<sup>25</sup> The directive began: "Prepare a draft memorandum revising the basic national security policies and assumptions, including the assumptions relating to 'counterforce' strikes ..." See Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p. 273.

missiles, despite the fact that this drastic measure was clearly illegal.<sup>26</sup> Under this threat, the Air Force finally relented. On 23 September 1961 McNamara sent Kennedy a Draft Presidential Memorandum (DPM) noting:

The forces I am recommending have been chosen to provide the United States with the capability, in the event of a Soviet nuclear attack, first, to strike back against Soviet bomber bases, missile sites and other installations associated with long-range nuclear forces, in order to reduce Soviet power and limit the damage that can be done to us by vulnerable Soviet follow-on forces, while, second, holding in protected reserve forces capable of destroying the Soviet urban society, if necessary, in a controlled and deliberate way.<sup>27</sup>

Though the administration committed itself to the counterforce strategy in the fall of 1961, it was not officially acknowledged until 5 May 1962, when McNamara publicly described the no-cities doctrine in a commencement address at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Counterforce placed a heavy burden on the military intelligence community: it called for precise strikes against Soviet offensive forces which in turn required timely and accurate estimates of the location and capabilities of Russian military units. The experiences of the bomber and missile "gaps" could not be repeated. Consensus and accuracy were imperative. McNamara expected the DIA's Office of Estimates to spearhead this drive for unanimity.

Both considerations -- PPBS and counterforce -- drove McNamara to accelerate the activation of the Office of Estimates. The office was originally divided into five divisions: Soviet Bloc, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Latin America, and Scientific and Technical (the latter primarily coordinated input from the armed services, as the production and management of this type of intelligence remained with the military departments). Yet the office was ill-equipped for the Promethean task McNamara set for it, for this element, like the majority of DIA offices, was chronically understaffed. Although the Office of Estimates was formally assigned one hundred and four staffers, in fact in the fall of 1961 the office contained only seven estimators and one clerk.<sup>28</sup>

Irrespective of this shortage of personnel, McNamara continued to press forward with his plans for USB reform, wherein the DIA was to play a major role. On 31 October 1961 the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations (OSO) was disestablished. Its special clearance responsibilities were reassigned to DIA, and the NSA was directed to report to the Secretary of Defense through an Assistant Secretary of Defense (the Honorable John H. Rubel).<sup>29</sup> McNamara was thereafter reliant on the DIA for strategic intelligence. McNamara pressed the military departments

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<sup>26</sup> When Stern approached the Defense Department's general counsel Cyrus Vance to discover what measures could be employed to subdue the Air Force, Vance stated, "Anything you can get away with." Quoted in Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p. 280. For details of counterforce, pp. 270-85.

<sup>27</sup> DPM quoted in Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, pp. 281-82.

<sup>28</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 96-98.

<sup>29</sup> Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, "Disestablishment of the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations," 2 October 1961 (No declassification date) p 1.

to transfer the required personnel to the Office of Estimates, so that it might be fully operational as soon as possible. Again, the armed services delayed. They viewed the activation of the office as a prelude to USIB reform; a prospect they feared and contested. In this resistance, the military departments discovered an unlikely ally in DCI Allen Dulles. Dulles was averse to many of the JSG recommendations, particularly that which proposed the substitution of the service intelligence representatives on the USIB with a solitary DIA representative.<sup>30</sup> The latter opinion is notable, given the fact that the DCI was reputed to have little interest in the mundane estimates process, preferring the glamour of covert operations. The proposal made Dulles and senior CIA officials apprehensive for they feared that such a reform would result in the CIA no longer having direct access to raw military intelligence, leaving civilians dependent solely on the judgment of the DIA.<sup>31</sup> Although the USIB meetings were often tumultuous, the frequent open disagreement between the services allowed CIA and civilian officials to discern the divisions within the military intelligence community over raw data and its interpretation. The establishment of the DIA would radically alter this situation. The consolidated military posture created by a single DIA representative would, in effect, suppress (or veil) dissent within the military intelligence community. Civilians would have considerable difficulty in contesting DIA estimates on military matters, for they would lack access to dissenting military evaluations. As one former State Department official stated: "It was desirable to maintain enough service tension to flush out service interests."<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, a unified military intelligence community might also threaten traditional realms of civilian dominance, particularly national reconnaissance. In private, civilian officials complained that the establishment of the DIA would prevent the State Department and CIA from playing the services against one another as they had done so successfully in the past: the strategy of "divide and conquer" would become ineffective against their military rivals. Thus Dulles, motivated by bureaucratic considerations, had supported the JCS in their opposition to a radical reformation of the military intelligence community in the spring of 1961.<sup>33</sup> Despite the compromise which created the DIA, Dulles continued to resist the consolidation of military representation on the USIB, much to the delight of the military departments.

Fortunately for McNamara, Dulles was dismissed as DCI in late November 1961. The move caught few by surprise: by August it was widely known that Kennedy expected the resignation of Dulles for his role in the Bay of Pigs fiasco. However, many in the Democratic party were shocked when the President announced that his successor would be John McCone. McCone was a wealthy conservative Republican from California, who had built his personal fortune during the Second World

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<sup>30</sup> Dulles' views on the JSG recommendations are most fully expressed in Central Intelligence Agency, "Memo to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council: The Seventh Report to the President's Board of Consultants on Foreign Intelligence Activities, dated 4 October 1960," 24 December 1960 (Declassified 10 September 1984) DDRS: 1985-13.

<sup>31</sup> Ross and Wise, *The Invisible Government*, p. 214.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Freedman, *Soviet Strategic Threat*, p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> *New York Times*, 10 April 1961 (16:3).

War in shipbuilding, which caused many liberals to accuse him of being a war profiteer.<sup>34</sup> Thereafter, he served in an assortment of government positions: Assistant Secretary of Defense in 1948; Undersecretary of the Air Force from 1950-51, and finally chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). McCone assumed the position of DCI on 29 November 1961. Though officials at the CIA were initially skeptical of his proclaimed commitment to restore morale and make intelligence products more responsive to the needs of senior policymakers, they were soon impressed with McCone's professionalism and integrity. Ray Cline, an analyst appointed Deputy Director for Intelligence by McCone a year later, reflected:

[McCone] is the only DCI who ever took his role of providing substantive intelligence analysis and estimates to the President as his first priority job, and the only one who considered his duties as coordinating supervisor of the whole intelligence community to be a more important responsibility than the CIA's own clandestine and covert programs.<sup>35</sup>

In his drive to implement USIB reform, McNamara found a welcome ally in John McCone. Though the two frequently clashed over other matters, they agreed on the need to improve the quality of national intelligence products through a reduction in the estimative capabilities of the military services. All the military departments were opposed to this measure; however, the Air Force proved to be the most recalcitrant.

The conflict over the fate of the USIB reforms began in earnest on 2 January 1962, when the DIA's Office of Estimates was fully activated. In past years the J-2 had coordinated service inputs for USIB deliberations: the armed services submitted estimates directly to BNE. With the full activation of the Office of Estimates, McNamara instructed the services to discontinue this practice. Now the services were to submit their raw intelligence and assessments to DIA, who would process and evaluate this material, ultimately producing and submitting putative Defense Department estimates to BNE. In effect, the service evaluative capabilities were being transferred to DIA. It is important to recall that this was McNamara's primary objective in establishing the DIA. This is why he pushed so hard for the full activation of the Office of Estimates while the other components remained in rudimentary stages of development. Service resistance to this measure was strong, despite the fact that the DIA charter contained a provision for including service dissents in Defense Department estimates forwarded to the USIB.<sup>36</sup> As previously discussed, the military leadership feared the loss of independent analysis

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<sup>34</sup> In 1946 the General Accounting Office had investigated this allegation. One of its investigators, Ralph Casey, testified that McCone and his colleagues in the California Shipbuilding Corporation, had profited \$44 million on an initial investment of \$100,000. Casey remarked: "I daresay that at no time in the history of American business whether in wartime or peacetime have so few men made so much money with so little risk and all at the expense of the taxpayers, not only of his generation but of future generations." Quoted in Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>35</sup> Ray S. Cline, *The CIA under Reagan, Bush and Casey: The Evolution of the Agency: Roosevelt to Reagan*. Washington: Acropolis, 1981, p. 216.

<sup>36</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 48.

capabilities, which would result in dependence upon DIA for processing and production. In their minds, this centralization increased the possibility of the suppression of dissent within the military intelligence community and raised the specter that intelligence could be manipulated to serve political ends. Of course, McNamara was concerned with a similar apparition: that the military departments were manipulating intelligence to serve bureaucratic ends (that is, in support of budget requests). Thus the Secretary of Defense and the military departments possessed contradictory views on the Office of Estimates: for the former it held the promise of purging bias from intelligence, for the latter it increased the threat of manipulating intelligence. In the end, it was a question of mistrust: McNamara did not trust the intelligence estimates of the armed services; in turn, they did not trust him. The struggle was over who had the final say in the estimating process.

A bureaucratic war of attrition ensued. Although all the military departments were to some extent involved in the dispute, the Air Force was the most intransigent. Under the leadership of Generals Curtis LeMay and Thomas Powers, the Air Force had long considered assessments of Soviet strategic capabilities to be its sole province. Though the bomber and missile "gaps" tarnished its reputation in this area, the service still believed these threat assessments to be its prerogative. As described in the previous chapter, the loss control of the U-2 program to the CIA in 1960 had galvanized the Air Force, alerting it to the threat of increased civilian interference in traditional departmental activities. McNamara's recent shift from the strategy of massive retaliation (a doctrine which bestowed military primacy upon the bomber and missile programs of the Air Force) to flexible response and counterforce nuclear targeting (which threatened to reduce the department to *primus inter pares*) heightened the apprehension of the Air Staff. Among some of the senior officers a siege mentality set in. They were determined to resist what they perceived to be civilian encroachment. It is not surprising that they generally viewed McNamara's proposals to replace Air Force representation on USIB committees, coupled with the cessation of direct submission of estimates to BNE, with alarm. Yet another departmental prerogative was under threat. Thus they strove to defy McNamara by continuing to submit prominent estimates (including those concerning Soviet strategic capabilities) directly to BNE, spurning the DIA's Office of Estimates. The other services followed the precedent of the Air Force.<sup>37</sup>

McNamara, with McCone's support, strove to force compliance. The services mounted fierce resistance, arguing that the DIA did not have the necessary expertise to perform important intelligence assessments. Of course, the argument was disingenuous: the reason that the DIA did not possess the required expertise was because the services continued to delay the transfer of qualified personnel to the Office of Estimates. When pressed to accelerate the transfer of personnel, the services would stonewall, citing the customary excuse that premature transfers would jeopardize the effectiveness of the military intelligence effort and so put national security at risk. Historically, the argument that any proposal under consideration threatens to "compromise national security" has been the trump card of the intelligence agencies (indeed, it has been the trump card of the executive branch and its agents, employed by statesmen and rogues alike). It was played frequently and effectively. Yet McNamara

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<sup>37</sup> Commenting on the affair, the DIA's historian states, with characteristic sympathy: "Before DIA the J-2 had merely coordinated the service's contribution. Reluctant to break with long established procedures, the services continued to independently submit some of their estimates directly to the Board of National Estimates until 1963, when the practice was ended." Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 98-99.

would have none of this: it was his job to decide what was good for national security, it was the job of the military to follow orders. He ordered compliance. Yet the military can be very cunning about things like this when they want to be, so while they did not openly disregard directives from the Secretary, they continued to delay implementation, completing paperwork, commissioning studies, and complaining about manpower shortages. Classic footdragging. In the Pentagon, bureaucratic struggles are rarely marked by sound and fury; silence and inaction are more common. The latter marked this dispute between McNamara and the Air Force. Its resolution would take almost two years.

It should be noted that this was one of two fronts the Air Force fought civilian policymakers in early 1962. The other front was aerial reconnaissance. Although the Air Force lost control of the U-2 program to the CIA in 1960, the battle over overhead reconnaissance platforms continued. The stakes were increasing: the new generation of satellite systems promised to be a lucrative and prestigious prize.<sup>38</sup> In an attempt to forestall bureaucratic conflict, the Eisenhower administration had established the inter-agency National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) on 25 August 1960.<sup>39</sup> Yet the creation of the office did not quell the strife: the Air Force continued to design satellites although this function was clearly assigned to the CIA. McNamara joined with McCone to assert the primacy of the civilian agency in overhead intelligence. In this, the motive of the Secretary of Defense was simple: he was determined to check the growth in the bureaucratic power of the Air Force. McNamara and McCone won the first of many battles in early 1961, when they persuaded President Kennedy to support them. On 16 January 1962, Kennedy signed a Presidential directive that instructed McCone to exert greater statutory authority over the entire intelligence community.<sup>40</sup> The message to the bureaucracy was clear: the President upheld the authority of the DCI over national intelligence programs and weighed in on the side of the CIA in the dispute over aerial reconnaissance. Yet this was but one victory in a long campaign. Unlike the struggle over estimate reform, this was a long and bitter conflict, which raged until 1965. Even today, otherwise gregarious Air Force officers involved in the dispute will go silent when the subject is brought up. The bureaucratic wounds run deep.

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<sup>38</sup> From 1959 to 1960 the Corona and SAMOS projects (CIA and Air Force programs respectively) competed for funding as the premier reconnaissance satellite system.

<sup>39</sup> The NRO operated under the auspices of the Undersecretary of the Air Force, Office of Space Systems, and reported directly to the Secretary of Defense. The director was the Undersecretary of the Air Force, his deputy was a CIA officer (thus both men were civilians). Under the provisions Eisenhower approved, the Air Force was tasked with launching and recovering satellites, the CIA would design and procure them. Burrows, *Deep Black*, pp. 115-16. For years the NRO was the most secret of all the US intelligence agencies: even its name was classified. Its existence was only publicly acknowledged in 1992.

<sup>40</sup> Directive published in Lyman Kirkpatrick, *The U.S. Intelligence Community: Foreign Policy and Domestic Activities*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1973, pp. 193-4. Also see Anne Karalekas, *History of the Central Intelligence Agency*. Laguna Hills, CA: Aegean Park Press, 1977, p. 73.

## A Practical Matter: Vietnam, 1961-62

The failure of McNamara and Carroll to secure adequate authority and resources for the DIA had immediate and profound implications. The most significant related to American policy in Southeast Asia. For, as the DIA became operational in October 1961, the Kennedy administration struggled to come to terms with what would become the dominant foreign policy challenge of the decade: American involvement in Southeast Asia. Throughout the autumn, Admiral Harry S. Felt, the Commander-in-Chief of United States forces in the Pacific (in military lexicon, CINCPAC), sent cables to Washington expressing fears about the growing strength of the communist insurgency in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). There the conservative government of President Ngo Dinh Diem, long the recipient of considerable economic and military assistance from the United States, was under mounting military pressure from the Viet Cong (VC) rebels, communist insurgents supported by North Vietnam (nominally, the *Democratic* Republic of Vietnam), China, and the Soviet Union. Felt's pessimism resonated among the JCS, who were alarmed by the wider strategic implications of the expanding communist insurgencies in the region. They attributed much of the proliferation of guerrilla activity to the 6 January 1961 speech of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, wherein the Soviet leader announced that the Soviet Union would thereafter openly support regional "wars of national liberation." Many American military officers interpreted this bold proclamation to be an explicit challenge to the United States and an unequivocal indication of the new Soviet commitment to support guerrilla wars against American allies, the latest incarnation of the historic struggle between the forces of communism and capitalism. Indochina appeared to be the ideal laboratory to test this new doctrine of liberation. The tenacity of the indigenous insurgents, coupled with the communist perception that the United States lacked the resolve to take decisive military action in the Southeast Asia (which they viewed as the logical result of the conciliatory posture adopted by the Kennedy administration in Laos), led American military leaders to believe that a Soviet initiative in the region was ineluctable. South Vietnam looked to be the weakest prey. The Diem regime was politically and militarily inept. For the past several years, its ineffective policies and misconceived programs caused domestic opposition to wax as the military counterinsurgency campaign waned. By the fall of 1961 the JCS were certain that the Kremlin would no longer ignore the erosion of the Diem government and would increase its support to the Viet Cong. The Chiefs were convinced that an explicit and potent display of American support for the government of North Vietnam was imperative, in order to demonstrate American resolve, forestall additional Soviet incursions, and reassure timorous allies in the region. The JCS counseled bold action.

In early October the Chiefs recommended that the United States introduce combat troops into South Vietnam to assist the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in suppressing guerrilla activity.<sup>41</sup> This recommendation was one of several proposals considered by the President.<sup>42</sup> It is notable that all shared the sanguine assumption that the commitment of US forces to Vietnam would be a decisive act, which would indisputably vanquish the Viet Cong. Among American policymakers at the time this belief was so elementary that it was almost visceral. In that age, few doubted that the American military -- rife with modern armaments and proficient soldiers -- would swiftly prevail over the bandits and marauders assembled under the communist standard. After all, history demonstrated that God favored the big battalions.

The American intelligence community was not so certain. In contrast to the confidence of policymakers and military leaders, intelligence analysts were generally pessimistic about the ability of American forces to turn the tide of combat in favor of the Diem regime. Experienced Indochina specialists in the CIA, and the few assigned to the DIA, viewed the deployment of US soldiers with foreboding. They were inclined to perceive the conflict in its historical perspective and therefore judged the Viet Cong to be not a sundry and impotent collection of peasants and malcontents, but a formidable, if unconventional, modern fighting force: the latest manifestation of the mighty Viet Minh militia that drove the French from Southeast Asia in the nineteen-fifties.<sup>43</sup> Seen from this perspective, the Viet Cong were not communist agitators who infiltrated South Vietnam from the North (as successive American administrations repeatedly claimed), but native dissidents and nationalists. This judgment, widely shared by civilian and military intelligence analysts at the time, was diametrically opposed to the conventional wisdom in Washington. All the policy recommendations for South Vietnam considered by the President in 1961 shared the assumption that the Viet Cong were heavily dependent upon their principal benefactor, North Vietnam, for manpower and supplies. Under the JCS recommendation, American military forces were to be employed to assist the ARVN in interdicting the stream of men and materials (presumed to be substantial) from North to South in order to foil communist re-supply efforts. Denied this support, deemed to be essential, the common wisdom held that the Viet Cong would wither. The espionage community thought that the scenario was appealing but fundamentally flawed, for it disputed the central premise that the Viet Cong were dependent on North Vietnam for assistance. Current intelligence indicated that the Viet Cong were largely an indigenous military force. In fact, the CIA concluded "that 80-90 per cent of the estimated 17,000 VC had been locally recruited, and that there was little evidence that the VC relied on external

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<sup>41</sup> This was not the first such recommendation. The JCS advocated a commitment of US ground forces to Vietnam and Laos as early as May, 1961. See *United States -- Vietnam Relations, 1945-67*. (hereafter cited as *DODPP*) 12 Volumes. (Volume II) GPO, 1971, p. 49. By the fall of 1961, the United States had four hundred Special Forces troops and one hundred military advisors committed to South Vietnam to assist the government in its efforts to combat the insurgency. This deployment was the result of NSAM-52 of 11 May 1961. See *The Pentagon Papers*. As published by the *New York Times*. Written by Neil Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, E. W. Kenworthy, and Fox Butterfield (hereafter cited as *NYTPP*). New York: Bantam, 1971, pp. 90-92.

<sup>42</sup> Specifically, the proposals were submitted by the JCS, Walt Rostow, and Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense William P. Bundy.

<sup>43</sup> Confidential interview, former DIA intelligence analyst.

supplies."<sup>44</sup> The DIA shared this judgment.<sup>45</sup> The distinction between communist agitators and indigenous rebels can not be overstated because it had important policy implications. If the unorthodox opinion of the intelligence community was correct (and history appears to support this judgment) -- that the fundamental source of support for the insurgency was not North Vietnam but the indigenous population -- then the JCS recommendation to utilize American troops to interdict the supply of men and materials from the North to the South was futile. The supply lines from the North were not essential, but supplemental. The Viet Cong were likely to continue to fight irrespective of the success of American interdiction efforts. To truly defeat the rebels, an ambitious and comprehensive program of political and social reforms would be necessary, a program that would ally the population with the Diem government, and thus deprive the insurgents of their base of support. Separated from the host, the parasite would perish. In the end, the distinction was of civil war versus foreign interventionism. The intelligence analysts, reticent and reflective, cautiously embraced the former judgment; the JCS, assertive and intuitive, precipitously grasped the latter.

It is difficult to determine the influence of the pessimistic intelligence reports on President Kennedy. It is probable that they fed his personal misgivings on the wisdom of deploying American troops in Southeast Asia. After pondering the divergent policy recommendations toward South Vietnam, including the JCS proposal to introduce combat forces, President Kennedy demurred. To further delay the profound policy decision, the President sent General Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow to Saigon in mid-October to investigate conditions within South Vietnam and formulate a new set of policy recommendations. Though it was not publicly stated at the time, the two were privately instructed by Kennedy to determine whether it was necessary to deploy American combat troops to Vietnam to preserve the Diem regime. After a week-long visit to the country, the pair returned to Washington and made a confidential recommendation to the President that the United States commit up to eight thousand combat troops to South Vietnam, asserting that the deployment was "an essential action if we are to reverse the current downward trend of events."<sup>46</sup> The JCS and McNamara were consulted on the proposal; both endorsed it. When presented with the Taylor-Rostow recommendation for American intervention, Kennedy again balked. It was a revealing moment. The President was twice advised to commit American combat forces, and twice he rejected the counsel. Instead, Kennedy instructed McNamara and the Secretary of State Dean Rusk to revise the recommendation to suggest that support rather than combat forces be deployed. The Secretaries dutifully complied. Kennedy then approved the revision, and thus the United States crossed the Rubicon and committed American armed forces to what would be a devastating national ordeal in Southeast Asia.

What is remarkable about this fateful decision is the fact that the intelligence community provided little direct advice and support to senior policymakers and the President. Neither the CIA nor the DIA were asked to evaluate the probable consequences of the Taylor-Rostow recommendations. With regard to the DIA, this neglect was understandable; after all, the agency was in its infancy, unable to perform the panoramic analysis required. However, the CIA was more than competent in this capacity.

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<sup>44</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 98.

<sup>45</sup> Confidential interview, former DIA intelligence analyst.

<sup>46</sup> See *DODPP (II)*, pp. 90-92.

Nevertheless, neither organization was asked to examine the two crucial aspects of the recommendations: (1) was the deployment of American soldiers *necessary* to defeat the Viet Cong? (Taylor and Rostow clearly believed it was.) and (2), if necessary, were the number of troops requested *sufficient* to complete the mission? (Taylor and Rostow suggested it was not.<sup>47</sup>) No comprehensive intelligence review of Vietnam was requested by the President or his senior advisors; nor, for that matter, was one provided. Despite Kennedy's oft-cited reluctance to commit American troops to the conflict in South Vietnam, the President never solicited the judgment of the intelligence community, a judgment which he had reason to suspect, based on past estimates, would be pessimistic. It was a curious omission. One would expect a skeptical President to turn toward those who might confirm his doubts. Instead, Kennedy turned away. In limiting the advice he sought to that of professional soldiers (Taylor and the JCS) and men who shared their basic convictions and predilections (Rostow and Rusk), the President effectively constrained the scope of the policy debate, and ensured that the social problems of South Vietnam would be viewed from a military perspective. Accordingly, the nature of the recommendations was never in doubt: additional military measures to combat the insurgency.<sup>48</sup>

Although the Office of Estimates was incomplete and the CIIC was in a state of disarray, a DIA staff analyst accompanied the Taylor-Rostow mission to South Vietnam. The experience confirmed his suspicion that the problems of South Vietnam were primarily political in nature, the result of the incompetence and rigidity of the Diem government. He believed the proper solution was not the deployment of US forces, but a comprehensive program of social and political reform.<sup>49</sup> After returning to Washington, he persuaded many intelligence analysts at the DIA that reform of the government of South Vietnam was essential if the insurgency was to be successfully defeated.<sup>50</sup> Yet the DIA's immediate superiors -- the JCS and McNamara -- ignored this assessment.

In the autumn of 1961 President Kennedy deployed American troops to Vietnam to support the counterinsurgency effort. Thereafter, McNamara and the JCS became potent players in policy deliberations within the administration over Vietnam. The bureaucratic position of the Defense Department was immeasurably strengthened by the commitment of US troops to Indochina. South Vietnam, long a diplomatic matter, now became an American military effort. As in most martial

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<sup>47</sup> The initial program including the deployment of eight thousand American combat troops was presented to the President as adequate for the short run, but probably insufficient for the long run.

<sup>48</sup> David Halberstam is fond of contrasting Kennedy's decision to commit American troops to Southeast Asia with Eisenhower's decision not to intervene. In the spring of 1954, when both the Chairman of the JCS Admiral Arthur W. Radford and the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles were urging the Republican President to intervene in Indochina to support the French, Eisenhower allowed General Matthew B. Ridgway to send an Army survey team to Indochina to provide him with a comprehensive assessment of the forces required to defeat the Vietnamese insurgency. The final Army report was shocking. It postulated that the mission would require five to ten American combat divisions, plus engineering battalions, for a total of 500,000 to 1,000,000 US personnel. Eisenhower promptly rejected intervention. Conversely, the Taylor-Rostow report was cursory and myopic, concerned only with short-term relief, deliberately avoiding the complexities of a long-term remedy. Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, pp. 176-79.

<sup>49</sup> Contrary to many journalistic accounts and statements from the participants, Taylor, the most influential advisor on Indochina, did not include any requirements for Vietnamese political or social change among his personal recommendations to the President. See *DODPP (II)* pp. 97-108.

<sup>50</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 173.

matters, the judgment of the Department of Defense generally prevailed over other federal agencies. For his part, McNamara eagerly expanded the jurisdiction of the Pentagon. In response to a question posed to senior advisors by the White House on 27 November 1961, "Whom should the President regard as personally responsible for the effectiveness of the Washington end of this operation [Vietnam]?" McNamara responded: "Myself and L [the Chairman of the JCS General Lyman Lemnitzer]."<sup>51</sup> McNamara, the consummate bureaucratic marshal, rarely let pass an opportunity to expand his authority. The memorandum is indicative of the successful effort of the Secretary of Defense to be in the forefront of Vietnam policymaking. It was a peculiar occurrence: McNamara, the systems man, the technocrat, wading into the murky waters of South Vietnam; a rational American in an alien morass. It was all faintly redolent of the Graham Greene novel *The Quiet American*. McNamara was ill-prepared for the challenge; by education, by experience, and by predisposition. Yet the Secretary displayed no doubts about his ability to manage the crisis; he was, as always, all confidence. He sought to manage Vietnam in the same way he managed the Department of Defense and the Ford Motor Company. His *modus operandi*: assemble the relevant data, correlate and evaluate, and decide and implement. However, one past element was notably absent. In the paramount foreign policy challenge of the decade, McNamara did not allow the iconoclastic Whiz Kids to assist him: the matter was too politically explosive, the JCS would raise hell, Congress might intervene. Moreover, although McNamara was openly skeptical of the ability of JCS to formulate strategic doctrine and supervise weapons procurement, he respected their ability to conduct combat operations. In deference to the professional expertise of the JCS, the Secretary kept the civilian Whiz Kids from examining the military situation in Southeast Asia.<sup>52</sup> Instead, McNamara relied on his new creation -- the DIA -- to collect and evaluate information on the Vietnam conflict for him. For the precocious agency, striving to establish its jurisdiction and authority, the charge amounted to trial by fire. The DIA became responsible for providing the Secretary of Defense and his staff with vital strategic intelligence on the scope and nature of the Viet Cong insurgency, and the efforts of the Diem government to suppress it. This responsibility inexorably brought the agency into direct conflict with the entrenched service and field intelligence elements, who viewed the DIA's efforts as imperiling their own. Thus the DIA, a reluctant participant, was thrust to center stage of the American defense intelligence effort in Vietnam.

As the Secretary of Defense, with the assistance of the DIA, began to dominate Washington reporting on the conflict, the newly-appointed American military commander in South Vietnam began to dominate reporting from the field. In the wake of Kennedy's November 1961 decision to send US support troops to the Republic of Vietnam, the American command structure in the country was reorganized. On 8 February 1962 the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV),

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<sup>51</sup> Cited in Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 146.

<sup>52</sup> Alain Enthoven, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis and preeminent Whiz Kid, remarked: "I thought -- but never knew -- that McNamara had a deal with the services. They would let us run all over the rest of the defense program and ask a lot of nasty questions and overturn assumptions, so long as they were left alone with their war, without unwanted civilians poking around." Quoted in Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993, p. 413.

was established as a subordinate command of CINCPAC to coordinate the American military effort. General Paul D. Harkins, formerly the commander of the American Army forces in the Pacific, was named the commander of MACV (which resulted in the majestic acronym COMUSMACV). To the indignation of Ambassador Frederick E. Nolting, Harkins was granted diplomatic status equal to that of the Ambassador, effectively making the military command independent of the Embassy. This was significant because it meant that MACV intelligence would soon compete with, and eventually dominate, the intelligence produced by the CIA and the Embassy. This, in turn, reinforced the nascent tendency of senior Washington to perceive Vietnam in the military terms of MACV: as an armed conflict which required the proper combination of military might and effective application for a successful conclusion. The ascension of MACV intelligence was also important because it brought the command into bureaucratic conflict with the DIA, as both agencies vied for the attention of Washington policymakers.

In this contest MACV and the DIA submitted to McNamara's predilection to quantify whenever and wherever possible, applying statistical analyses to the war effort in Vietnam. A staggering array of numerical indicators were introduced by McNamara and his staff to assess the state of the conflict in Indochina. Of these indicators, one stands out as the most prominent; certainly the most controversial. This was the enemy order of battle (OB), the comprehensive statistical profile of Viet Cong men and material.<sup>53</sup> During the course of the conflict in Southeast Asia, the OB, a standard military assessment, would come to be seen as the primary indicator of advancement on the battlefield. It was often interpreted in a simplistic manner: a decrease in the aggregate enemy OB was construed as a decline in the strength and capability of communist forces, signifying the ascendancy of the armed forces of the United States and South Vietnam in the conflict. Conversely, an increase in the OB indicated increased Viet Cong success. However facile, a decline in the OB came to be equated with the successful prosecution of the war. Hence the OB came to dominate the American military intelligence effort in Southeast Asia.

The DIA was enjoined to coordinate the OB effort in early 1962. Prior to that time, the agency was only marginally involved in compiling the OB: the routine assessments were normally coordinated by the J-2, and produced by analysts at the Military Assistance and Advisory Group (the precursor of MACV) and CINCPAC. This changed in February, 1962. That month McNamara called a conference of the military establishment at CINCPAC Headquarters at Camp Smith, Honolulu, to assess the state of the conflict in South Vietnam. (This was the third of eight conferences the Secretary of Defense held on the Vietnam conflict during the Kennedy administration.) The general consensus among the officials in attendance was that the war was going badly. The participants were aware that an SNIE was being prepared in Washington that confirmed this pessimism. Derived from field intelligence reports, the estimate concluded that despite the augmentation of the South Vietnamese counter-insurgency program, the rebellion continued to prosper: Viet Cong forces had effectively

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<sup>53</sup> In military lexicon order-of-battle, abbreviated OB, refers to the identification, strength, command structure, and disposition of the personnel, units, and equipment of a military force. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of Military Terms*, p. 290.

doubled in the last six months.<sup>54</sup> On 19 February the conference participants were briefed by the new MACV commander, General Paul Harkins, and his intelligence chief, Colonel James Winterbottom. To the surprise of all, Harkins stated that he was optimistic about the prospects for success in Vietnam in the near future. McNamara was astonished by this judgment, for it directly contrasted the SNIE. He questioned MACV intelligence chief Colonel Winterbottom closely, inquiring as to what specific factors provided the basis for such optimism. The Secretary noted that MACV's own estimate of the Viet Cong OB had increased, presumably the strength of the insurgency was growing; was this not contrary to the expressed optimism? He asked: "what happened to the VC; in July [1961] they were reported to have a strength of 12,300, in December 17,000, in January 20-25,000. Have they increased or have we been miscounting?"<sup>55</sup> Winterbottom's response was evasive. He offered the Secretary a range of 18,500-27,000 Viet Cong, and failed to intelligibly explain the methodology which yielded these figures. McNamara was not satisfied, and pressed the issue. Ambassador Nolting and the Chairman of the JCS General Lemnitzer joined the fray. The former argued that the MACV figures were too low; the latter contended that they were too high. The discussion became heated. Admiral Felt tried to end the argument, but McNamara resisted, remarking, "If we don't have a firm OB today" the Kennedy administration would be unable to "determine what the changes have been."<sup>56</sup> In effect, the Secretary asserted that as long as the OB remained indeterminate, the progress of the war could not be evaluated. McNamara angrily stated that he wanted a putative OB as soon as possible, and to this end, he instructed the military to provide his office with a specific statement of the intelligence resources required to execute this order as a matter top priority. He concluded: "This intelligence problem must be solved."<sup>57</sup> The military intelligence community scrambled to fulfill this directive.

The collection, processing, and analysis of intelligence pertinent to the OB was a formidable task. The intelligence employed was derived from disparate sources, provided by elements of the NSA, CIA, State Department, U&S Commands, and military services. The systematic processing and evaluation of this information was truly an inter-departmental effort, requiring meticulous coordination and assertive management. As a matter of common concern, the task appears tailor-made for the DIA. The agency was created precisely to deal with intelligence matters that transcended the competence of a single military agency or element. The OB certainly met this criterion. Moreover, at heart, the OB was a strategic intelligence estimate: strategic because it was employed by administration officials to formulate policy and military plans at national and international levels. The intelligence literature recognizes the OB as strategic intelligence, and since the DIA was nominally responsible for coordinating military contributions to strategic intelligence estimates, one would expect the OB to fall

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<sup>54</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, SNIE 10-62, "Communist Objectives, Capabilities, and Intentions in Southeast Asia," 21 February 1962. Cited in Gareth Porter (ed.), *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. Stanfordsville, NY: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, 1979, Volume 2, pp. 160-56.

<sup>55</sup> From CINCPAC record of the proceedings of the third Secretary of Defense conference, 19 February 1962. Quoted in Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 191. For comparison, the South Vietnamese OB was listed as 170,000 as of 15 January 1962.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 192.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 193.

under the purview of the agency's Estimates Office.<sup>58</sup> However, the agency's jurisdiction in this matter was disputed. MACV asserted that the OB was not strategic but tactical intelligence, and therefore within its domain. In fact, both were correct: there is no fundamental difference between strategic and tactical intelligence. The distinction is derived from the level of application: strategic intelligence is that intelligence employed by national policymakers; tactical is used by field commanders. The OB was utilized by both sets of consumers for different purposes. The DIA and MACV both had legitimate jurisdictional claims regarding it, although many disinterested intelligence analysts judge the merits of the DIA claim to be greater.<sup>59</sup> Curiously, the DIA did not press the matter and acceded to the request of the military command in Saigon to assume responsibility for the Viet Cong OB.<sup>60</sup> It was an unusual move. Several explanations have been offered. The most persuasive is that MACV's proximity to the conflict allowed it to exploit raw intelligence more efficiently and rapidly, offering greater responsiveness to changing intelligence requirements from Saigon and Washington.<sup>61</sup> Irrespective of the merits of the argument, it is remarkable that Carroll sacrificed the organizational interests of the DIA to placate a field commander. Analysts at the DIA feared that the OB process would be corrupted by the operational requirements of MACV. This fear proved to be valid.

McNamara's exhortation -- "this intelligence problem must be solved" -- was resolved not in Washington but in Saigon. The MACV OB endeavor was centered in the newly-established Joint Evaluation Center (JEC), an inter-agency all-source intelligence organization. The JEC was intended to supplement MACV intelligence, providing congruent estimative intelligence. The center was assigned personnel from MACV, CIA, and the State Department in an attempt to moderate institutional bias. This objective was reinforced by the fact that the JEC was directed by the American Ambassador rather than COMUSMACV, and was physically located in the Embassy in Saigon.<sup>62</sup>

In late February the DIA sent its premier OB analyst George Allen to Saigon to assist MACV and the JEC in compiling the Viet Cong OB. At the time Allen was serving as a civilian consultant to the director of the DIA's CIIC. Allen was an Indochina specialist, a former Army officer with several tours of duty in the region. He had personally witnessed the futile French effort to tame the Viet Minh in the nineteen-fifties, and was therefore inclined to view American involvement in Vietnam with a sense of historical skepticism. He arrived in Saigon several days after the Third Secretary of Defense Conference to receive a rude reception. When he reported to MACV's intelligence chief Colonel Winterbottom, he found the colonel in a foul mood, admonishing a subordinate for failing to allow Winterbottom to review communications between the officer and his superiors in Washington (although such a review was clearly a violation of military protocol). According to Allen:

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<sup>58</sup> See Andriole in Hopple and Watson, *Military Intelligence Community*, pp. 99-106.

<sup>59</sup> Confidential interviews, senior intelligence officials, military and civilian.

<sup>60</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 134.

<sup>61</sup> Additionally, MACV asserted that the DIA lacked the manpower and resources to supervise the formulation of the OB. Of course, the agency lacked these capabilities because the military departments and the U&S Commands procrastinated in transferring them to DIA. The dilemma could have been solved simply by assigning OB resources to DIA rather than MACV.

<sup>62</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 174.

He [Winterbottom] then turned to me, and mixing strong verbal and expletives in his heated remarks, told me in no uncertain terms that though I might have been a "hot-shot," big-time, powerful blankety-blank GS-15 back in Washington, out there in Saigon I was no better than the lowest ranked private, that I would enjoy no special privileges, that I should remember for whom I was working, that I was not DIA's employee but his, and that if I tried to communicate with my home office without clearing any message with him, he would fix my wagon (to put it politely).<sup>63</sup>

Allen, the lone representative of the DIA in Saigon, joined a small team of a dozen military officers who were responsible for compiling the OB. The team performed five weeks of arduous research, gathering data on the Viet Cong military apparatus from field trips, combat unit intelligence reports, signal intercepts, captured documents, and interviews with prisoners. By April the team had collected enough evidence to begin a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the information. The team subsequently developed a strict criterion for confirming reported Viet Cong units and a rigorous methodology for evaluating the size, composition, and strength of the unit. The strict criterion was intentional: the team wanted to produce a sober, if conservative, assessment of enemy strength.<sup>64</sup>

Throughout the assignment, the OB team clashed with Winterbottom. Several members later asserted that Winterbottom appeared unable to understand the complexities of formulating an accurate OB. A few accused him of professional incompetence, a serious charge, not capriciously made.<sup>65</sup> Nearly all team members report that the J-2 repeatedly attempted to subvert cable traffic between them and their commanders at CINCPAC and in Washington. These do not appear to have been isolated occurrences, but illustrations of Winterbottom's *modus operandi*, which disregarded common operating configurations and procedures. Normally, the intelligence (G-2) and operations (G-3) divisions are kept separate in the command component to insulate intelligence from operational bias. However, in the Saigon J-2 Winterbottom allowed operations officers to edit intelligence reports prior to submission.<sup>66</sup> The conflict of interest is manifest: the implementors of orders were allowed to evaluate their own performance. All pretense to objectivity was discarded. It was a dangerous precedent, which would lead to disastrous consequences.

Why did Winterbottom exercise such control over the intelligence section? Two motives seem likely. The first was simple organizational self-interest. Strict control allowed Winterbottom to limit the dissemination of pessimistic intelligence which would contradict official MACV claims of progress. Bleak intelligence might have been interpreted detrimentally to the command in Washington and created misgivings concerning the performance of the US military advisory team.<sup>67</sup> All things considered, optimistic intelligence was more likely to preserve the autonomy and authority of military

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<sup>63</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 175-76.

<sup>64</sup> See Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 238-41.

<sup>65</sup> See Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 196-97; and George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 176.

<sup>66</sup> See Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 230.

<sup>67</sup> These institutional factors are discussed in Leslie Gelb, "How the System Worked," in Jeffrey P. Kimball, *To Reason Why: The Debate About the Causes of U.S. Involvement in the Vietnam War*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1990, pp. 157-61.

commanders in Saigon than pessimistic intelligence, and therefore was preferred and encouraged. The second motive was political. Since early March, Kennedy intimate and Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith had been urging the President to seek a neutralist political solution to the conflict in Vietnam. Galbraith's thought-provoking cables caught and held the interest of the President, for they questioned the very foundation of American involvement in Indochina. For example, in 2 March 1962 Galbraith wrote Kennedy:

Incidentally, who is the man in your administration who decides what countries are strategic? I would like to have his name and address and ask him what is so important about this real estate in the space age. What strength do we gain from alliance with an incompetent government and a people who are largely indifferent to their own salvation?<sup>68</sup>

On 1 April, Galbraith met personally with the President to advocate a political compromise for Vietnam. Predictably, the JCS were vehemently opposed to the proposal, and condemned it as naive and inept.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, Kennedy appeared to seriously consider the Galbraith proposal. While the President contemplated, the American military effort in Vietnam hung in the balance. Thus April was a politically sensitive month for the military. The JCS were acutely aware that bad news from Vietnam might influence the President to accept the Galbraith proposal. The President's Military Representative General Maxwell Taylor concurred with the JCS that the present American policy in Vietnam should be pursued to a successful conclusion. Taylor possessed outstanding political intuition: he was well aware of the magnitude of the President's immanent decision, and advised Harkins of the delicate political dynamics in Washington through private back-channel cables. It should be noted that Harkins was very much Taylor's man in the field, a trusted friend and confidant. The pair formed an formidable team: Taylor the leader, with fine political and bureaucratic instincts; Harkins the assistant, the competent manager and team player. The relationship was tried and true. Previously, when Taylor was named the Superintendent of West Point, Harkins was appointed the Commandant of Cadets. When Taylor took over the US Eighth Army in Korea, Harkins was appointed as chief of staff. Few were surprised that when McNamara was seeking a commander for the newly-created MACV in February, Taylor recommended Harkins for the post, despite the fact that Harkins had no experience in guerrilla warfare (his prowess lay in logistics). He was, by all accounts, very much the conventional general. Yet he was appointed commander for a truly unconventional war. Taylor orchestrated the appointment, as he had in the past, and Harkins was again grateful. He knew his role. If Taylor wanted optimism from Vietnam, and he and the JCS clearly did, it was probable that Harkins and his intelligence chief Winterbottom would provide it.

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<sup>68</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal: A Personal Account of the Kennedy Years*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969, p. 311.

<sup>69</sup> See *DODPP (XII)*, pp. 464-65.

In the middle of April the Saigon team arrived at a new OB figure. By their conservative estimate, the Viet Cong regular military units (mainforce and guerrilla) totaled approximately 40,000 men. This was a startling increase over the 25,000 figure presented to the Secretary of Defense eight weeks earlier. As the team prepared to submit the revised OB, it was informed through intermediaries that Winterbottom would not accept the statistics, that the aggregate was too high. It was suggested that the team lower the figures, although the new range desired by the intelligence chief was not made clear. In order to achieve this end, after some thought, the team simply introduced a new classification category, *possible* units, to supplement the existing categories, *confirmed* and *probable*. In short, the aggregate would now be divided into three (as opposed to two) groups, one of which, the *possible* category, could be easily dismissed by MACV as unconfirmed (although informed military men knew better) and therefore inconsequential. The process was analogous to dividing a deck of cards into three portions, rather than two; then discarding one portion. The total was reduced, not through superior methodology, but through bureaucratic sleight of hand. One participant, William Benedict, recalled its provenance thus:

George [Allen] and Lou [Tixier of ARPAC] and I sat down over a bottle of bourbon and we tried to come up with some way . . . We wanted a figure of 20,000 main force, roughly speaking, as I recall, and so that's how we came up with the probable and possible units, feeling that . . . a reasonable commander would look [at this] and say okay, if there's 20,000 confirmed, and there's 10,000 probable, and 5,000 possible, why there's a hell of a lot of bad guys out there.<sup>70</sup>

Note Benedict's justification for the manipulation: a "reasonable" commander would not discount the specious *probable* category, and include these units in his assessment of enemy strength. Regrettably, few commanders proved to be reasonable by Benedict's definition.

Despite the clever revision, the team again was informed that Winterbottom would not accept the new figures, that the total was still too high. The team again reworked the figures, shifting even more units into the *possible* category. Winterbottom accepted the last modification, and on 15 April MACV endorsed the work of the OB team and issued the official Viet Cong order of battle as 16,305.<sup>71</sup> Disillusioned by the experience, George Allen informed Winterbottom's superior, General Harkins, that the OB figure was inaccurate, and described the manipulation of the categories in detail. It appears that Harkins did not investigate this allegation. Allen claims that he later learned that the orders to reduce the OB originated from Harkins; Winterbottom simply conveyed them.<sup>72</sup>

The spurious MACV OB was presented to McNamara and his staff at the Fifth Secretary of Defense Conference, held in Saigon 8-11 May. The OB was employed by MACV officers to portray the Vietnam conflict in promising light. Harkins expressed progress in virtually all areas of the war effort. Four of the analysts from the OB team present at the conference later claimed that the briefings were

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with William Benedict. Quoted in Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 243.

<sup>71</sup> Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 243-44.

<sup>72</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 247.

intentionally misleading, that the Secretary and his staff were not presented with an accurate assessment of growing Viet Cong strength.<sup>73</sup> John Newman, a historian who examined the records of the conference in detail, asserts:

The Secretary of Defense was purposely misled on nearly all of the crucial aspects of the war: the size of the enemy, the number and quality of friendly operations; the territory controlled by the enemy versus the territory controlled by friendly forces; the number of desertions from South Vietnam's armed forces; the success of the placement of US intelligence advisors; and the problems with the Self Defense Corps.<sup>74</sup>

The May Secretary of Defense Conference was a watershed event in the order of battle controversy. In the words of Captain Donald Blascak, a MACV analyst assigned to the OB team, "This is when the big lie started."<sup>75</sup>

McNamara was not the "reasonable" commander William Benedict hoped for. By all accounts, the Secretary was encouraged by MACV's optimism. He took detailed notes during the briefings, in the end filling several notebooks. Following the conference, McNamara told the press: "I've seen nothing but progress and hopeful indications of further progress in the future." Many journalists were surprised by the statement. Most had spent considerable time in South Vietnam and personally witnessed the mounting deterioration of the countryside. They ascribed his remark, at odds with their experience, to official propaganda. Later, Neil Sheehan of United Press International found himself alone with McNamara and asked him, off-the-record, what he really thought about the conflict. His reply astonished Sheehan, and revealed much about the Secretary of Defense, soon to become the Secretary of War: "Every quantitative measurement we have shows that we are winning the war."<sup>76</sup> For McNamara, statistics were reality. If MACV stated that the number of enemy units was declining, then the military operations of South Vietnam and the United States were effective: America was prevailing. It was that simple.

Following the Fifth Secretary of Defense Conference, the OB team was dissolved. Responsibility for compiling and updating the Viet Cong OB was transferred to the MACV intelligence section. Though few realized at the time, Winterbottom won the struggle for authority over the enemy OB. It was an easy victory: the other intelligence agencies were largely indifferent to the matter (Carroll was reported to have "little interest" in the OB), and, with the notable exception of George Allen, most were content to let MACV direct the effort.<sup>77</sup> Thereafter, the intelligence community generally deferred

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<sup>73</sup> The four officers are George Allen, William Benedict, Donald Blascak, and Samuel Dowling.

<sup>74</sup> Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 255.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Donald Blascak. Quoted in Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 255.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 198, p. 289-90.

<sup>77</sup> Characterization of Carroll in T. L. Cubbage, "Westmoreland v. CBS: Was Intelligence Corrupted by Policy Demands?" in Michael Handel (ed.), *Leaders and Intelligence*. London, Frank Cass, 1989, p. 123.

to MACV on OB intelligence, and MACV intelligence assumed new prominence. It was now an important bureaucratic player, not only in the theater (where it was the most important player) but in Washington. As the influence of MACV waxed, the legitimacy of the JEC, and with it the promise of inter-departmental intelligence, waned. The CIA and the State Department did not commit sufficient resources, both money and manpower, to the center because they suspected that any intelligence it produced was likely to be disregarded by MACV if it contradicted the operational desires of the command. Without true support from the civilian intelligence agencies, the JEC atrophied. It was eventually relocated from the Embassy to MACV, where it simply supplemented Winterbottom's intelligence section.<sup>78</sup> MACV's victory over its rivals was now complete.

For the DIA, the OB matter was a neglected opportunity: a missed chance to exert its authority and exercise its analytic capabilities. Spurning leadership, the agency was content to follow. Its growing inability to influence the course of events in Vietnam was illustrated by the ordeal of George Allen. After leaving Saigon for Washington in May, Allen stopped at CINCPAC intelligence in Honolulu. There he briefed Brigadier General Patterson on the manipulation of the OB. Paterson appeared sympathetic, but he, like Harkins, in the end took no action against Winterbottom. Instead, Allen later discovered, Patterson sent a back-channel message to both MACV in Saigon and Air Force intelligence in Washington, warning that Allen was "out to get" Winterbottom.<sup>79</sup> When Allen arrived in Washington, he was informed that General Carroll wanted to meet with him immediately. Unaware of the back-channel cable that preceded him, Allen briefed the director of the DIA and his aides candidly. He recounts:

I began, after taking a deep breath, with the suggestion that J-2 [Winterbottom] be replaced, again, outlining his unsuitability for the assignment. General Carroll asked what service the J-2 belonged to; when I replied that he was an Air Force colonel, the general flushed, but then continued questioning me on other matters for another 15 minutes or so. Finally he thanked me, and dismissed me. After the door closed behind me, the general asked the assembled colonels and the brigadier generals who the hell that civilian thought he was to call into judgment the competence of an Air Force colonel.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 174-77.

<sup>79</sup> See George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 199-207.

<sup>80</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 199. It is interesting to compare Allen's return with that of another OB team member, William Benedict. When Benedict returned to Washington, he reported to his superior General Fitch (ASCI). He recalled: "I went in, and I told Fitch what the story was, how they'd manipulated the figures, you know, the pressure we'd had to hold the point down. He tried to call the [Army] Chief of Staff, but that was just at the time when Decker was checking out of the net, and he wasn't available . . . So what happened is, Fitch sent me over to the National Board of Estimates . . . I went over and gave a two-hour talk to those guys where I leveled them, and they all said, "Hey, the suspicion is confirmed, but what are you going to do?" By then the whole thing had reached a point where there was a political implication overpowering us." Interview with William Benedict. Quoted in Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 279.

Carroll's reaction is significant, for it discloses the tacit belief of many senior officers that only military men are competent to assess the performance of their peers. In spite of Allen's military background and expertise in the region, he was still a civilian, and therefore not qualified to criticize Winterbottom. It was a curious, but by no means unique, event: the director of the DIA dismissed the judgment of the agency's preeminent Indochina specialist in deference to a military colonel with little experience in the region and little understanding of guerrilla warfare, simply because the colonel and the general wore the same color uniform. Service loyalty came first; the integrity of the intelligence process and the organizational interests of the DIA a distant second and third. Nonetheless, Allen's outspoken views on the OB matter stirred controversy in Washington and finally compelled Carroll to take action. In June, the director of the DIA announced that he would personally investigate Allen's allegations of manipulation. Carroll assembled a team of analysts to assist him and departed Washington for Saigon. The effort was for naught. Allen recalls:

The wind was taken out of [Carroll's] sails when he made the required courtesy call [to CINCPAC in Honolulu] en route to Saigon. Admiral Felt chose to remind General Carroll that Vietnam was on CINCPAC's turf, and that as the theater commander, he was responsible for intelligence in Vietnam; that he reported directly to the Joint Chiefs, that DIA was not in his chain of command and therefore had no authority over intelligence in Admiral Felt's theater, and that he trusted General Carroll understood this and would conduct himself accordingly. General Carroll advised his staff when they returned to their plane, that they would not conduct a review of intelligence in Vietnam, but would simply be making an "orientation visit" to familiarize themselves with the situation. And that's what he and his staff did.<sup>81</sup>

Thus the authority of the DIA over the U&S Commands was revealed to be a chimera.

Thankfully Carroll was never asked to account for the trip; Washington was soon consumed by the Cuban missile crisis. However, later Carroll was contacted by Walt Rostow to confirm a rumor that a senior DIA analyst recently returned from Vietnam with critical views of the war effort. Rostow was, of course, referring to George Allen. Carroll confirmed the rumor, and to his surprise Rostow asked to interview the analyst. At the time, Rostow was the Counselor of the Department of State and Chairman of the Policy Planning Council. As such, he was heavily involved in strategic planning for Vietnam and was an influential advisor to the principal policymakers. Allen recounts:

This [request] caused quite a stir throughout DIA, which finally agreed to Rostow's request, provided that he come to the Pentagon for the briefing. It was also decided that a DIA general officer (an Air Force Brigadier) should attend the briefing session as

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<sup>81</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 202-203.

“moderator.” I was warned to refrain from criticizing MACV’s intelligence competence. While I could offer my own views on the enemy situation, I would not do it in ways that might suggest any shortcomings in MACV’s intelligence effort.<sup>82</sup>

Thus criticism of the MACV intelligence effort, which might have been constructive at this early stage of American involvement, was proscribed. As William Perry observes, the unwritten code of military conduct “dictates that while unquestioning loyalty to one’s service and commander is not a requirement ... criticizing one’s service and commander to others, especially those in other services, is absolutely forbidden.”<sup>83</sup> Carroll ensured that the DIA followed this code, even if it meant that he had to censor his own analysts. Of course, the other military intelligence agencies abided by the code and refrained from critiquing the reports of Winterbottom and his staff. The result was that MACV intelligence quickly became infallible and few dared to challenge its reporting. This applied not only to other intelligence organizations, but to internal dissenters.

The experience of Captain James Harris is illustrative. In late July 1962, Harris, a former member of the OB team now assigned to MACV intelligence, completed a study of the communist insurgency that concluded that Viet Cong strength was probably on the rise as the result of increased infiltration from North Vietnam. The study was widely disseminated and immediately praised by CINCPAC, the Army element (ARPAC) in particular, as a seminal and accurate analysis based on highly reliable intelligence sources. Nevertheless, MACV rejected the Harris study, repudiating the work of its own analyst. In fact, MACV promptly released a contradictory assessment, based on ambiguous evidence and dubious analysis, and officially reduced the estimate of infiltration from the previous month: from 800-1000 men in June to 500-600 in July.<sup>84</sup> Those who questioned the doctrine of optimism were swiftly spurned by the command. Progress was the creed of MACV; a puritanical canon that abided no dissent.

Nonetheless, heretics lurked on the steps of the temple. In the spring of 1962, intelligence reports produced by the intelligence section of ARPAC, derived from the same raw intelligence that MACV employed, were consistently cynical about the prospects for the success of the counterinsurgency campaign. The historian John Newman explains the disparity thus: MACV tended to utilize only intelligence which demonstrated progress in its analyses and ignored contradictory information; ARPAC objectively assessed all intelligence to arrive at its pessimistic conclusions.<sup>85</sup> Newman concluded that ARPAC performed honest intelligence analysis, rigorous and objective, while MACV produced misleading intelligence in support of the wishes of its commanders. It is remarkable that at this early stage of the conflict that Army intelligence, which presumably was proficient at accurately assessing combat operations, was skeptical of the war effort, while MACV intelligence, directed by an Air Force colonel with no experience in guerrilla warfare, exuded confidence.

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<sup>82</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 204.

<sup>83</sup> Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 43.

<sup>84</sup> See Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 269-71.

<sup>85</sup> See Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 173-75; 225-34; 282-88.

In May, Brigadier General W. B. Rossen, the Special Assistant to the Army Chief of Staff General George Decker personally traveled to Vietnam to assess the state of the conflict. His final report was laden with gloom. In every region that he visited, from the highlands to the delta, he found near universal skepticism among the American advisors that the Viet Cong could be swiftly defeated. The Army Staff ignored the report.<sup>86</sup> It too was unwilling to challenge the judgment of MACV, to doubt the creed of progress.

Dissent was rare. Optimism was the established faith and the Secretary of Defense was a true believer. At the Sixth Secretary of Defense Conference on 23 July 1962, MACV presented McNamara with an OB estimate which indicated that there was no significant change in enemy strength. The Secretary interpreted this to be a validation of the effectiveness of the existing American policies. In fact, the Secretary was so enthusiastic about the progress of the war, based on MACV intelligence, that he ordered the JCS to formulate a withdrawal plan for American forces.<sup>87</sup> DIA analysts believed that the Secretary was overly optimistic. Several suspected that OB was static because MACV was again altering its criteria to show no change.<sup>88</sup> When DIA analysts in the CIIC surreptitiously queried several fraternal MACV intelligence officers about the inert OB, they received disturbing responses. The MACV intelligence officers believed that the evidence compiled prior to the conference clearly indicated that the Viet Cong OB should be increasing, not decreasing. Aware that Winterbottom would not be receptive to this information, they circumvented the intelligence chief and presented the evidence and the negative assessment to Harkins. After reviewing the intelligence provided by his staff, Harkins rejected a increase in the enemy OB, based not on contradictory evidence or discrete analysis, but on his intuitive belief that allied operations must be taking a toll on the Viet Cong. This discovery shocked even a disillusioned George Allen at DIA. He was "astonished ... [that] a field commander's subjective views could lead to the suppression of hard intelligence of mounting enemy capabilities."<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless it had occurred. It was not the the first time; nor would it be the last.

Once again the DIA command staff did not allow its analysts to challenge the OB issued by MACV. Additionally, they did not inform McNamara of the disparity of judgment within the defense intelligence community over the Viet Cong OB. The Secretary mistakenly believed that the espionage agencies were in accord. Here the DIA clearly failed to fulfill its responsibilities to the Secretary of Defense. McNamara should have been advised of the disagreements over the OB, and provided with an independent DIA assessment. Carroll did not allow the agency analysts to do this, and so failed the Secretary. His service loyalties came first, and so he acquiesced to the wishes of the field commanders. By doing this, Carroll removed the DIA from one of the crucial issues of the Vietnam conflict. The exile was largely self-imposed: the director never truly confronted the military establishment over the

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<sup>86</sup> Andrew Krepinevich, *The Army in Vietnam*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 76.

<sup>87</sup> Two days later, on 25 July 1962, the JCS formally ordered CINCPAC to develop the Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam (CPSVN) to implement the withdrawal. On 14 August 1961 CINCPAC relayed the order, along with additional guidance, to MACV for formulation. *The Pentagon Papers: History of U.S. Decision-Making in Vietnam*. The Senator Gravel Edition (hereafter cited as *GPP*). Boston: Beacon Press, 1972, Volume 2, p. 176.

<sup>88</sup> Confidential interview, former DIA official.

<sup>89</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 207.

matter, never pressed his authority. Through silence and inaction, the DIA abdicated its strategic responsibility for order of battle intelligence.

The apathy of Carroll in this matter has never been explained satisfactorily. Several DIA officials have suggested that the director of the DIA believed that the OB was a prerogative of MACV, and that the proper role of the DIA was one of support. This view is understandable, despite the fact that there was good reason for the OB to be considered a strategic intelligence estimate, and therefore fall under purview of the DIA. What is difficult to understand, however, is why Carroll subsequently let MACV dominate the issue, to the point of the virtual exclusion of his own agency. As a defense intelligence agency serving the Secretary of Defense, Carroll and his staff of analysts certainly had the right, some would say the responsibility, to challenge OB assessments from Saigon inconsistent with DIA intelligence. Yet Carroll tacitly discouraged these challenges in the summer of 1962; a year later he would explicitly forbid them. Carroll, always prudent, did not wish to rock the boat. Thus the DIA did not simply acquiesce to MACV on order of battle intelligence, it capitulated.

## Congressional Oversight, 1962

On 26 March 1962, amid growing Congressional fears of over-centralization within the Defense Department, the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee created a Special Subcommittee on Defense Agencies which held hearings to inquire into agencies that had been created or were being contemplated by the OSD. The inquiry focused on NSA, DCA, DIA, and the Defense Supply Agency (the latter was established on 6 November 1961, by McNamara to coordinate military supply and service functions). Traditionally, the House Armed Services Committee had been a strong supporter of military services, opposed to the merger of the departments or the creation of a general staff, critical of civilian encroachment into military realms. The hearings were called because the Armed Service Committee was concerned that the increased centralization of military functions under the jurisdiction of OSD was moving the Defense Department toward a "single defense concept" -- an idea which the majority of members were diametrically opposed to. McNamara's drive to consolidate defense intelligence in the winter of 1961-62 heightened the apprehension of the powerful representatives. Consequently, they moved to investigate.

The principal task of the Special Subcommittee, chaired by Porter Hardy, Jr. (Democrat-VA), and William Bates (Republican-MA), was to determine whether the defense agencies created by the fiat of the Secretary of Defense had sufficient statutory basis. Since all were created under the authority of the National Security Act, specifically the McCormack-Curtis Amendment, the subcommittee, in effect, was trying to determine whether the agencies truly increased efficiency and eliminated duplication; thus making them legal under the provisions of the Act.<sup>90</sup> McNamara, senior defense officials, and General Carroll and his staff testified before the subcommittee.

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<sup>90</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services, *Hearings*. p. 6683.

McNamara's appearances before the subcommittee in June were marked by disagreement between the Secretary of Defense and subcommittee members over the correct interpretation of the McCormack-Curtis Amendment. Whereas McNamara and OSD preferred to interpret the amendment as broadly as possible, allowing for the possible consolidation of virtually all service functions with the exception of training, the subcommittee, referring to the floor debate over the amendment, chose to view the amendment narrowly as justifying only those reforms intended to bring about substantial savings on common-use items.<sup>91</sup> They accurately noted that the OSD interpretation allowed the Secretary of Defense to enact virtually any reform, for any reason, by the "simple allegation," true or not, that it would bring about more efficient administration and/or the elimination of duplication.<sup>92</sup> As Congressman Harry Blandford observed:

You could create these agencies; you could say that it would bring about savings; and Congress could only say: "We don't think that it will bring about savings," but we wouldn't be able to do much about it.<sup>93</sup>

McNamara failed to address this assertion adequately, repeatedly digressing and deferring to his legal counsel. Furthermore, when questioned closely about the specific measures which would result in greater efficiency, his answers were vague.<sup>94</sup>

Consequently, the subcommittee members questioned General Carroll carefully as to precisely how the creation of the DIA would save money and manpower. Despite his spirited initial claims to the contrary, Carroll eventually conceded that it appeared that the new agency would not reduce the overall manpower of the military intelligence effort nor would it reduce the number of service personnel assigned to intelligence duties. Where would the gains in efficiency come from? asked the subcommittee. Carroll digressed. Still the subcommittee pressed. Finally, Carroll was forced to state directly that he was not prepared at the time to specifically disclose how the DIA would increase the efficiency of the military intelligence effort.<sup>95</sup> This was a startling, and sobering, announcement by the DIA's top official. Although he had personally drafted the organizational directive for the DIA, a directive ostensibly committed to greater efficiency and the elimination of duplication, he stood before Congress in 1962 and stated that he could not specify the exact means by which the agency would achieve these goals. So it was revealed that the assertions of greater efficiency and the elimination of duplication were mere rhetoric: simply the thin reed on which the legal legitimacy of the DIA rested. In reality, there was little truth to these claims. The compromise that created the DIA for the most part

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<sup>91</sup> The OSD interpretation of the amendment was stated by Cyrus Vance: "To summarize, we are of the opinion that the National Security Act, as amended, grants to the Secretary of Defense supreme power and authority to run the affairs of the Department of Defense and all its organizations and agencies." See USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Report*, pp. 6609-11.

<sup>92</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Report*, p. 6613.

<sup>93</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, p. 6697.

<sup>94</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, pp. 6692-99.

<sup>95</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, pp. 6772-73.

protected the autonomy of the intelligence components armed services. The DIA did not possess the authority to compel the armed services to reduce or eliminate resources assigned to specific intelligence operations. The DIA simply could not impose efficiency on the recalcitrant military intelligence community. The point was made explicit by Congressman William H. Bates, in the following exchange with General Carroll:

MR. BATES: Well, you [DIA] supervise, but you don't really mean supervise, I guess, do you? You take a look at something. But you can't tell them [the services] to do anything. You can't tell them to change a thing.

All you might do is write a memorandum upstairs and have somebody maybe--

GEN. CARROLL: If that should be necessary, that certainly would be done.

MR. BLANDSFORD: General Carroll, isn't this basically, however, what the Army, Navy, and Air Force have historically had?...

Well, the thing that bothers me, General: You are taking no new responsibilities.<sup>96</sup>

Congressman Blandsford astutely located the crucial flaw in the DIA. Its authority over the military intelligence community was nominal. In reality, the agency was largely powerless to effect change. The status quo prevailed.

The single advantage derived from the establishment of the DIA repeatedly cited by both military and civilian officials was the transfer of the ability to evaluate raw data from the services to the agency.<sup>97</sup> McNamara stressed that the creation of a single intelligence estimate was the primary benefit of the establishment of the DIA.<sup>98</sup> But McNamara failed to disclose the obstacles which were preventing the attainment of this objective, previously examined in this chapter. USIB reform was stalled; the DIA Estimates Office deprived of needed resources. Although the DIA's activation plan set July 1962 as the operational date for the Production Center, wherein the estimative intelligence functions of the agency would be centered, bureaucratic intransigence delayed its activation for a full year.<sup>99</sup> At best, the testimony of McNamara and defense officials on this matter was disingenuous.

In the end, the subcommittee concluded that they found no faults in the DIA. They did, however, object to its establishment under the authority of the McCormack-Curtis Amendment. This was not surprising due to the traditional apprehension of the House Armed Services Committee to any measure which might allow the services to be consolidated against the will of Congress. Ironically, they did object to the only true reform that defense officials continually referred to -- a single intelligence

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<sup>96</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, pp. 6784-85, 6786.

<sup>97</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, pp. 6777-6813.

<sup>98</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, p. 6710.

<sup>99</sup> See Deane Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 58-59.

estimate. The subcommittee, like Allen Dulles and senior CIA officials, simply feared this reform might result in the suppression of dissent from policymakers. Its final report remarked:

[There] is a potential danger in the Defense Intelligence Agency; namely, that in an effort to bring about an integrated intelligence estimate the minority views of another service may be disregarded. The adoption of a single intelligence estimate does not assure its accuracy.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, the military found a powerful ally for its struggle to resist the centerpiece of McNamara's reform of military intelligence -- that which he had fought so hard for and given so much to preserve -- USIB reorganization and the consolidation of the preparation of threat estimates.

## An Evaluation: The First Six Months

The first six months of the DIA were arduous. The agency was repeatedly confronted by what one former Director of Naval Intelligence called, "institutional opposition and institutional sabotage."<sup>101</sup> In the Hobbesian realm of military intelligence, the DIA struggled to assert its authority and forge an identity. In several areas, notably collection requirements and current intelligence production, the agency was able to meet its responsibilities with minimal resistance from the venerable military departments. This was largely because these functions had been disregarded in the past. Since no agency previously performed these functions, there was no one to contest the authority of the DIA. Furthermore, these tasks were generally regarded as dull and mundane; other organizations were loathe to undertake them. Thus the endeavors of the DIA in these areas went unchallenged. It was in the more prominent tasks, particularly those relating to the analysis and production of strategic intelligence, that the DIA would find its tentative authority vigorously contested. Here there existed no functional void: the military departments had long-established realms and prerogatives in these areas, and they viewed the DIA as a usurper, out to seize traditional provinces and privileges. To the services, it was a zero-sum contest: the DIA could gain authority and functions only at the expense of their intelligence elements. The struggle was not over bureaucratic minutiae -- greater efficiency and increased effectiveness -- although the conflict was frequently portrayed in these terms. At heart, the struggle was for power: power over institutions, power over resources, power over estimates. All involved understood the stakes. If the DIA was to truly achieve the vision of McNamara -- to become a strong central manager with independent analytical capabilities -- then the DIA was compelled to challenge the role of the armed services and the field commands in the strategic intelligence process. Based on the inability of the DIA to secure necessary personnel and resources and its egregious performance in the Viet Cong OB, the agency failed the early tests.

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<sup>100</sup> USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Report*, p. 6621.

<sup>101</sup> Confidential interview, former director of Naval Intelligence.

## Chapter Four

### Cuba

#### The Sum of Their Fears

The DIA is a curious creature. It must serve two superiors whose responsibilities and needs are dissimilar. On one hand, the Secretary of Defense demands that the agency produce national intelligence, purged of organizational bias, and assert control over the bellicose military intelligence community. On the other hand, the JCS require the agency to perform miscellaneous and sundry tasks, and for the most part, stay out of the way of the more powerful entities. The first six months of the agency's existence conformed to the preferences of the military leaders, despite the best efforts of McNamara to the contrary. The DIA had succumbed to the nascent authority of MACV in the Viet Cong order of battle and yielded to the military departments in the formulation of strategic intelligence estimates. In all it was an inauspicious beginning. Yet the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 presented an opportunity for the DIA to turn the tide. Unlike USIB reform, the crisis was not a sterile debate over bureaucratic procedures, but a momentous historical event. While the OB dispute was centered in Saigon and perceived to be primarily a military matter, albeit with significant political ramifications, wherein the DIA, an auxiliary organization based in Washington, had little role, the missile crisis unfolded in the corridors of the White House and the Pentagon, and was viewed by Kennedy administration officials principally as a political quandary with military implications. As such, the burden of responsibility fell heavily on the Secretary of Defense, and his advice and counsel to the President assumed added importance. For the DIA, McNamara's principal intelligence agent, the crisis was an unprecedented chance to assert its nominal authority over the national intelligence activities of the Defense Department and validate McNamara's vision of dispassionate threat assessment. At issue was whether the agency could promulgate and maintain a stance of analytical independence, or once again acquiesce to the command position, as it had done in the OB controversy. In assessing the performance of the DIA, this chapter does not focus narrowly on the deeds of the the agency; rather it broadly examines American intelligence activities during the nuclear confrontation, for it is only in the context of this expanse that we might observe and measure the influences and constraints on the agency, and accurately evaluate its performance. For, to borrow from John Donne, no organization is an island, and the DIA is no exception. It is simply one amid the archipelago, battered by the raging seas of powerful interests, eroded by the tides of antipathy. The bird's-eye view is often the most revealing, if the most difficult to obtain. Consequently, the chapter is concerned with the DIA's effort to provide strategic intelligence to its principal consumers: the Secretary of the

Defense and the JCS. The first section describes the start of the crisis, focusing on the controversy regarding military control of U-2 surveillance missions over Cuba. It notes that during this period the actions of the DIA were marked by autonomy and self-interest. Furthermore, it chronicles the evolution of the agency from a proponent of the common wisdom of the intelligence community, to an outspoken dissenter. The second section details the ebb of the agency's independence, commensurate with the intensifying military crisis. The third contrasts the motives and aims of the JCS and their military brethren to civilian policymakers. The following section illustrates the agency's growing obsequiousness by recounting the decisive role of the agency in formulating a significant NIE at the height of the crisis. The subservience of the DIA to military departments near the end of the crisis is explored in the fourth section. The final section offers an evaluation of the agency's performance.

## Prelude to the Crisis: From Proponent to Dissenter

President John F. Kennedy's preoccupation with Cuba, fostered by the Bay of Pigs debacle, began in earnest in February 1962 when he authorized the implementation of a covert program to overthrow the Castro regime. Codenamed Operation MONGOOSE, an essential premise of the plan was the willingness of the United States to employ military force to dislodge the communist government.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with this premise, an ad hoc Defense Department group composed of officers from the Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Command (CINCLANT) and the DIA started contingency planning for an American naval blockade of the island in April.<sup>2</sup> In response to the MONGOOSE guerrilla operations mounted against the Cuban government, in the spring of 1962 the Soviet Union began to furnish Castro's besieged regime with large quantities of conventional arms, including Soviet MIG jet fighters and torpedo boats. The buildup accelerated in July and August: the American intelligence community monitored an unusually large number of Soviet ships delivering military armaments and personnel to Cuban ports. Initially neither the DIA nor the CIA were unduly alarmed by the increased Soviet assistance to Castro. The Russian equipment was deemed to be "defensive" material, supplied to the Cubans in the response to the MONGOOSE program and Cuban emigre raids, and the Soviet personnel were thought to be primarily military instructors, advisors, and trainers.<sup>3</sup> Yet the DIA became concerned when Soviet military personnel began military construction projects at several locations on the island, from Oriente Province in the east to Pinar del Rio Province in the west. The growing apprehension of DIA analysts was shared by John McCone. The DCI feared that

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<sup>1</sup> MONGOOSE was an inter-departmental effort, under the operational control of the DOD through the JCS. The involvement of the DIA in the operation was negligible. See USC (94/1) Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations. *Report of Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders With Respect to Intelligence Activities*; and Central Intelligence Agency, "Memorandum to Director, CIA, from John A. McCone," 14 April 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Gribkov and Smith. *Operation Anadyr*, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> USC (88/1) Senate Armed Services. *Interim Report: The Cuban Military Build-up*. GPO, 1963, p. 6. Confidential interview, senior DIA analyst.

these ambitious construction projects were a prelude to the introduction of Soviet nuclear missile forces into Cuba, although analysts in his own agency dismissed this possibility, asserting that the buildup was defensive in nature. In high-level meetings on the tenth and twenty-first of August, McCone conveyed his fears to Kennedy administration officials. Most were skeptical of the possibility of such a bold deployment by the Russians, particularly McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk. For the time being, the principals were content to accept the benign judgment of the intelligence community, dismissing the dissent from its director.

On 18 August the DIA reported indications that Soviets were providing electronic counter-measures equipment to the Castro government. This intelligence was derived from the reports of Cuban refugees, who also reported a substantial increase in the number of Soviet and Communist Bloc personnel on the island.<sup>4</sup> The presence of ECM equipment on the island further troubled analysts at the DIA. They suspected that this sophisticated electronic "jamming" technology was a precursor to the installation of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) in Cuba. At the end of the month, preliminary intelligence derived from U-2 aerial photography of 29 August indicated that Soviet SAMs were present in Cuba at eight locations, with additional locations probable.<sup>5</sup> On 6 September the DIA concluded that Soviet SA-2 SAMs (designated "Guideline" by NATO military planners) had arrived on the island. This was a significant discovery, as the SA-2 was the most sophisticated contemporary Russian air defense system. A missile from the SA-2 system had shot down the U-2 plane of Francis Powers in May, 1960. Consequently, the American intelligence community was acutely aware of the danger this system posed: it was a direct threat to US reconnaissance aircraft. As if this risk was not evident to intelligence officials from the start, the point was driven home on 9 September 1962, when a SA-2 SAM system downed a U-2 aircraft piloted by a Chinese nationalist over Communist China. The lesson could not have been more clear. The Cuban buildup assumed a more ominous air.

In early September, the DIA noted the presence of Soviet KOMAR guided-missile patrol boats on the Cuban coast. Yet regardless of the introduction of the perilous state-of-the-art weapons systems and a marked increase in the number of heavy tanks and artillery on the island, in a summary report to the JCS on 6 September the DIA continued to support the putative assessment of the intelligence community that the buildup remained defensive in nature.<sup>6</sup>

On 8 September the DIA concluded that the Soviets had shipped the most advanced Soviet jet fighter, the MIG-21 ("Fishbed") to Cuba.<sup>7</sup> This assessment caused considerable consternation within military intelligence circles, for the MIG-21 was thought to be a formidable aircraft, an effective fighter-interceptor and bomber. It was apparent to agency analysts that the stakes were increasing in Cuba. Both the SA-2 and the MIG-21 were front-line Soviet weapons systems. The Russians did not

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<sup>4</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Chronology of JCS Decisions Concerning Cuban Crisis," No date (Declassified 24 June 1988) 139 pp. (Hereafter cited as JCS Chronology.) National Security Archives, *Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*. Microfilm collection. Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healy, 1990, No. 2780, p. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 2; and Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 357.

<sup>6</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 2. It is worth noting that in a public statement on 4 September 1962, President Kennedy had defined an "offensive" buildup to be one containing "offensive ground-to-ground missiles." By implication a "defensive" buildup lacked these missiles.

<sup>7</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 2.

readily provide this equipment to allied nations: Cuba, for some reason, had been designated as a worthy recipient. The DIA and the intelligence community strove to discover why. To its director, John McCone, the reason was clear: the Soviets intended to establish offensive missile sites in the Western Hemisphere. At the time, McCone was crying in the wilderness. Yet his voice rang true. In early September, contrary to the prevailing judgment of the American intelligence community, the USSR installed offensive nuclear missiles on the island of Cuba.<sup>8</sup>

At McCone's promptings, BNE met in mid-September to review the military situation in Cuba. After extensive deliberation, and in spite of the increasing scope and sophistication of Soviet military assistance to the Castro regime, the intelligence community (with the concurrence of the DIA) reaffirmed the earlier assessments that buildup was principally motivated by defensive considerations. The 19 September SNIE concluded:

We believe that the military buildup which began in July does not reflect a radically new Soviet policy towards Cuba, either in terms of military commitments or of the role of Cuba in overall Soviet strategy. Without changing the essential defensive character of the military buildup in Cuba and without making an open pledge to protect Cuba under all circumstances, the Soviets have enhanced Cuban military capabilities, repeated in stronger terms their warnings to the United States, and tied the Cuban situation to the general questions of East-West confrontation.<sup>9</sup>

In support of the conclusion that the Soviets would not place offensive missiles in Cuba the intelligence agencies offered the following rationale: there was no precedent for the deployment of nuclear missiles outside of the borders of the Soviet Union; and that the USSR would be deterred from such a deployment by the rational calculation that the risks of this act far outweighed the benefits. Ironically, at the precise time the Soviets installed offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba, American intelligence erroneously concluded they would not.

This now-notorious "September estimate" has been the subject of considerable comment, scholarly and otherwise. The failure of American intelligence, both civilian and military, to predict Soviet intentions in Cuba is frequently cited (often in conjunction with the "missile gap") as an archetypical example of the problem of "mirror-imaging" in intelligence analysis. The views of the respected historian Walter Laqueur are emblematic of this criticism: "Intelligence was handicapped by its inability to entertain the hypothesis that Soviet leaders were acting on assumptions quite different from

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<sup>8</sup> In testimony before Congress, General Carroll stated that the DIA believed, in retrospect, that the missiles arrived in Cuba on 8 September. He stated: "We believe that it was then [8 September] that the first missile shipment came in. In addition to the missiles themselves, which I described as being of such a size that they required being hold-loaded in wide-hatch vessels, missile erectors also started to come in . . . We believe the missile buildup itself began shortly after the first week in September and was continuing right up to the time that the quarantine was established." USC (88/1) House Foreign Affairs. *Hearings: Castro-Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere*. GPO, 1963, p.173. Soviet sources suggest that the first MRBMs arrived in Cuba on 15 September 1962. See Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 334; and Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Special National Intelligence Estimate 85-3-62, "The Military Buildup in Cuba," 27 February 1962 (No declassification date). Cited in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, pp. 91-93.

what the Americans assumed them to be.”<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, Angelo Codevilla, a Senate intelligence committee staff member for eight years, remarked that Sherman Kent (Chairman of BNE at the time and thus responsible for the production of the erroneous SNIE) for years went around telling friends and foes alike that his judgment, embodied in the September SNIE, as to the course of action the Soviets should have pursued in Cuba in 1962 was better than the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev’s. Codevilla wryly notes that Kent misses the point: the challenge was not to second-guess Khrushchev, but predict Soviet behavior. Since Kent and the intelligence community failed to do this, Codevilla concludes that Cuba was an intelligence failure.<sup>11</sup> Such criticism is misplaced. The fact is that BNE did consider the possibility of the introduction of offensive missiles in Cuba, but rejected it. Two factors are reported to have been decisive. The first was that intelligence officials accepted *prima facie* the statements, both public and private, of Khrushchev, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, and Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin which appeared to respect President Kennedy’s repeated warnings that the American government would not allow Cuba to become an offensive missile base for the USSR.<sup>12</sup> These Soviet assurances reinforced the second factor, the general assumption shared by intelligence analysts that “the opposition is acting in its best interest.”<sup>13</sup> The roots of this belief lay in the Western concepts of rationality and positivism, and the particular American creed of pragmatism. Under normal circumstances, Western observers expect individuals and institutions to act in accordance with their best interests, within the limitations of their environment. US intelligence analysts viewed the explicit American commitment to a nuclear-free Cuba as a formidable constraint upon Soviet behavior in the Caribbean region. Soviet behavior was studied only within the boundaries of this limitation. Actions outside of this boundary were considered irrational, and therefore improbable. With American interests in Cuba so clearly defined, and the price of conflict so high, why would the Kremlin risk confrontation? The intelligence community concluded it would not; a prudent, informed, logical conclusion. Unfortunately wrong. For sometimes human behavior is irrational: men, and the governments they create, are complex creatures, driven by fear, prodded by reason, lured by ambition. Many human decisions are irrational, a truth much-lamented by economists and social scientists. So, in a sense, Sherman Kent was right: he probably did make a more rational assessment of the international situation the Soviet Presidium faced; rational, however, in that it was based on the tenets of Western *realpolitik*, rather than Russian political and institutional considerations. The view from the Kremlin is quite different than from that of Langley. In the end no one is certain why Khrushchev placed the missiles in Cuba, even with the full benefit of hindsight. Arnold Horelick, the Director of the RAND-UCLA Center for the Study of Soviet International Behavior and a careful student of the crisis, remarked:

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<sup>10</sup> Laqueur, *A World of Secrets*, p. 170.

<sup>11</sup> Angelo Codevilla, *Informing Statecraft: Intelligence for a New Century*. New York: Free Press, 1992, p. 202.

<sup>12</sup> Allison, *Essence of Decision*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>13</sup> Roger Hilsman, *To Move A Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy*. New York: Delta, 1967, p. 189.

I have thought about the question since 1962, and I have concluded that there is no entirely plausible explanation of why the Soviets did what they did. All rationales seem to me relevant to one degree or another. Different parts of the Soviet government and different organizations probably came to support the decisions for quite different reasons, and I don't know if we'll ever be able to disentangle all of the motivations.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, the failure of the intelligence community to predict the installation of Soviet offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba appears ineluctable. BNE was not wholly culpable: predictive failures, though unfortunate, are inherent to the trade.<sup>15</sup> Like a conservative judiciary, BNE was inclined to uphold precedent in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary. At the time the estimate was drafted, the intelligence agencies simply did not possess compelling data that the Russians planned to introduce missiles onto the island, in spite of the intuitions of John McCone. The dearth of evidence, not the infamous estimate, was the true intelligence failure.

The most striking deficiencies in the American intelligence operations of September 1962 were not in analysis and evaluation, but in the collection process. Despite growing concern over the extent and character of Soviet activities on the island, from 5 September to 14 October no U-2 reconnaissance flights were flown *directly* over the isle. Hence during the critical period of the Cuban buildup, the intelligence community was bereft of valuable high-resolution, high-altitude photographic coverage of the central and western portions of the island. This is startling when one considers that the aircraft was the primary intelligence collection platform for the island.<sup>16</sup> The want of "hard" (that is, technical and photographic) intelligence derived from U-2 flights was a formidable obstacle to obtaining an accurate assessment of the Cuban buildup. If not blinded, the sight of American intelligence was certainly impaired during this crucial span. The reason for the absence of U-2 coverage has been disputed for years. Senior CIA officials have consistently asserted that heavy cloud cover over Cuba resulted in the dearth of photography. In a post-mortem of the crisis commissioned by McCone, the CIA concluded: "The delay in completing the photographic coverage was due solely to the unfavorable weather

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, pp. 36-37. Khrushchev declared that the primary objective of the deployment was to defend Cuba and the Castro regime. See Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*. Translated by Strobe Talbott. New York: Harper and Collins, 1991, pp. 388-89. This assertion is supported by a senior Soviet general involved in the planning. See Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, pp. 11, 168.

<sup>15</sup> See Richard K. Betts, "Analysis, War, and Decision: Why intelligence failures are inevitable," *World Politics* 31 (October 1975).

<sup>16</sup> As previously noted, the intelligence community received photographic intelligence from Discoverer/Corona satellites. However, cognoscenti have asserted that the orbits of the satellites were ill-suited for coverage of Cuba (being primarily intended for reconnaissance over the USSR) and that the resolution was inferior to that of the U-2. (Interestingly, satellite intelligence has been ignored in public analyses of the crisis.) U-2 flights along the periphery of island were flown on 17, 27, 29 September, 5 and 7 October. Intelligence derived from these flights confirmed the proliferation of SAM sites on the coast, yet the interior of the island escaped coverage. Lower-level reconnaissance flights were conducted by SAC RB-47 photographic planes and Navy F8U Crusaders and F3D Skyknights in an attempt to penetrate the interior, yet the results were "disappointing." See Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, pp. 151-52.

predicted during this period."<sup>17</sup> Testifying before Congress, General Carroll concurred, stating on the record that the interruption was due to weather.<sup>18</sup> Yet this official explanation has proved unsatisfactory to many observers, and criticism of the intelligence community for the delay has endured throughout the years. Recently, several CIA officials have suggested that "non-meteorological forces" were responsible for the interruption in U-2 coverage during the missile crisis. They claim that the pause was principally the result of equivocation by senior Kennedy administration officials, notably McGeorge Bundy and Dean Rusk, who were troubled over the possible political costs of the loss of a U-2 over Cuba. Their concern reportedly led administration officials to delay approval of the CIA's request for additional U-2 flights to provide increased photographic coverage of the island, while policymakers searched in vain for safer, alternative methods of surveillance and legal justification for the overflights. The consequence of this delay was confusion within the intelligence community over the scheduling and trajectories of the proposed U-2 missions.<sup>19</sup>

There is some merit to this claim. As previously discussed, the proliferation of the SA-2 sites in Cuba alerted intelligence officials and policymakers to the possibility of the loss of an American U-2 aircraft over the island. The State Department was particularly concerned about this prospect, as it feared the international opprobrium which would follow such an incident. In mid-September, largely at the promptings of Rusk, the U-2 flight patterns were altered: the conventional west to east and east to west, two-pass flight path which penetrated Cuban airspace was replaced by peripheral flights, no closer than twenty-five miles to the island, over international waters. Administration officials hoped that the new flight path would reduce the risk to the U-2 missions by distancing the surveillance aircraft from the SAM installations. In addition, they believed that peripheral flights would be less provocative to the Castro regime because American aircraft no longer directly violated Cuba airspace. These perceived benefits were obtained at a great cost, for there is little doubt that the alteration to the flight paths adversely affected intelligence collection. Photographic coverage of the western portion of the island where the buildup was centered (and the SA-2 systems were reported to be nearing operational readiness) was difficult, and surveillance of the area waned.<sup>20</sup> CIA officials assert that the agency was aware of these deficiencies, but was unable to correct them. They maintain that Rusk and Bundy tacitly discouraged additional CIA requests for direct flights over the island, preferring peripheral flights while the policymakers explored less risky options. The implication is clear: the interruption in U-2 coverage was the result of civilian interference and indecision.<sup>21</sup>

Senior administration officials sidestep these allegations with claims that intelligence officials were not *explicitly* prohibited from making direct flight requests. To support this assertion, policymakers point to the PFIAB post-mortem of the missile crisis. After a thorough inquiry into the performance of the intelligence community during the crisis, the oversight board concluded in February 1963 that the intelligence agencies, not policymakers, were responsible for the interruption in U-2 coverage. The

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<sup>17</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "U-2 Overflights of Cuba, 29 August through 14 October, 1962," 27 February 1963 (No declassification date). Cited in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, pp. 127-37.

<sup>18</sup> USC (88/1) House Foreign Affairs. *Hearings*, p.173.

<sup>19</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, pp. 135-38, 163-64.

<sup>20</sup> Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p. 121.

<sup>21</sup> Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, p. 117.

PFIAB noted that recommendations for future U-2 flights originated within the intelligence community, in the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR), an inter-agency forum established under the USIB to task aerial reconnaissance missions. After assessing the risk and value of proposed flights, COMOR recommended flights to the Special Group (an ad hoc high-level committee responsible for authorizing covert intelligence operations) for approval. Should the recommendation be approved by the Special Group (as was generally the case), it was referred directly to the President for authorization. The PFIAB report contended that throughout the month of September 1962, the President endorsed all U-2 flights referred to him by the Special Group, which in turn approved all flights (in one instance with minor modifications) recommended to it by COMOR and the intelligence agencies. The inference is that had the intelligence community recommended increased U-2 coverage of the Cuban buildup, administration officials would have routinely granted approval. In the absence of these recommendations, comprehensive coverage of the island was neglected. The report stated:

Until October 3, when the Defense Intelligence Agency urged that suspicious areas of Cuba be covered by U-2 photographic missions, it appears that there was a failure on the part of the intelligence community as a whole to propose to the Special Group U-2 reconnaissance missions on a scale commensurate with the nature and intensity of the Soviet activity in Cuba.<sup>22</sup>

PFIAB member Clark Clifford believed that this failure to recommend U-2 surveillance was the result of "a state of mind within the intelligence community, encouraged by the negative results of August 29 photography, which rejected the possibility of offensive missiles in Cuba."<sup>23</sup> He notes paradoxically that although DCI McCone personally believed that offensive missiles had arrived in Cuba, his agency, the CIA, did not petition for additional U-2 aerial reconnaissance missions to provide material evidence to confirm his hypothesis.<sup>24</sup> Of course, intelligence officials retort that they were discouraged from recommending these flights. The claims of both parties are reconcilable: the evidence suggests that senior Kennedy administration officials tacitly discouraged direct U-2 flights over Cuba in September 1962, and, for its part, the intelligence community (COMOR in particular) failed to press the issue.<sup>25</sup> The true dispute concerns bureaucratic responsibility. Who was responsible

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<sup>22</sup> President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, "Memorandum to the President," 4 February 1963 (No declassification date). Cited in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, p. 364.

<sup>23</sup> Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 358.

<sup>24</sup> Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 358. Although McCone was in Europe during this period of the crisis, he kept in close contact with deputy director Marshall Carter by telegraph. There is no evidence that he urged Carter to increase U-2 coverage.

<sup>25</sup> In his 1988 book, McGeorge Bundy was the first Kennedy administration official to publicly acknowledge that the administration shared in the blame for the interruption of U-2 coverage: "The photographs of 14 October were taken in good time, but they had been delayed, first by our own caution in overflying Cuba, then by an unworthy bureaucratic squabble between the CIA and the Air Force over control over the mission, and finally by weather." Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 687, note no. 45.

for ensuring that American intelligence assets were properly deployed against Cuba? The intelligence community believed that ultimate accountability lay with policymakers. Conversely, Clifford and the PFIAB believed that the espionage agencies had a professional responsibility to vigorously advocate the flights regardless of the administration's aversion. While a full discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is apparent that the intelligence community shares accountability. Should the espionage agencies conclude that important targets are not receiving adequate coverage, at the very least one would expect senior officials to be motivated by professional obligation to cogently present their concerns to policymakers, irrespective of whether these concerns were discouraged or not. The PFIAB report concluded that the intelligence community did not take this action in September 1962. Circumstances aside, the indictment is accurate: COMOR did not formally recommend direct overflights of Cuba during this period. It is therefore evident that the intelligence community bears no small measure of blame for the delay in U-2 coverage.

Why did the intelligence agencies, the CIA in particular, fail to press for U-2 flights over western and central Cuba in September 1962? While inclement weather and tacit discouragement were no doubt significant factors, institutional strife played a prominent role. Throughout September 1962 the intelligence community was preoccupied with a territorial dispute between the CIA and the Air Force over control of the U-2 flights over Cuba. This skirmish was one of many in the long war for domination over the nation's aerial reconnaissance program, outlined in the last chapter. As Soviet military assistance to Cuba increased in the fall of 1962, the Air Force saw an opportunity to wrest control of the U-2 surveillance flights from the CIA. In early September, the Air Staff briefed McNamara and Gilpatric on a proposal for SAC control of the flights, arguing that the presence of the SA-2 system and the increasing demand for U-2 missions necessitated the transfer of the operations to SAC for it alone possessed both the resources and expertise to conduct the overflights should hostilities occur. Initially, the Secretary and his deputy were receptive to the idea. Both were concerned (as was Attorney General Robert Kennedy) that should a U-2 aircraft be lost over the island, the CIA's cover story -- that a Lockheed pilot delivering a plane from the United States to Puerto Rico had inadvertently strayed over Cuban airspace -- would not be plausible. Both officials were amenable to the arguments of the Air Staff that SAC control of U-2 surveillance would eliminate the need for this cover story, as the nature of the flight would be transformed from a covert operation to a military reconnaissance mission. This transformation was not inconsequential. It is one matter to shoot down a spy-plane; quite another to shoot down a military reconnaissance aircraft. By removing the stigma of espionage from the mission, it would be easier to justify the flights to the international community should an aircraft be lost. McNamara and Gilpatric were impressed by the proposal and agreed to let the Air Force explore the possibility of SAC control of U-2 surveillance missions over Cuba.

Predictably, the CIA was opposed to the proposal. Most senior officials viewed it as pure organizational imperialism: yet another attempt by the Air Force to seize control of national aerial reconnaissance operations. Because DCI McCone was in Europe on his honeymoon in September 1962, the task of preserving the agency's prerogatives fell to deputy director General Marshall Carter. It was no small irony that the responsibility of defending the civilian agency from military encroachment fell to a military officer. In attempts to maintain control over the Cuban U-2 missions,

Carter and CIA officials argued that the flights remained technically classified as covert intelligence operations and therefore fell under the authority of the CIA by precedent. They asserted that the CIA pilots were more experienced than their Air Force counterparts and therefore more capable of dealing with the threat posed by the SAMs. They also noted that the U-2 planes employed by the CIA were superior to those operated by SAC: the CIA planes possessed more powerful engines (allowing the aircraft to fly higher) and improved ELINT capabilities.<sup>26</sup> These attributes made the aircraft more elusive, and therefore less vulnerable to anti-aircraft measures (notably, the SAMs). Thus the CIA argued that it should retain control of the U-2 flights by virtue of precedence and superior men and material.

For its part, the DIA championed the Air Force proposal. The agency joined with the JCS and the military departments in endorsing the SAC proposition, essentially because it would augment the role of the agency in analyzing U-2 photographic intelligence (traditionally a CIA preserve). It was natural for the DIA, whose staff was largely composed of military officers, to ally with their peers in the perennial inter-agency struggle over national surveillance programs. However, beyond these institutional and professional considerations, Carroll was convinced that the military was in a preferable position to the CIA to meet the immense collection requirements for tactical intelligence for military planning in the event of armed conflict between Cuba and the United States. The director of the DIA believed that such an event was likely. In mid-September, an agency analyst, Colonel John R. Wright, Jr. (who headed the MONGOOSE operations of the DIA), observed similarities between the pattern of SAM sites in western Cuba and those in the USSR used to protect strategic missile installations.<sup>27</sup> (Wright had been reviewing the 29 August photographs of the San Cristobal area.) Wright, like McCone, suspected that these SAMs were a signal of the impending deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles. However, unlike McCone, he set out to gather evidence to support the hypothesis. Recent refugee reports contained myriad allegations of missiles in Cuba, yet such intelligence was notoriously unreliable and inaccurate. Nonetheless, Wright began to amass and collate refugee information on suspected missile sightings. The breakthrough came on 18 September when he received an intelligence report by a CIA operative who claimed to have sighted the rear profile of a

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<sup>26</sup> The CIA operated the newer U-2F aircraft, while SAC possessed older U-2A's and U-2C's. The former aircraft contained the powerful J-75 engine and a more sophisticated power plant which allowed the plane to fly five thousand feet higher and provided improved capability for detecting ground-based radar and tracking SAMs. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p. 123; Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 182; and conversation with author, 14 June 1992.

<sup>27</sup> One of the more persistent myths surrounding the crisis is that the SAMs were deployed in a trapezoidal pattern. Former photographic analyst Dino Brugioni notes: "There were no SAMs deployed in a trapezoidal pattern near San Cristobal, but neither were SAMs deployed in Cuba in the same manner as they were deployed in the Soviet Union -- i.e. a point rather than an area defense pattern. When MRBMs were found in the San Cristobal area, the sites were not defended . . . with a SAM at each corner of the sites. The trapezoidal SAM defense concept was also discounted by the DOD hearings before Congress for FY 1964." Brugioni, p.165 n. Testifying before Congress in 1963, General Carroll also dismissed the trapezoidal SAM pattern, maintaining that the SAM sites were composed of six launch positions, forming two entwined triangles, encircling a central guidance area, as was common in the Soviet Union. In the majority of instances these sites were connected by roads to create a "Star of David" pattern familiar to American intelligence analysts. USC (88/1) House Foreign Affairs. *Hearings*, p.168. Also see Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 104.

Soviet ballistic missile carried on a truck on the island.<sup>28</sup> This piece of evidence was deemed to be so significant that General Carroll formally advanced the hypothesis that Soviet Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) might be present in the Pinar del Rio area of western Cuba to McNamara on 1 October.<sup>29</sup> Carroll wished to execute a south to north U-2 flight over the island as soon as possible to confirm or refute the hypothesis. He supported the SAC proposal as the most efficacious means to obtain corroborative photographic evidence. Consequently, Carroll appealed to McNamara to endorse the Air Force proposal. His influence was reportedly significant.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, so great was the DIA's concern over the buildup in Cuba that on 4 October the agency established a Cuban Situation Room within the CIIC at the Pentagon, directed by the ubiquitous George Allen, with personnel and facilities for continuous 24-hour operation. Furthermore, General Carroll appointed John Hughes, a talented and experienced photographic interpreter, to be his special assistant and ordered him to personally monitor the Cuban situation and report his findings directly to the director of the DIA. At the time there was little U-2 photography to evaluate.

The bureaucratic contest for control of the U-2 flights, which pitted the CIA against the DIA and its military brethren, lasted throughout September and into early October. While this melee was not the sole cause of the delay in surveillance flights over Cuba, it was the most important, for it polarized the intelligence community during a time of uncertainty over the scope and nature of the reconnaissance missions.<sup>31</sup> Throughout September the execution of the missions were in doubt (recall that the State Department was pressing for less risky alternatives), direct flights discouraged, and control disputed. Given this atmosphere of dubiety, it is not surprising that the intelligence community did not press for more U-2 flights, for its attention was fixed not on the island of Cuba, but the conference rooms of the Pentagon and White House. The DIA and CIA bear a large burden of the blame for the delay in reconnaissance. Regardless of the merits of their respective positions, neither agency ensured that Cuba received adequate surveillance coverage during the critical month of the buildup. This was an authentic intelligence failure. National intelligence needs were overshadowed

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<sup>28</sup> USC (88/1) House Appropriations. *Hearings: Department of Defense Appropriations, FY 1964*. GPO, 1963, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> USC (88/1) House Appropriations. *Hearings*, pp. 44-45, 71; and JCS Chronology, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Admiral Frankel recalled: "[W]hen he [General Carroll] found, or concluded, that the U-2 overflights were better run by the Air Force than by the Central Intelligence Agency, this was done with the highest backing, and from my point of view, since I was involved in it, with what might have seemed unreasonable demand as far as taking pictures, getting them back, and getting them analyzed. General Carroll properly insisted on an all out effort." Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel Frankel oral history interview, pp. 448-9.

<sup>31</sup> I acknowledge that this thesis is at odds with the report of the Stennis Committee which investigated the performance of the intelligence community in the Cuban missile crisis. The report stated: "There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that any conflict between CIA and SAC existed or that there was any delay in photographic coverage of the island because of the fact that the U-2 program was being operated by the CIA prior to October 14. Likewise there is no evidence whatsoever of any deadlock between the two agencies or any conflict or dispute with respect to the question of by whom the flights should be flown." USC (88/1) Senate Armed Services, p. 9. My confidential sources suggest otherwise. For support, see Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 687; Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p. 123.

by organizational rivalry and bureaucratic acquiescence. Consequently, the crucial middle days of September, wherein the Soviets introduced offensive missiles into Cuba, were lost by the American intelligence agencies to controversy and timidity.

As the month drew to a close, the DIA reported that several SA-2 sites were thought to be operational.<sup>32</sup> The threat to American U-2 missions increased significantly. This consideration, coupled with the advocacy of General Carroll, impelled McNamara to officially adopt the Air Force proposal for SAC control of U-2 operations over Cuba as the Defense Department position. In a lengthy meeting with the JCS to review military planning against Cuba on 1 October, the Secretary instructed the Chiefs to direct SAC to formulate an operational plan for reconnaissance over Cuba.<sup>33</sup> The subject was formally raised in a COMOR meeting three days later, but the debate was inconclusive.<sup>34</sup> The proposal was referred to the Special Group, an ad hoc committee established by President Kennedy to authorize and monitor covert operations, for decision.

The Special Group meeting which considered the issue of U-2 control was held in the office of McGeorge Bundy on 9 October.<sup>35</sup> The fact that the matter ended up in the office of the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs was an indication of the severity of the feud. Bundy, a favorite of the President, had become an informal chief of staff for Kennedy on national security issues, quickly moving to fill the vacuum created as the State Department's influence waned under Rusk. In the developing hierarchy, Bundy was one rung removed from the President. If the U-2 issue could not be settled by Bundy, it would end up on the desk of Kennedy. It had become that important. In the 9 October meeting, Marshall Carter defended the jurisdiction of the CIA over the missions, while Roswell Gilpatric advocated SAC control of future flights. After extensive deliberation, Gilpatric prevailed: Carter acceded to the Defense Department proposal and agreed to SAC control of U-2 flights over Cuba. It is likely that the military background of the deputy director of the CIA played a role in this decision. Carter reportedly realized that in the event of escalation, the CIA lacked the operational assets (that is, airplanes and pilots) to meet the expanding intelligence requirements of military planners. In the aftermath of the decision, many at the CIA were furious at Carter's acquiescence; they believed an important bureaucratic battle had been lost and the precedent of CIA authority over aerial reconnaissance programs had been effectively overturned. Privately McCone was said to be indignant, for he believed that Carter failed to mount a determined resistance to the Air Force proposal, that the Deputy Director's military background caused him to be overly sympathetic to the demands of the Defense Department. Yet McCone did not appeal the decision, telling colleagues that it was too late, he believed that the President had decided the issue prior to the COMOR meeting.

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<sup>32</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 4; and Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, pp. 161-62. In the same meeting McNamara also ordered Admiral Robert L. Dennison, Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, to begin planning for a blockade of Cuba.

<sup>34</sup> Allison, *Essence of Decision*, pp. 122-23.

<sup>35</sup> I could not determine which Special Group met at this time. The Special Group (Augmented) was responsible for the MONGOOSE program, but it normally met in a conference room next door to General Maxwell Taylor's office. The fact that the meeting took place in Bundy's office suggests that it was a Special Group meeting and thus the U-2 flights were considered within the broad jurisdiction of covert operations rather than the narrow confines of the anti-Castro program.

The DCI suspected that the Defense Department had outflanked him, that McNamara had privately consulted with the President and gained approval for the proposal before the 9 October meeting. To McCone, the Special Group debate was more theatrical than deliberative; the crucial decision was already made.<sup>36</sup> In any event, President Kennedy formally approved of the arrangement on 10 October.<sup>37</sup> Thus the CIA lost the battle for control of U-2 missions over Cuba.

It is a mistake to dismiss this dispute as a sterile bureaucratic controversy. The quarrel exacted a high cost, distracting the American government and espionage apparatus during the critical period of the Cuban buildup. It was only after the dispute was settled that policymakers and intelligence officials belatedly turned their attention to the alleged missile sites. On 9 October the Special Group approved a COMOR recommendation of 4 October for the execution of a long-proposed south to north U-2 flight plan over the island that would provide detailed photographic coverage of western Cuba. This decision was an important victory for the DIA, which had long advocated this flight path. The mission was to be flown as soon as weather permitted.

Two days later, while awaiting the flight, the DIA reported, based on a Navy Photographic Interpretation Center report of fleet aerial reconnaissance photography (dated 28 September) pertaining to ten crates carried on the deck of the Soviet ship *Kasimov*, that the Soviet Union had shipped additional offensive weapons to Cuba. Through a form of analysis called "crateology" -- wherein analysts seek correlations between military equipment and the type and size of crate it is shipped in -- analysts in the DIA Situation Room concluded that Soviet IL-28 ("Beagle") light bombers were being delivered to the Castro regime.<sup>38</sup> The DIA also reported the discovery of additional SA-2 sites: by 11 October the agency believed approximately twenty sites were in disparate stages of construction on the island.<sup>39</sup> Apprehension at DIA became palpable, as analysts awaited the execution of the SAC U-2 overflight over western Cuba that the Special Group approved on 9 September.

The long-awaited U-2 flight over western Cuba, focusing on the San Cristobal area fifty miles southwest of Havana, was finally carried out on 14 October. The first mission under control of SAC, the U-2 aircraft was piloted by Major Richard S. Heyser and performed a single pass over the western

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<sup>36</sup> Confidential interview, senior CIA official. Also see Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 155.

<sup>37</sup> The Defense Department assumed operational responsibility for the U-2 missions on 12 October 1962. The U-2 aircraft were assigned to 4080th Strategic Wing of SAC.

<sup>38</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 4. In congressional testimony, General Carroll later admitted that the DIA never received photographic intelligence verifying this conclusion: "It was a probable determination because we never did see the aircraft as such. We did see the crates which had a configuration which we subsequently identified as being the same as that which we had observed moving into Indonesia and the UAR." USC (88/1) House Foreign Affairs. *Hearings*, p.167. Contemporary Soviet sources confirm the deployment of the bombers. Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>39</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 4. These findings were based on intelligence derived from the peripheral surveillance flights of the preceding month.

end of the island.<sup>40</sup> The flight did not elicit any reaction from the feared SA-2 systems.<sup>41</sup> The raw intelligence, in the form of two large rolls of film, was immediately sent to the Naval Photographic Intelligence Center (NAVPIC) in Suitland, Maryland, for processing. The developed film, edited and titled, arrived at National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) in northwest Washington the next morning. NPIC was a multi-departmental agency tasked with exploiting strategic photographic intelligence. Although funded, operated, and staffed by the CIA, the DIA and each military service had special detachments at NPIC, under the administrative control of the intelligence chiefs of the military departments.<sup>42</sup> NPIC was responsible for evaluation of the intelligence derived from U-2 flights over Cuba.

Monday, 15 October was the fateful day of discovery. In the early evening, the staff at NPIC formed a preliminary conclusion that Soviet missiles were present in the Pinar del Rio area of Cuba. Colonel David Parker, the deputy director of NPIC, contacted John Hughes and asked him to come to NPIC to review the intelligence. Hughes arrived with a DIA photo-interpreter, John McLaughlin, and the two reviewed the preliminary evidence. Both were quickly convinced that the discovered missiles were offensive in nature (that is, ground-to-ground), probably MRBMs. After taking brief notes, the two drove to Bolling Air Force Base to the home of General Carroll. In a tense encounter, the Director of the DIA was briefed on the available intelligence. Carroll quickly telephoned Gilpatric (for McNamara was unreachable, as he was attending a Hickory Hill seminar that evening) while Hughes and McLaughlin set out for the home of the Deputy Secretary of Defense. After listening to a terse summary of the preliminary evidence from the pair, Gilpatric decided that little could be done that evening: McNamara and McCone were indisposed and, in any event, comprehensive analysis of the intelligence would not be complete until morning. Gilpatric therefore decided to keep his arrangements for the evening. He and Carroll set out for a party at the quarters of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maxwell Taylor, while Hughes returned to NPIC to witness the processing and analysis of the U-2 imagery.<sup>43</sup> Upon their arrival at Taylor's party, Gilpatric and Carroll discovered that Deputy Undersecretary of State U. Alexis Johnson and Marshall Carter were in attendance. They were discreetly informed of developments as circumstances permitted. Taylor recalled:

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<sup>40</sup> Many accounts of the crisis have identified the pilot of the 14 October flight as Major Rudolph Anderson, Jr. Intelligence officials involved in the operation have informed me that this claim is erroneous and suggested that the assertions were made perhaps in tribute to the pilot, who was subsequently killed in a 27 October mission over Cuba. His was the only life lost by hostile action during the crisis. It is possible that Anderson performed a peripheral role in the flight: Brugioni claims that he was the designated backup pilot. Others have suggested that two missions were flown that evening, one by Anderson and the other by Heyser. See Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 182. For concurrent flights see Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: The Cuban Missile Crisis*. London: Pan, 1968, p. 95; Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 391; Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p. 123.

<sup>41</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, pp. 193-94.

<sup>43</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, pp. 206-10.

It was in the cocktail hour that General Carroll edged over to me and whispered that he thought they had definite photography now showing the presence of missiles in Cuba. So we all went about whispering to each other in the corners of the sun porch at my quarters.<sup>44</sup>

Thus the principals were informed of early developments in the Cuban missile crisis largely by word of mouth.

October 15 was the highwater mark of the DIA's role in the crisis. The agency accurately monitored early developments -- the deployment of the MIG-21s, SA-2s, and IL-28s -- and supported the Defense Department's successful effort to gain control of the U-2 surveillance flights over the island. More importantly, the DIA formulated and advanced the hypothesis that missiles were deployed in the San Cristobal area; a thesis at odds with conventional wisdom within the intelligence community. Subsequently, the agency fought for, and won, photographic coverage of western Cuba. In fact, the DIA proposed the flight path of the historic 14 October flight which discovered the MRBMs on the island. These were achievements of no small measure, especially when one considers the youth and disorder of the agency. They proved that the DIA could make decisive contributions to the American intelligence effort. In a very real sense, the Cuban missile crisis was a rite of passage for the DIA. Its first chief of staff, Admiral Samuel Frankel later recalled:

Well, the Cuban missile episode was resolved and, of course, reflected great credit on the Defense Intelligence Agency, and rightly so . . . We couldn't have had a better episode or occurrence to have reduced the -- or cause abatement of this general feeling of suspicion [toward DIA] . . . But after the Cuban crisis had been resolved, the agencies took a look at themselves and realized that, without the Defense Intelligence Agency riding herd on this as a central element, the information which was made available would probably have not been made available in the manner and in the time limits it was. I believe that's right. I don't think it would. Furthermore, the people who would have done their individual work on this could not have ended up with as fine a product as did come out of it.<sup>45</sup>

If the days prior to the discovery of the missiles were a credit to the DIA, the succeeding days revealed its shortcomings. As the crisis deepened, the DIA found its influence waning. Formerly in the vanguard, the agency found itself exiled to the rear of the intelligence effort, consigned to an auxiliary role.

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<sup>44</sup> Transcript, General Maxwell Taylor oral history interview, 21 June 1964, by Elspeth Rostow, p. 8. JFK Library.

<sup>45</sup> Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel Frankel oral history interview, pp. 450-52.

## The Military Crisis: the Erosion of DIA Authority

Following the discovery of the Soviet missiles in Cuba, General Carroll, with McNamara's approval, directed the DIA to assume control over national intelligence collection operations relevant to the deployment and the production of current intelligence. Admiral Frankel remembered:

He [Carroll] required that every agency, including that portion of the CIA which dealt with photography, overflights, be immediately responsive to his requirements. Flights were laid on, Navy ships were moved about for intelligence-collection purposes, special courier flights were established, and the photographs processed and analyzed, with such speed that I don't think there was any photograph which was more than twelve hours late -- within twelve hours after the picture was taken the information was available.<sup>46</sup>

The task was immense. Immediately following the discovery of the missiles on 16 October, McNamara ordered SAC to conduct additional U-2 flights as required to achieve complete photographic coverage of Cuba as quickly as possible. The DIA coordinated the intelligence requirements for the intelligence community and the U&S Commands for each proposed mission. Within a week, seventeen high-altitude missions were flown, providing coverage of ninety-eight percent of the island.<sup>47</sup> The film from each mission was processed at NAVPIC and SAC; subsequently it was sent to NPIC for evaluation, where teams of CIA, DIA, and armed service analysts examined the photographic intelligence. Concurrent evaluation was performed at the DIA Cuban Situation Room in the Pentagon. The work was complex and arduous; by all accounts, the DIA staff performed admirably.

Yet the endeavors of the DIA to disseminate the current intelligence were fraught with difficulty. For example, on the morning of discovery, 16 October, McNamara was briefed on the deployment of the missiles by John Hughes of the DIA.<sup>48</sup> However, the JCS were not similarly briefed by the DIA as one would expect. Instead, teams of Army, Navy, and Air Force briefers were assembled and informed of events by NPIC staffers. The teams then conveyed the information to their superiors in the military departments, employing notes and briefing boards prepared by NPIC. DIA analysts were denied the opportunity to brief the service chiefs; traditional military precedence prevailed. The following anecdote is illustrative. The Navy team was unable to brief CNO Anderson that morning, for he was presenting a lecture to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. In his absence a Navy briefer, Lt. Commander Peter Brunnette, suggested that the team alert the Commandant of the Marines, General Shoup, of the missile installation. Although Shoup was nearby, working at his office at the Pentagon, the proposal was immediately rejected:

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<sup>46</sup> Transcript, Rear Admiral Samuel Frankel oral history interview, pp. 448-49.

<sup>47</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 225.

An aide to Admiral Anderson reminded Brunette that the Marines got their information, as far as intelligence was concerned, from the Navy and you never brief the commandant of the Marine Corps before you brief the Chief of Naval Operations. When Brunette questioned that judgment, the aide said, "You just let us worry about that."<sup>49</sup>

This tale offers a valuable insight into the way the military operates. Rank and precedence mean everything. Unfortunately, the DIA possessed neither. In spite of the fact that the DIA was established to perform this precise function -- briefing the JCS and the leaders of the military departments (the Editorial and Briefing Section of the CIIC was specifically charged with this task in 1961) -- for all intents and purposes the armed services disregarded this provision and denied DIA briefers access to the chiefs of staff. Established departmental procedures were maintained. For the duration of the crisis, the DIA normally provided intelligence assessments and briefing boards to service officers, who in turn briefed the senior officers of the military departments. Thus did the military services preserve their institutional prerogatives.

The dissemination of current intelligence to another important DIA consumer, the U&S Commands, also proved to be problematic. The ability of the agency to impart intelligence to field commanders was impaired by a system of strict compartmentalization imposed in September, 1962. In normal circumstances, the intelligence community seeks to confine sensitive information to top staffers, generally on a "need-to-know" basis. Security systems are established to limit the distribution of information and thereby reduce the risk of disclosure of covert sources and methods. In the case of intelligence on Cuba, however, a rigid security system was established principally for political reasons. President Kennedy was concerned about the prospect that sensitive (and politically explosive) intelligence which revealed the magnitude of Soviet military assistance to Cuba might be leaked to the press. Such a leak could severely damage the administration, for it would effectively bolster Republican claims that the Democratic President was pursuing a policy of appeasement toward the Castro regime. To reduce this possibility, at a 31 August meeting on aerial reconnaissance over Cuba, President Kennedy restricted the dissemination of intelligence on the Cuban buildup. Subsequently, a new security clearance (designated PSALM) was created under the authority of the USIB to safeguard sensitive photographic intelligence on Cuba. The system imposed an injunction on the distribution of information on offensive weapons in intelligence publications. The rigid restrictions of the new security system effectively confined the information to high-level intelligence officials and policymakers centered in the Washington area. Many officers in the military commands were not granted PSALM clearance and, for the most part, were denied detailed intelligence on the Cuban buildup.<sup>50</sup> When the MRBM deployments were discovered in October, the relevant intelligence was routinely classified under the PSALM security clearance, hence it was not disseminated to the U&S

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<sup>49</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, pp. 227-28.

<sup>50</sup> President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, "Memorandum to the President," 4 February 1963. Cited in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, pp. 362-71; Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, pp. 125-28; and conversation with author, 14 June 1993.

Commands in military intelligence publications. In order to inform military commanders of developments, the DIA was forced to call in high-ranking officers from the field for oral briefings. Thereafter, the intelligence remained restricted to senior U&S Command officers and was withheld from military planners of lesser ranks for some time. Thus the rigid system of compartmentalization hampered the DIA's capability to disseminate intelligence to the field commands and impeded early operational planning for American military action against the Castro regime.<sup>51</sup>

While the DIA essayed to collect and evaluate current intelligence, the Kennedy administration deliberated the proper response to the Soviet missile deployment. On the afternoon of 16 October, President Kennedy assembled a group of senior advisors, experts, and statesmen to advise him on the Cuban situation. Called the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExCom), the group met daily for the duration of the crisis to review developments, evaluate American options, and recommend actions to the President.<sup>52</sup> At the first meeting, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell Taylor -- the only military representative on the committee -- argued that the deployment of Soviet missiles in the Caribbean represented a major Soviet effort to alter the nuclear balance of power. Echoing the views of military leaders, Taylor asserted that Khrushchev's bold venture greatly increased the capability of the Soviet Union to threaten and attack the United States with nuclear missiles. However, this argument was rejected by several participants, including the Secretary of Defense, who contended that in spite of the deployment, the United States enjoyed incontrovertible nuclear superiority. Reflecting on the debate, McNamara later observed:

the assumption that the strategic nuclear balance (or "imbalance") mattered in any way was wrong. As far as I am concerned, it made no difference. Now, I don't recall that we had any hard evidence that there were Soviet warheads in Cuba, though, I suppose it is likely they were there; but what difference would the extra forty have made to the overall strategic balance? If memory serves me correctly, we had some 5000 strategic nuclear warheads against their 300. Can anyone seriously tell me that their having 340 would have made any difference? The military balance wasn't changed. I didn't believe it then, and I don't believe it now.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> PFIAB, "Memorandum to the President," Cited in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, pp. 370-71.

<sup>52</sup> Although ExCom was formally established by National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) No. 196 of 22 October 1962, the committee first met at 11:45 AM on 16 October. Initially composed of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of the Treasury C. Douglas Dillon, John McCone, General Maxwell Taylor, McGeorge Bundy, and Special Counsel Theodore Sorenson, later participants included Robert Lovett, Dean Acheson, Undersecretary of State George Ball, Assistant Secretary of State (Latin American Affairs) Edwin M. Martin, Roswell Gilpatric, Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) Paul Nitze, State Department Soviet Expert Llewellyn Thompson, General Marshall Carter, Lyndon Johnson, Kenneth O'Donnell, Donald Wilson, and Adlai Stevenson. Its haphazard format was characterized by Dean Acheson as "a floating crap game for decisions." Quoted in Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 224.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 23.

It swiftly became apparent that the DIA's superiors, the Secretary of Defense and the JCS, were deeply divided over the interpretation and implications of the missile deployment. This rift was reflected within ExCom. Those, like McNamara, who viewed the deployment as strategically inconsequential and advocated a moderate American reaction came to be called the "doves." Conversely, those who thought the deployment to be strategically significant and endorsed immediate military action against Cuba came to be known as "hawks." The Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, DCI John McCone and the JCS were numbered among the latter.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, the ExCom participants were divided between those who felt that the crisis was primarily a military problem and a question of force (that is, the "hawks"), and those who believed that it was essentially a political problem wherein military force could be applied to demonstrate national resolve (that is, the "doves"). The critical distinction between hawks and doves was between applying military force for military ends, and military force for political and diplomatic objectives. Despite the disparity, common ground was discovered: there was unanimous agreement among the President's counselors that the presence of the nuclear missiles in Cuba could not be tolerated. Subsequent debate centered on the best means to persuade the Soviet Union to withdraw the weapons.

## The Perceptions and Preferences of the JCS: the DIA as Accomplice

Concurrent with the ExCom meeting, the JCS convened to discuss a dozen questions posed to them in the early afternoon by McNamara concerning possible American responses to the Soviet missile deployment. Not surprisingly, the JCS embraced a hawkish perspective. The military leadership viewed the installation of Soviet MRBMs in Cuba as a fundamental shift in the strategic equation. This was not merely a theoretical assessment, based upon abstract comparisons of US-Soviet force structures; rather it was a practical evaluation of the Russian military threat, a threat that the JCS were professionally responsible for estimating and counteracting. Many in the military are quick to point out that civilian nuclear theorists had the luxury of speculating as to the precise effect of these nuclear missiles on the strategic equilibrium; the JCS did not have the time for such musings. For the nation's military leaders, the specter of a Soviet nuclear strike against US military bases and population centers offered, for the first time, the very real prospect of the destruction of a large portion of the strategic capabilities of SAC and the death of as many as eighty million American citizens. For US military planners the threat was tangible. Some believed that the Cuban deployment -- estimated to be 40 launchers with 80 warheads -- represented an eighty percent increase in Soviet first-strike

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<sup>54</sup> Dillon later recalled: "All I can remember is how we [the hawks] felt at the time. I felt -- and so did the Joint Chiefs of Staff -- that there *was* a change in the strategic balance." Quoted in Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 23. The hawks were Acheson, Dillon, McCone, Nitze, and Taylor.

capability.<sup>55</sup> The implications were extraordinary. It should be recalled that the existing American nuclear plan (SIOP-62) called for a massive preemptive nuclear attack on the Soviet Union and its communist allies; what the Air Force called “a splendid first strike.” Thus the installation of Soviet nuclear forces in the Caribbean had dire implications for strategic planners, committed to ensuring that the United States possessed both the capabilities and plans for nuclear victory. The comments of Graham Allison are instructive:

The President had a “reasonable” prospect under SIOP 1(a) of “getting them all” on a first strike, at least according to the military folks. [The spy Colonel Oleg] Penkovsky had been giving us hard information on Soviet bases at least until September 1962. But after the Soviets put MRBMs and IRBMs [Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missiles] in Cuba, things are no longer so easy. So, clearly, from the position of the SAC planner and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Cuban move looks very, very big.<sup>56</sup>

Given that they were entrusted with the responsibility for ensuring the survival of the nation, it is not surprising that most in the military desired the immediate, forceful removal of the missiles from Cuba. The JCS preferred to deal with the threat at its source: by destroying the missile installations in Cuba, the strategic consequences of the Soviet deployment would be moot. Like a surgeon operating with dispatch, the JCS were inclined to ignore the symptoms and treat the affliction.

Accordingly, in conference on the afternoon of 16 October the JCS endorsed a massive air strike against the MRBM installations, combat aircraft, tanks, PT boats, and suspected nuclear storage facilities on the island. In addition to this aerial assault, the JCS recommended that a naval blockade be imposed against Cuba at least ten days prior to the attack, and that SAC be moved to Defensive Condition (DefCon) Two (2). The latter military posture scrambled SAC’s bomber force and allowed for the mobilization of up to 150,000 American troops. The stated objectives of these acts were to eliminate the nuclear threat to the United States and to liberate Cuba.<sup>57</sup> The second objective is noteworthy as it indicates that the JCS saw the missile crisis as an opportunity to not only to exercise American strategic superiority, but remove the present communist government from power. Of course, in this the Chiefs were not inspired entirely by Lockean principles; they were also looking to settle an old score. Stung by Presidential reproach from the Bay of Pigs debacle, the JCS yearned for a second chance to redeem themselves and settle the Cuban matter once and for all. There was a general conviction in the military that the insolent tyrant Castro had been allowed to annoy the United States for too long, that it was high time America invoked the Monroe Doctrine and intervened in Cuban

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<sup>55</sup> See Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 417. The exact number of missiles present on the island is still disputed: “Photographic reconnaissance was unable to detect precisely how many ballistic missiles were introduced into Cuba. Prior to the Soviet announcement that 42 missiles would be withdrawn, our photographs had revealed a lesser number. It could not be established, therefore, how many ballistic missiles were, in fact, introduced into Cuba or specifically how many the Soviets planned to introduce.” USC (88/1) Senate Armed Services. *Hearings*, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>57</sup> JCS Chronology, pp. 9-13.

affairs to purge the island of communists. An earlier attempt, the CIA's Bay of Pigs operation, had failed, but the military were not truly surprised. After all, they reasoned, what did civilians know about military operations? The agency was good at cloak and dagger missions, in shadow and fog. Authentic combat operations surpassed the CIA. This was the realm of the military. Now that the Soviets had upped the ante by placing missiles in Cuba, many in the armed services believed that it was time to call in the professionals, time to send in the first team. The JCS were confident there would not be a second failure.

Though the performance of the American military leadership would later be harshly criticized, none alleged that the JCS perspective was anything other than consistent. From the first day of the crisis to the last, the Chiefs unanimously advocated an immediate response to the Soviet missile deployment and recommended a massive bombing strike accompanied by full-scale invasion of Cuba to destroy the missile sites. This course of action was advanced relentlessly, irrespective of whether the missile sites were assessed to be operational or not. The resolve of the JCS was invariable; they repeatedly dismissed alternative proposals for negotiation and conciliation in favor of a sweeping military assault on the island. Simply stated, for the JCS the Cuban missile crisis represented a rare opportunity to teach the Soviets a lesson in the high price of aggrandizement. The Air Force Chief of Staff General Curtis LeMay -- who, as David Halberstam observed, "had a penchant for saying aloud what some other military men were merely thinking"<sup>58</sup> -- remarked: "The Russian bear has always been eager to stick his paw in Latin American waters. Now, we've got him in a trap, let's take his leg off right up to his testicles. On second thought, let's take off his testicles, too."<sup>59</sup>

President Kennedy did not share this perspective. After meeting with ExCom in the evening of 16 October to review the spectrum of possible US responses to the missile deployment, from inaction to an invasion, the President initially favored a "surgical" air strike against the missile sites alone. Kennedy believed that this option offered the possibility of destroying the missiles before they became fully operational while conveying, in unambiguous terms, American determination to prevent the entrance of additional Russian offensive weapons into the Western Hemisphere. It was a "dovish" response, the application of measured force. Yet both the President and McNamara believed, in marked contrast to the JCS, that military might should be employed with prudence. At the conclusion of the meeting President Kennedy instructed McNamara and Taylor to order the military to formulate plans for this contingency immediately.

Thereafter McNamara and Taylor met with the JCS to advise them of the President's preference for an air strike against the missile sites. The JCS were disappointed. They believed that their recommendation for a comprehensive invasion should have been endorsed, and that the President ignored the counsel of the military leaders at the peril of the nation. Nevertheless, they forbore their objections and followed the instructions of their superiors.<sup>60</sup> Yet the military deigned to draft new

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<sup>58</sup> David Halberstam, *The Fifties*. New York: Villard, 1993, p. 26.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 469.

<sup>60</sup> Although Taylor represented the JCS in ExCom meetings, McNamara gave each JCS participant full operational responsibility during the crisis: Wheeler oversaw Army deployments; Anderson communicated directly with CINCLANT commander Admiral Robert Dennison; and LeMay instructed SAC commander General Thomas Powers. See Perry, *Four Stars*, pp. 124-25.

operational plans consistent with the ExCom "surgical strike" concept; instead they modified the existing contingency plans for military operations against Cuba (which had been reviewed by the Secretary of Defense on 1 October 1962). In this, the JCS effectively circumvented the wishes of the President, as planning for a limited air strike directed solely at missile sites was replaced by planning for a massive air campaign against Cuba as a prelude to an American invasion. The new mission was more ambitious, the operation more expansive, and the pressures to escalate would be more demanding. It was a subtle maneuver. The critical distinction was between means and ends: was the operation sufficient in its own right or was it a component of a larger campaign? By planning the air strike not as an end in itself, but as an ancillary operation within a comprehensive invasion, the JCS hoped to supplant the political objective of the President with the military end that they desired: to destroy the communist military threat in Cuba.<sup>61</sup> Although the DIA provided intelligence support to military planners, it is doubtful that its analysts were aware of the shift in objective or its policy implications.

The following day military leaders presented their version of the "surgical strike" plan to ExCom. Committee members were surprised to discover that the concept of a limited attack had evolved into the military recommendation to execute as many as five hundred aircraft sorties against targets in Cuba, which were likely to result in extensive "collateral" damage. Many analysts, including several ExCom participants, have been perplexed by the transformation of the "surgical strike" into the massive air assault. In his authoritative account of the Cuban missile crisis, Graham Allison describes the affair as a "misunderstanding," an unfortunate consequence of the disparate assumptions held by military planners and civilian policymakers concerning the option.<sup>62</sup> Yet this explanation is unsatisfactory, for the parameters of the mission (that is, against the missile installations alone) were explicitly defined to the JCS on the evening of 16 October by both McNamara and Taylor.<sup>63</sup> The fact is that the military planners ignored these specifications, and alternately formulated a massive air and ground assault. The evidence suggests that this was not a misunderstanding, but a conscious and deliberate alteration by the JCS to utilize the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba as an opportunity to execute existing plans for the ouster of the Castro government. In accordance with the predilection of senior military officers, the plans were designed to employ massive, as opposed to limited, force; hence the prodigious scope of the proposed assault. Seen in this light, the JCS recommendation for an all-out invasion appears to be a mixture of political opportunism and military preference.

In attempts to prompt ExCom to endorse their recommendation the military leaders employed a two-fold strategy: first, discredit those options relying on the use of limited force (the "surgical" air strike proposal, in particular); second, forcefully advocate the implementation of existing contingency plans for an invasion of Cuba. In the ExCom meeting of 17 October the former followed the latter. In order to refute the "surgical strike" concept, General Walter C. Sweeney, Commander of the Air Force's Tactical Air Command, informed ExCom that the military could not guarantee the total destruction of

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<sup>61</sup> The JCS, especially Chairman Taylor, were well aware of the disparity between the military and civilians over the mission. See Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>62</sup> Allison, *Essence of Decision*, pp. 124-26. The author notes: "The surgical air strike the government leaders wanted, and which they thought was being discussed, was never examined in detail by Air Force planners during the first week of the crisis." p. 125.

<sup>63</sup> Personal interview, Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

all the missiles under the “surgical strike” option. He opined that the optimal result would be the negation of ninety percent of the MRBMs present on the island. In support of this conclusion, Sweeney observed that the Soviet MRBMs were classified as “mobile” or “field-type” and suggested that the missiles might be moved before or during an American attack and fired from a new position. The calculation that ten percent of the missiles could be expected to survive the air attack was based upon the alleged mobility of the MRBMs. Given the presumed elusiveness of the missiles, the military simply could not offer the assurance that all would be destroyed in one attack. In response to questions from ExCom members, Sweeney and Taylor fueled the concerns of Kennedy advisors that Soviet field commanders might launch the missiles under an imminent American attack; further disparaging the air strike option. In the end, both considerations, mobility and the possibility of a launch-under-attack, were astutely and effectively employed by military leaders to discredit the proposed air strike on the missile sites.<sup>64</sup> Following Sweeney’s presentation, ExCom foreclosed the air strike option and explored other alternatives.

This was unfortunate, for Sweeney’s briefing was misleading. The next week civilian specialists reconsidered the air strike option and found that many of the allegations made by military were spurious. Careful examination revealed that the mobility of missiles was analogous to that of a small house: the MRBMs could be moved and reassembled in eight to ten days.<sup>65</sup> In fact, the MRBMs were far from elusive: for all intents and purposes they were stationary, and thus exceedingly vulnerable to an air strike. The susceptibility of the missiles to attack was heightened by the delicate and painstaking fueling, arming, and targeting procedures that were necessary for a successful launch. These factors led two contemporary scholars to remark:

The conclusion which follows from this is that something like divine intervention would have been necessary to permit a Soviet second lieutenant to fire the missile under his command successfully during an American air strike. Such a launch would not have been absolutely impossible, but the information available at the time clearly indicated that it was wildly improbable. Though General Sweeney was technically correct in refusing to guarantee that he could destroy all the known missiles, he evidently failed to communicate to McNamara how unlikely a launch-under-attack would be.<sup>66</sup>

What is disturbing about the performance of the DIA during this period is that the agency did not correct the misperceptions of the Secretary of Defense and his staff. Officials at the agency were aware that the two basic arguments the JCS used to discredit the surgical air strike, mobility and the prospect of launch-under-attack, were unsound. The DIA was well aware of the limited mobility of the

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<sup>64</sup> See Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>65</sup> Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p. 126.

<sup>66</sup> Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 212. The military offered several other dubious premises in their attempt to discredit the surgical air strike: assuming that all the SA-2 SAMs were operational, employing an absurdly high (by historical standards) attrition rate for aircraft over the island, and presuming that the strike could only be carried out in a single, massive wave (as opposed to multiple waves).

Soviet MRBM and its vulnerability to aerial attack. The former was common knowledge within the espionage community, for the capabilities of the Russian SS-4 MRBM had been evaluated by intelligence analysts and confirmed by the agent Oleg Penkovsky.<sup>67</sup> As to the latter, the DIA was cognizant of the improbability of a successful launch-under-attack because it was advised by the CIA in October that the Soviet MRBMs employed a volatile liquid fuel that, for reasons of safety, was kept separate from the missile under normal circumstances. In order to fire the missile successfully under combat conditions, the Soviet technicians had to fuel the rocket, then successfully mate the missile with the warhead (the latter, if present, would also be stored independently from the MRBMs for security reasons). The practical consequence of this unwieldy procedure was that in the event of an impending US air strike, eight to twenty hours were required to prepare the missiles for launch.<sup>68</sup> This provided ample time for the American military to locate the missiles and neutralize them, in one or more air strikes; in marked contrast to the impression Sweeney gave to ExCom. The DIA never corrected this misinterpretation, nor did the agency brief McNamara or his aides on the capabilities and limitations of the Soviet MRBMs. There is no evidence that the agency reviewed the final operational plans presented to the Secretary of Defense and ExCom by the military leaders for accuracy. In fact, the historical evidence available suggests that the DIA did little more than convey information from the JCS to OSD and the U&S Commands, without analysis or comment. The DIA did not exercise its independent evaluative capabilities (though, admittedly, they remained in a rudimentary state); it simply transmitted information from the military to the Secretary of Defense. McNamara's vision of the DIA as the scrupulous adjudicator of the military intelligence community proved to be an apparition: the judge had become little more than a courier.

The reason for this transformation was neither insidious nor enigmatic. As the crisis deepened, and the Soviet missiles in Cuba approached operational readiness, the armed services prepared for battle. Accordingly, the services mobilized and activated their intelligence assets in anticipation of the increased demand for tactical intelligence to support combat operations of the theater commanders. As the intelligence efforts of the military departments, in support of the U&S Commands, waxed, the influence of joint endeavors, the Joint Staff and the DIA in particular, waned. The power and the authority of the inter-service organizations was limited to begin with, and largely confined to strategic planning and military policy. As hostilities approached, the significance of these bodies declined dramatically. Policy was the realm of Joint Staff and its agents; war the domain of the U&S Commands and the armed services. Thus as the United States was pulled to the brink of war, the DIA was pushed aside as the military services asserted their preeminence.

While this metamorphosis is understandable, it was nonetheless detrimental to the national interest, for the Secretary of Defense and OSD lost an important source of information, and a possible bureaucratic ally, at a perilous time. In the past the Secretary had relied on OSO to meet his intelligence requirements; the dissolution of this office on 31 October 1961 left him dependent on the

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<sup>67</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, pp. 199, 281-82.

<sup>68</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Memorandum on the construction of missile sites in Cuba," 19 October 1962 (No declassification date). National Security Archives, Washington, DC. Contemporary Russian sources indicate that the SS-4s required eighteen hours to be fueled. Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, p. 63.

DIA for strategic intelligence. As the influence of the DIA waned, McNamara and ExCom were forced to rely on the military departments for both operational planning and intelligence analysis. In fact, the services monopolized military information on Cuba; and effectively “starved” the DIA of intelligence. Moreover, in what appears to have been a conflict of interest, the services both recommended military action and evaluated intelligence germane to the operational plans to judge the probable success of the venture. For civilians there was no effective way to challenge the services; there was no competing military agency to contest the intelligence assessments of the services and impartially advise OSD. As the influence of the DIA diminished and its role within the military intelligence community devolved from a dispassionate dissenter to silent accomplice, an important institutional check on the military departments was lost. At the time when the Secretary of Defense was most in need of the capability to evaluate intelligence, amid the cacophony of calls for military action, the DIA succumbed wholly to the authority of the military departments. McNamara had no intelligence to support (or, for that matter, refute) his dovish predilection; no intelligence to oppose the ascendancy of the hawks. The Secretary of Defense had, in fact, no independent source for intelligence. The DIA could no longer, in the words of Admiral Frankel, “ride herd” on the intelligence elements of the Defense Department. The reverse was now true: the DIA was being driven by the interests of the military departments. The importance of this can not be overstated, for it reveals the inherent weaknesses of the agency. The DIA could neither challenge the intelligence assessments of the military departments and field commands, nor could it provide adequate intelligence support to the Secretary of Defense at a time of grave national peril.

## A Propitious, But Flawed, Estimate: the DIA as Partisan

After disparaging, inaccurately as we now know, the surgical air strike, in the ExCom meeting on 17 October Generals Taylor and Sweeney proceeded to recommend an invasion of Cuba, preferably under OPLAN-314.<sup>69</sup> OPLAN-314 was the second of three contingency plans for military operations against Cuba prepared by the Defense Department during the crisis.<sup>70</sup> It called for simultaneous amphibious and airborne assaults on the island following a comprehensive air attack. The JCS opined that the probable Soviet response to execution of this plan would not be general war; but an increase in tensions at East-West confrontation points, the most likely of which was Berlin. The military leaders argued that the benefits of implementing OPLAN-314 justified the costs; that it was essential to the national interest that the missiles be forcefully removed from Cuba as soon as possible. The

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<sup>69</sup> In a memorandum to McNamara dated 17 October, the JCS formally characterized their view on the Cuban situation as: “recommending an attack against all missile sites, all combat aircraft and nuclear storage facilities, combat ships, tanks, and other appropriate military targets in Cuba, in conjunction with a complete blockade; opposing a strike against the IRBMs alone; and advising that the elimination of the Castro regime would require an invasion, preferably under OPLAN-314.” JCS Chronology, p. 15.

<sup>70</sup> Operational Plan 312 (OPLAN-312) set out air strike options, OPLAN-314 and OPLAN-316 set out invasion options.

JCS believed that the invasion was the only way to insure their removal; other measures were deemed ineffective and eliminated from consideration. Thus the surgical air strike became the first casualty of military thinking, of the American predilection for massive force. McNamara later recalled: "Now, I don't believe the military *ever* gave us a surgical air strike option. They always emphasized the necessity of having an invasion follow the strike, and they told us we could expect thousands of casualties."<sup>71</sup>

The JCS strategy to gain approval for the invasion backfired. After the surgical air strike was discredited, the focus of ExCom turned not toward an invasion, but a naval blockade of Cuba. The implementation of a blockade had been discussed since the early days of the crisis, normally within the context of more ambitious military operations. However, in the evening of 17 October, the blockade (in the less provocative semantic incarnation of *quarantine* ) became an option in its own right. The reasons for this are complex, and have been dealt with at length elsewhere. For our purposes it is sufficient to note that the blockade was a viable compromise between the positions of the hawks and doves: it was a military response; but an incremental and limited measure. The doves generally viewed it as a cautious response which shifted the diplomatic initiative from Washington to Moscow, providing American policymakers with additional time to evaluate Soviet intentions and actions. Though the hawks believed that the blockade was an insufficient reaction to the Soviet missile deployment, they reluctantly embraced it in the hope that it might be a prelude to further military action. Consequently, consensus within ExCom began to coalesce around the blockade.

The next morning, McNamara asked CNO Admiral Anderson to send the current blockade contingency plans and policy papers of CINCLANT to OSD for review. At lunch that afternoon, McNamara and Gilpatric engaged in an informal bout of role playing in an attempt to assess which option under consideration would be most effective. In this "war game" the Secretary of Defense played the United States and his deputy represented the Soviet Union. Through a series of hypothetical moves and countermoves, the possible reactions of the superpowers were explored, and the probable outcome assessed. Gilpatric later remarked:

And it was during that session that McNamara became convinced that this limited form of blockade, quarantine, was the best move. It evolved from this back and forth gaming. Not in all of the details, but it was pretty much set in his mind. He never shifted from that ground from that point on.<sup>72</sup>

The Secretary of Defense came to prefer the quarantine over other military measures because it represented a graduated American response to a limited Soviet initiative. Later that afternoon, McNamara received the CINCLANT documents from General Taylor. Taylor previously had evaluated the papers in his capacity as Chairman of the JCS, and agreed with the Navy's recommendation that the quarantine be declared as a specific response to the deployment of Soviet missiles; justified as a

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<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>72</sup> Transcript, Roswell Gilpatric oral history interview, JFK library, p. 50.

necessary act to prevent the proliferation of offensive nuclear weapons in the Western Hemisphere and executed under the provisions of the charter of the Organization of American States and the Rio Treaty.<sup>73</sup> McNamara was impressed with the proposal and urged ExCom to endorse it.

Meanwhile, it was apparent to the JCS that ExCom was drifting away from the invasion, toward the quarantine. The Chiefs, removed from ExCom deliberations, had become estranged, suspicious of the judgments of the President and his key advisors. In an effort to turn the tide, that afternoon the JCS demanded a face-to-face meeting with the President within twenty-four hours to personally present their recommendation for a full-scale invasion of Cuba.<sup>74</sup> The military leaders suspected that Taylor had gone “soft” on the use of force, that he had become overly sympathetic to political concerns, and that he had not cogently presented their views to the President.<sup>75</sup> Yet the demand came too late: with McNamara joining Sorenson and Robert Kennedy in advocating the quarantine, the resistance of the ExCom hawks crumbled. In the evening of 18 October, President Kennedy tentatively chose the quarantine as the American response to the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba, and ordered that it be put into effect by 22 October.

Nevertheless, the hawks rallied and attempted to reopen the issue the following day. On 19 October, the hawks challenged the decision of the President in the morning ExCom meetings, while the JCS delayed a scheduled campaign trip of President Kennedy to the Midwest to press their case. The efforts were to no avail: the President continued to support the quarantine. Throughout the afternoon, the administration toiled to prepare the operation for final presidential review: Sorenson drafted a Presidential speech declaring the quarantine, McNamara reviewed the blockade strategy, and the Navy refined its operational plans. The debate was effectively closed. Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, a prominent hawk, withdrew from ExCom discussions in disgust. Afterward, he was scornful of the performance of civilian policymakers during the crisis, particularly the Secretary of Defense, who he believed failed to fully weigh and consider the consequences of proposed acts. McNamara, in the words of Acheson, was guilty of “pin-pricking the situation with erudite nonsense.”<sup>76</sup> Acheson’s opinion was widely shared by military leaders. With the decision on intervention in the balance, the pressure on the DIA to support the operational preference of the JCS, the invasion under OPLAN-314, was intense. The demands on the agency’s immediate superior, the JCS, appears to have outweighed that of its more distant commander, the Secretary of the Defense. There is no evidence that the DIA assisted McNamara in his review of the blockade planning. While the limited resources of the agency were principally concentrated on intelligence collection and analysis, the DIA also strove mightily to coordinate and formulate an important strategic intelligence estimate; an assessment of acute concern to the JCS.

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<sup>73</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 279.

<sup>74</sup> See Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 126.

<sup>75</sup> Taylor denied these charges, and claimed that he faithfully expressed the views of the JCS to the President and ExCom. Commenting on the militarism of the Chiefs during the crisis, Taylor later remarked the he thought of himself as a “double hawk” in ExCom meetings, yet among the JCS he felt himself to be a dove. Quoted in Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 57.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 304.

To the relief of the JCS the “crash” estimate was released on 19 October, the pivotal day in ExCom deliberations over merits of the proposed invasion vis-a-vis the blockade. The SNIE explored probable Soviet reactions to proposed US actions considered by ExCom. The estimate, prepared by BNE and approved by USIB, suggested that an all-out invasion of Cuba was *less likely* to cause a Soviet military response than an air strike or other form of graduated military action. The rationale behind the judgment is obscure. The thesis appears to be an affront to common sense: one presumes that the Russian response would be commensurate with the level of force employed by the United States; that as the amount of American force applied increased, the probability and dimensions of an armed Soviet response would increase proportionally. In short, escalation breeds escalation. The number of casualties to Soviet military instructors and advisors in Cuba was likely to be far greater in the event of an American invasion than as the result of air strikes against isolated missile installations, thereby increasing the probability and magnitude of a Soviet military response. Similarly the diplomatic consequences of an invasion were likely more severe. An American invasion to overthrow the Castro government would be a clear violation of the sovereignty of an independent nation and was certain to draw international censure. Conversely, the limited air strike was diplomatically more defensible. The destruction of the Soviet MRBMs might be plausibly justified as a precise defensive measure to ensure the stability of the Western hemisphere. The affair was no longer one of sovereignty, but of self-defense. The distinction between limited defensive military measures and prodigious aggressive actions appears profound. Yet the SNIE ignored this distinction, positing through obtuse analysis that the invasion was less likely to provoke the Soviet leaders.

It was a curious argument, and one that would ultimately appear to be erroneous. However, there is no doubt that the document reinforced the JCS proposal for decisive military action against Cuba, at a time when the recommendation was clearly waning. It is interesting to note that the SNIE employed the polemical strategy of the JCS to support the invasion: it discredited the surgical air strike by suggesting it was more likely to trigger a Soviet military response and implicitly endorsed the invasion by downplaying the risks involved, concluding: “We believe that whatever course of retaliation the USSR elected, the Soviet leaders would not deliberately initiate general war or take military measures, which in their calculation, would run the gravest risks of general war.”<sup>77</sup> The fact that the estimate incorporated this design in the text suggests that the military played a dominant role in its formulation. CIA sources confirm this explanation, asserting that the CIA had grave reservations regarding the conclusion, but were rebuffed by the military intelligence agencies, led by the DIA. They argue that the DIA was under ferocious pressure from the JCS to produce an estimate which supported their operational preference, and that the agency marshaled the military intelligence organizations to act accordingly.<sup>78</sup> Confronted by a united and obstinate coalition of military agencies and the exigency of the Cuban threat, the CIA had no choice but to submit to the tenacious majority. The claim is credible when one considers that the USIB, the committee responsible for ultimately approving the estimate, was dominated by the military at the time.

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<sup>77</sup> Special National Intelligence Estimate 11-18-62, “Soviet Reactions to Certain US Courses of Action on Cuba,” 19 October 1962 (No declassification date). Cited in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, pp. 197-202.

<sup>78</sup> Confidential interviews, senior CIA officials.

In spite of the repeated efforts of McNamara and McCone to implement the proposals of the Joint Study Group, the composition of the USIB was unchanged in 1962. Recall that the aim of the 1960 recommendations was to reduce military representation on the USIB in order to enable the Board to take a greater management role in the espionage community. As previously described, after assuming office McNamara endorsed the JSG recommendations and strove to implement them, but his efforts were regularly blocked by the armed services. By the fall of 1962, the only reform the Secretary of Defense was able to implement on the USIB was the replacement of the representative of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations with the DIA representative (the former office was disestablished prior to the activation of the DIA). Although this reform was intended to be the first of several measures to mitigate military influence on the USIB, in the absence of additional reform, it paradoxically had the opposite effect. Historically, the Office of Special Operations tended to support the position of civilian policymakers on defense issues. This is not surprising, as the office was an agent of the Secretary of Defense, inclined by outlook and duty to favor the perspective of civilian policymakers. The DIA representative which replaced it, however, was not so inclined. As this dissertation proves, the military departments and the JCS exerted a powerful influence over the new intelligence agency, by virtue of placement and composition. As was to be expected, the DIA frequently sided with the military leadership in matters before the USIB, effectively increasing military influence on the Board. This was true during the Cuban missile crisis. Whereas civilians in OSD were inclined, like Kennedy and McNamara, to view the Soviet missile deployment as a political initiative requiring a limited American response, as the crisis progressed the DIA, under pressure from the military leaders, gradually aligned itself with the JCS in perceiving the deployment as a significant change in the strategic nuclear balance.<sup>79</sup> In September 1962, the DIA had expressed a markedly independent view on the buildup in Cuba; by mid-October, the agency faithfully towed the official JCS line. To repeat, the reason for this change in perspective was evident: as the crisis deepened, military leaders reined in their wayward scion in order to consolidate the military position on the Soviet deployment, to present a unified front against the civilian dissenters. This coalescence was dramatically reflected on the USIB, where the six military representatives were prone to vote as a block, overriding the four civilian members, to produce a durable majority.<sup>80</sup> The DIA played a central role in the realignment, as it replaced a presumably dovish OSD representative. On important estimates, such as the SNIE of 19 October, the military were able to overwhelm the reservations of the

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<sup>79</sup> For example, the following day the DIA opined that the deployment was more than "token show of strength"; that the Soviet Union intended to establish a "prime strategic base" in the Caribbean. JCS Chronology, p. 23.

<sup>80</sup> During the crisis, the following USIB members represented military agencies: Lieutenant General Carroll of the DIA; Major General Alva R. Fitch, assistant chief of staff for intelligence, Department of the Army; Rear Admiral Vernon L. Lowrance, assistant chief of naval operations (intelligence), Department of the Navy; Major General Robert A. Breitweiser, assistant chief of staff, intelligence, United States Air Force; Lieutenant General Gordon A. Blake, director, National Security Agency; Major General Richard Collins, Joint Staff. The civilians: Henry Trainor, assistant general manager for administration, Atomic Energy Commission; Alan H. Belmont, assistant to the director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; Roger Hilsman, director of intelligence and research, State Department; Ray Cline or Sherman Kent of the CIA. USC (88/1) House Appropriations. *Hearings*, p. 57.

civilians by virtue of numerical superiority. Therefore is not surprising that the USIB approved the crash estimate favoring an invasion over an air strike. What is surprising is that there was no official dissent from the CIA. The motives of the agency remain inscrutable.

Consequently, the 19 October SNIE might be properly be viewed under bureaucratic light, more as a political vehicle of advocacy than an objective work of intelligence. The estimate appears to be a desperate final attempt by the military intelligence agencies, exhorted by the DIA, to persuade ExCom to endorse the invasion recommended by the JCS. As such, it was somewhat belated; by the date of publication, 19 October, the doves were triumphant. Yet the dispatch which marked its formulation resulted in several perilous errors, evident in hindsight.

Foremost among these was that the assessment of the effectiveness of proposed American military actions presented in the estimate were based upon the presumption that in the event of an invasion US ground forces would encounter armed resistance primarily from indigenous Cuban forces. In crafting the SNIE, BNE dismissed the possibility of a direct encounter with Soviet armed forces, largely at the promptings of the DIA, asserting that the estimated 5,000 Soviets personnel on the island were for the most part non-combatants (that is, military instructors, advisors, and trainers), and therefore presented little military threat. This assessment of 5,000 non-combatants, employed in the 19 October SNIE, was swiftly proven to erroneous: both the agency and board vastly underestimated the size and composition of Soviet the military personnel in Cuba. Even as the SNIE was being prepared in mid-September, it became evident that this assumption was erroneous, that American forces would likely face far greater opposition in the event of an invasion of the island, namely from Soviet combat forces. Analysts at NPIC opined, on the basis of photographic intelligence, that far more Soviet forces were in Cuba than the SNIE postulated, and that the majority were combat troops rather than trainers and advisors. When preparing the estimate, DIA analysts had access to raw photographic intelligence identical to that of NPIC, yet, inexplicably, had ignored its implications. The SNIE was compiled employing the 5,000 assessment, in spite of growing evidence that it was inaccurate. It was only a week after the SNIE was published (and, incidentally, the invasion dismissed by the President) that the DIA and the service intelligence elements reluctantly conceded that the figure was inaccurate, and revised the assessment of the number of Soviet personnel on the island from 5,000 to 22,000.<sup>81</sup> As if this dramatic increase was not startling enough, the composition of the personnel was also revised: low-level aerial reconnaissance provided conclusive evidence that in addition to trainers and advisors, four mobile armored Soviet divisions were present on the island.<sup>82</sup> This consequence of this revision of the Soviet order of battle in Cuba was profound. The disciplined and well-armored Soviet combatants greatly enhanced the strength of the communist forces on the isle and hence significantly raised the costs, in men and material, of an invasion by the United States. More importantly, the revision undermined the suggestion of the SNIE that an invasion was less likely to initiate a military response from the USSR than alternate military actions, for it was now obvious that a military encounter with the powerful Russian armored divisions during an American ground assault was

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<sup>81</sup> USC (88/1) House Foreign Affairs. *Hearings*, p.174. Contemporary Russian and Cuban sources suggest that the number of Soviet military personnel in Cuba during the missile crisis exceeded 40,000. See Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, pp. 308-309.

probable and liable to result in significant casualties to both sides. It is difficult to envisage a possible scenario in which the Kremlin could not respond militarily to such an incident. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that the high casualties which would result from such a contest would increase, not decrease, the possibility of a Soviet military response; in contradiction to the 19 October SNIE.

Not only did the SNIE underestimate the number and constitution of Soviet forces in Cuba, it failed to address the subject of Soviet nuclear weapons on the island. Although many within the administration and the intelligence community assumed that nuclear warheads accompanied the offensive missiles to Cuba, at the time the estimate was drafted there was no definitive evidence to support this assumption.<sup>83</sup> Despite the importance of this matter, the SNIE ignored the prospect altogether. This omission is startling in light of the fact that a post-mortem study of the crisis concluded that nuclear warheads were indeed present on the island in October 1962, probably stored at a processing facility near the Mariel airfield. Ominously, American military planners had targeted the airfield as a landing position for the 101st Airborne Division at the start of a US invasion.<sup>84</sup> The prospect of American paratroopers landing in the midst of a nuclear weapons processing facility is chilling; especially when recent Russian disclosures indicate that Soviet short-range tactical nuclear missiles were present in Cuba and available to Soviet ground commanders, unbeknownst to US intelligence (which was preoccupied with the MRBMs and IRBMs), are taken into account. Retired Russian general Anatoly I. Gribkov recently provided compelling evidence that twelve tactical rockets ("Luna" missiles) with nuclear warheads were provided in support of Soviet military forces in Cuba and that the senior Soviet commander on the island had the authority to use these weapons to repel an American attack, without the direct approval of senior staff officers in Moscow.<sup>85</sup> This was contrary to the belief of most US policymakers, military officers, and intelligence officials that approval for the use of nuclear weapons in defense of Cuba must emanate from the Kremlin. If Gribkov's allegations are true (and they appear to be), the probability that a nuclear exchange might have resulted from an American invasion of Cuba was much greater than the Kennedy administration believed. The prospect of nuclear war between the superpowers was very real in October, 1962.

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<sup>83</sup> When questioned about the subject in his first press briefing on the crisis on 22 October, McNamara responded: "We don't know. Nuclear warheads are of such a size that it is extremely unlikely we would ever be able to observe them by the intelligence means open to us. I think it is almost inconceivable, however, that there would be missiles, as I have indicated without the accompanying warheads." Background briefing on the Cuban situation, 22 October 1962, p. 9. On 20 October the DIA reported the discovery of a "likely" nuclear weapons storage bunker in Cuba from analysis of U-2 photography, confirming the suspicions of agency analysts that warheads were present. JCS Chronology, p. 23. A day later the CIA concurred: "one must assume that nuclear weapons could now be in Cuba to support the operational nuclear capability as it becomes available." Central Intelligence Agency, Intelligence Memorandum, "Evaluation of the Offensive Threat in Cuba," 21 October 1962. Cited in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, p. 238.

<sup>84</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 248; Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 335; and Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, p. 46.

<sup>85</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 15 January 1992 (7:1); and Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, p. 4. General Issa Pliyev, commander of the Soviet Group of Forces in Cuba, was granted authority to employ the battlefield atomic weapons in confronted with a US invasion until 22 October, when Khrushchev revoked this authority. Also present on the island were eighty cruise missiles and six nuclear bombs for nuclear-capable IL-28s, but Pliyev lacked the authority to use these weapons without approval from Moscow. See Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, pp. 7, 43.

Seen in this light, the 19 October SNIE was fundamentally flawed. The assessment of the size and composition of Soviet forces in Cuba was erroneous and the presence of nuclear warheads was ignored. These deficiencies were largely caused by the haste which marked the formulation the estimate and the policy preferences of the military. Yet, to some extent, these miscalculations were unavoidable. Intelligence operates in realms of ambiguity, where nescience is the only constant. No issue is wholly amenable to systematic analysis: data is always scarce, frequently unreliable, and notoriously inaccurate. The best one can hope for is a rational assessment based on available information. The 19 October SNIE initially met this criterion. What is inexplicable, however, is the failure to the intelligence agencies to revise the conclusions of the estimate when it swiftly became apparent that the assumptions were false. As the estimate was being distributed, the intelligence community was aware that the premise that the involvement of Soviet personnel on the island was nominal and peripheral was fallacious; that the Soviet commitment to the Castro regime was greater than previously assessed. Yet the estimate was not revised accordingly. Instead the intelligence community made superficial modifications to the estimate -- altering the troop estimates, targeting the Russian armored units -- and allowed the conclusions to stand. Irrespective of the fact that the key assumptions of the estimate lay in ruins, the endorsement of the invasion was not formally revised. Policymakers were informed of adjustments to the Soviet order of battle, but not explicitly advised of the impact of these changes on the probable Soviet response to a ground assault. Despite the fact that the DIA was aware of the revisions, the agency never informed McNamara of the military implications. The requirements of the JCS were paramount; those of the Secretary superfluous. Quite simply, the agency failed to provide McNamara with accurate and timely strategic intelligence during a critical time of the crisis.

## The Implementation of the Blockade: the DIA Submits to the Navy

Fortunately, President Kennedy was persuaded neither by the logic of the SNIE nor the arguments of the JCS to endorse the invasion. The arguments of Robert Kennedy, Sorenson, and McNamara in support of the quarantine were decisive: on 20 October the President reaffirmed his decision to implement the naval blockade. Kennedy continued to harbor reservations about the effectiveness of this act, however, and met with Sweeney and Air Force bombing experts the next day to ensure that the surgical air strike option could not be executed with certitude. After he was again informed by the military that the complete destruction of the four MRBM and two IRBM sites in Cuba could not be assured by an aerial assault, Kennedy gave final approval to the quarantine operation.<sup>86</sup>

For their part, the JCS reluctantly accepted the presidential decision to impose the quarantine. Many senior officers viewed the blockade not as an end in itself, but as the first stage of an expansive program to overthrow the Castro regime and remove the missiles from the island. The distinction is

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<sup>86</sup> For information on the six missile sites identified see Central Intelligence Agency, Arthur Lundahl, Director of NPIC, to Directors of CIA and DIA, "Additional Information -- Mission 3107 (U-2 of 16 October)," 19 October 1962. Cited in McAuliffe, *CIA Documents*, p. 209.

important: in contrast to the perception shared by a majority of the ExCom participants that the quarantine was a communications exercise (that is, that the United States would not accept the presence of Soviet offensive missiles in the Caribbean), the military viewed it as a prelude to greater military action, the initial component of a full-scale invasion. The latter perspective was illustrated in a JCS meeting on 20 October, prior to the formal presentation of quarantine plans to ExCom. In this meeting between the JCS and the ranking officers of the armed services, the military reviewed the quarantine plans not as an independent operation, but as part of a larger military strategy, to be executed in conjunction with the ambitious OPLAN-314.<sup>87</sup> In other words, the military was content to accept half a loaf insofar as they expected to receive the remainder in the near future. This disparity in perception was not evident from the start; it became apparent only as the crisis progressed. The DIA, preoccupied with expanding intelligence requirements and imagery analysis, displayed no awareness that its superiors differed over the fundamental objective of American military policy.

Until this time, knowledge of the Soviet missiles in Cuba was still a closely-guarded secret, confined to a handful of presidential advisors, military officers, and senior civil servants. After President Kennedy confirmed his choice of the quarantine, the administration publicly revealed the presence of the missiles and announced the implementation of the blockade on Monday, 22 October. Prior to this declaration, the American government discreetly notified its allies of the imminent activation of the quarantine through military and diplomatic channels. The Defense Department was charged with briefing the military establishments of allied nations on the details of the operation. Normally, one would expect that this function would fall to the DIA: the agency was intended to be the primary point of contact between the military departments of United States the armed forces of foreign nations. Yet on the afternoon of 22 October, the military attaches of NATO and the OAS were briefed on the immanent blockade not by the DIA, but by the assistant chief of staff for intelligence of the Air Force, Major General Robert A. Breitweiser, presumably because the photographic intelligence utilized in the briefings was derived from the U-2 flights conducted under the auspices of SAC and the Air Force.<sup>88</sup> Once again the JCS slighted the DIA.

In the evening of 22 October, President Kennedy informed the American polity of the discovery of offensive missiles in Cuba and issued the Quarantine Proclamation, to take effect on 24 October. In the wake of this announcement, the JCS anxiously moved toward full wartime posture; the military began, in the words of Admiral Anderson, "unsheathing the cold blue steel of power."<sup>89</sup> Naval task Force 136 steamed toward the designated quarantine area while American ground forces (five Army divisions and one Marine: 82nd Airborne, 101st Airborne, 2nd Infantry, 1st Armored, 1st Infantry, and 2nd Marines) moved to forward bases in Florida. In a precipitous act, the JCS ordered the US strategic posture, notoriously known as DefCon, upgraded from Five (5) to Three (3). Without the knowledge or consent of the President and senior administration officials, this order to American military forces worldwide was broadcast "in the clear," meaning the message was not encrypted, as was common practice, and therefore subject to easy interception and translation by the

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<sup>87</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 280.

<sup>88</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 386.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 378.

intelligence apparatus of the Soviet Union.<sup>90</sup> The administration did not authorize the order to be transmitted uncoded; this irregular communication was initiated by military leaders. Their motive in this is evident: to alert the Kremlin to the mobilization of US forces. Issued on the same day that the Air Force handed over the first of fifteen operational Jupiter IRBMs to the Turkish government on the periphery of the USSR, the message was intended to serve as an unambiguous reminder of American strategic nuclear superiority, carrying an implicit threat to Soviet Union and its forces in the Caribbean. In effect, the JCS threw down the gauntlet; in such a manner that the Soviet leadership could not help but notice that the mailed glove was replete with nuclear tips.<sup>91</sup>

As American forces moved to strategic alert, US intelligence monitored the Soviet armed forces for reciprocal action. In response to Kennedy's announcement of the quarantine, the Kremlin proclaimed (at 3:00 pm Moscow time on 23 October) that Soviet forces were to be placed on war footing. It was soon apparent that this announcement could be attributed more to political posturing than to military necessity: the DIA reported that Soviet strategic forces remained at a low level of alert and that theater forces, particularly in Berlin, were placid.<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, tension mounted within the intelligence community as the construction on the missile sites in Cuba advanced. The President authorized additional U-2 flights over the island; SAC flew a minimum of one, normally two, missions daily.<sup>93</sup>

As the implementation of the quarantine grew nearer, the DIA attempted to coordinate the intelligence collection requirements associated with the operation. The quarantine offered the United States a rare opportunity to observe Soviet military vessels at close range while operating in the high seas. The espionage community realized that invaluable intelligence on the Soviet military could be acquired under these circumstances. Consequently, all the intelligence organizations were eager to exploit the occasion. The Navy, zealous in preserving its hegemony over all aspects of naval operations, denied them the opportunity. Since the Navy was principally concerned with the operational details of implementing the blockade, its intelligence efforts focused on naval information germane to the mission, such as the location of Soviet vessels, their tonnage, probable cargo, and present course. Preoccupied with this basic data, the Navy ignored chances to collect the more intricate and sensitive intelligence (primarily SIGINT), which the other armed services coveted. Throughout the quarantine, the Navy repeatedly rebuffed the appeals of the DIA, Army, and Air Force to provide supplemental material and manpower for the quarantine operation, in order to free intelligence resources

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<sup>90</sup> Raymond Garthoff, *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Washington: Brookings Institution, 1987, pp. 37-38.

<sup>91</sup> This was one of many provocative acts undertaken by the US military during the crisis, some deliberate, others inadvertent. According to Scott Sagan, these include: hot-wiring some American ICBMs to bypass safety measures (ostensibly to ensure that they could be launched); allowing nuclear-armed F-100 fighter planes to sit on the runways of Incirlik Air Force Base in Turkey; and test-firing US ICBMs from California into the Pacific, and, more perilously, from Florida over Cuba into the South Atlantic. With regard to the latter occurrence, Sagan writes: "No one in Washington apparently imagined the possibility that the Soviets might learn of the launch just as it was taking place, and interpret it as part of an actual attack." See *The Washington Post*, "Missteps by Military Posed Threat During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Book Says," 10 September 1993 (21:1).

<sup>92</sup> Adam Yarmolinsky, Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Department of Defense Operations during the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Washington: GPO, 1963, p. 12; interview with Adam Yarmolinsky, 13 October 1992.

<sup>93</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 37.

to make such efforts possible. In fact, the Navy was so intransigent that it refused additional Russian linguists offered to assist Naval commanders in communicating with their Soviet counterparts, in spite of the fact that these skilled interpreters were sorely needed. Its nominal authority aside, the DIA was unable to compel the Navy to respond to collection requirements outside of its own narrow needs. Throughout the crisis, the Navy coveted its departmental prerogatives in intelligence gathering, at the expense of the American military intelligence effort as a whole. Thus it was revealed that centralized control of the intelligence requirements of the military by the DIA was a polite fiction. After the first week of quarantine operations, an Air Force officer characterized the situation thus: "CINCLANT and CINCLANT Fleet is in a state of aggravated confusion . . . Operations in connection with the quarantine and blockade are conducted in complete absence of intelligence collection operations."<sup>94</sup> The DIA could do little to correct the matter.

In the evening of 23 October, approximately twenty-four hours after the President's public announcement of the quarantine, the NSA informed CIA, DIA, and the intelligence elements of the military departments that current intelligence reports indicated that the Soviet ships in the Atlantic suspected of carrying missile components to Cuba had abruptly stopped or changed course. Some even appeared to be returning to Russia. The Navy was skeptical of these reports. Naval intelligence officers believed that the course alterations were a transparent attempt to lull American naval forces into complacency and opined that the ships had simply stopped to pick up additional Soviet submarine escorts.<sup>95</sup> The Navy therefore recommended that this intelligence be held abeyance, pending further verification. Since ONI was the "point" agency in this matter (the intelligence was provided in direct support of the quarantine; the Navy was responsible for executing the operation; *ergo* ONI had jurisdiction over the analysis and dissemination of the intelligence), the other intelligence agencies deferred to the wishes of the service. Although the DIA was obligated to keep the Secretary of Defense fully informed of developments, it respected the jurisdiction of the Navy and did not advise McNamara of the intelligence. As a consequence of bureaucratic etiquette, timely intelligence on an important development was denied to senior policymakers.

The following morning, the quarantine was officially implemented. American naval vessels moved into position to execute search and seizure operations on violators. Other components of the US armed forces moved toward full readiness for war: SAC went to DefCon Two (2), and American ground forces in Florida mobilized for an invasion. As the tension mounted, administration officials showed signs of strain. The burden of responsibility and the dearth of sleep began to take toll. The Secretary of Defense, who slept on a cot in his office at the Pentagon for the duration of the crisis, was widely reported to be "coming apart at the seams." McNamara was becoming increasingly frustrated by the failure of the DIA to provide him with timely and accurate intelligence. He believed that the agency, engrossed with the intelligence collection requirements and imagery analysis, was grossly neglecting his needs for national intelligence. His frustration set the stage for an infamous confrontation.

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<sup>94</sup> United States Air Force, "DIA Meeting, Cuba, Memorandum for the Record," 29 October 1962. *Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, No. 1632, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 391; and Hilsman, *To Move A Nation*, p. 215.

In the morning of 24 October, McNamara and his staff were briefed by the Navy on the status of the quarantine, including the location and course of Soviet vessels in the Atlantic. Inexplicably, the Navy again did not inform the Secretary that most Soviet ships had stopped or altered course the previous day, though the preliminary intelligence reports of the previous evening were now confirmed and corroborated. Instead, McNamara was given the impression that Russian ships were still advancing on the quarantine line (approximately five hundred miles from the eastern tip of Cuba), presumably to challenge American resolve. McNamara left the briefing with the conviction that the crisis was escalating. Later that morning, ONI finally accepted the validity of the intelligence on the Soviet ship movement. ONI then notified Admiral Anderson and General Taylor that the communist ships had altered course. Taylor subsequently briefed McNamara on the intelligence; the DIA was circumvented once more. Thus the Secretary of Defense received critical intelligence that Soviet ships were hesitant to challenge the quarantine belatedly, through a convoluted and impromptu chain of communication. McNamara was understandably upset both at the manner in which he was informed (by the Chairman of the JCS, as opposed to the Navy brass or DIA) and by the fact that evidence which indicated that the quarantine was proving to be effective, that the Soviet Union apparently would not test American determination, was withheld from administration officials for over eighteen hours. Angered, McNamara decided to seek intelligence at its source. That afternoon he and his deputy stormed into Flag Plot, the Navy's control room and *sanctum sanctorum*, to demand a full explanation of the delay in notification and a comprehensive briefing on the current status of the quarantine operation. CNO Admiral Anderson attempted to placate the Secretary by providing him with a brief, and superficial (in Gilpatric's opinion), summary. McNamara was unimpressed with the presentation. Moreover, as the Secretary surveyed the displays at Flag Plot detailing the naval blockade, he was disturbed to discover that the intelligence that the Navy was employing to conduct the operation was in variance with the intelligence provided to him in daily briefings by DIA. Gilpatric recalled:

And even when the chart room was set up to show the exact movements of the vessels that were approaching the quarantine, it was done in the Navy [at Flag Plot], and we found several cases where they didn't portray actually on this board what we learned through DIA was the case. There was some discrepancy. We just weren't sure that they were running on the very latest information. They'd run off a position at 1800 hours and operate on that for the next six or eight or twelve hours rather than constantly keep adjusting to moment by moment developments, it would seem.<sup>96</sup>

Disillusioned, McNamara left Flag Plot in the late afternoon to inform the President of the latest developments. He later briefed Kennedy on military preparations for a possible invasion of the island and asserted that the assault could be implemented within seven days of a presidential decision. McNamara has subsequently stated that he did not believe that the President would chose this option, that he viewed the planning for the invasion to be political stratagem to mollify the hawks. McNamara also told the President of the incident at Flag Plot, and of the discrepancies in operational

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<sup>96</sup> Transcript, Roswell Gilpatric oral history interview, JFK library, p. 60.

intelligence. Both expressed fears that the Navy was running the blockage in a cavalier manner and might blunder into a confrontation with Soviet naval forces. This fear was not new: it had first surfaced on the preceding day, when McNamara discovered that the Navy was using the quarantine as an opportunity to practice anti-submarine warfare against Soviet vessels. During the confrontation, the Navy forced at least four, possibly five, Soviet F-class submarines to the surface by cruising over them, pinging the vessels with active sonar, and at least in one instance, dropping practice depth charges.<sup>97</sup> The Navy's intent was to deny the USSR the effective use of its submarine forces. That the Navy felt free to employ such provocative naval maneuvers during the diplomatic standoff suggested that there were serious discrepancies between military and civilian perceptions of the quarantine. Administration officials generally viewed the quarantine as a moderate display of military power; intended primarily to communicate American resolve.<sup>98</sup> Conversely, Naval officers tended to perceive the blockade as a bold military operation, with discrete, practical military objectives. These differences, initially obscured, became increasingly apparent as the crisis progressed. In an effort to explore and reconcile these perspectives, McNamara and Gilpatric returned to Flag Plot in the evening of 24 October. McNamara asked Admiral Anderson a series of probing questions concerning naval interception practices, in an effort to determine the objectives pursued and methods employed by the Navy in implementing the quarantine. After a lengthy exchange, Anderson, agitated by what he perceived to be civilian interference in military matters, handed the Secretary of Defense the enormous *Manual of Naval Regulations* and remarked: "It's all in there."

Annoyed, McNamara replied: "I don't give a damn what John Paul Jones [the Scottish-born American naval officer of the Revolutionary War] would have done. I want to know what you are going to do."

Anderson responded: "Now, Mr. Secretary, if you and your Deputy will go back to your offices, the Navy will run the blockade"<sup>99</sup>

Now indignant, McNamara retorted, "You're not going to fire a single shot at anything without my express permission, is that clear?" He advised the Chief of Naval Operations that the quarantine was not a military exercise, but a means of communication, and that no force was to be applied without the explicit approval of himself and the President. "Is that understood?" he concluded.

From Anderson came the tight-lipped response: "Yes."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> See Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 61.

<sup>98</sup> See Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 63.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Allison, *Essence of Decision*, pp. 131-32.

<sup>100</sup> McNamara quoted in Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 64. After the encounter, McNamara informed Gilpatric that he had lost confidence in the CNO and that he would not be reappointed to the post. Gilpatric was sympathetic toward Anderson, and lobbied the President to offer him an ambassadorship. Kennedy consented, and in 1963 Anderson was appointed Ambassador to Portugal. It was rumored in the Pentagon was that McNamara requested that Anderson be assigned to Portugal because the Secretary of Defense could no longer tolerate the presence of the officer on the North American continent. Personal interview, Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992; and Shapley, *Promise and Power*, p. 183.

Thus did McNamara ensure that there would be no misunderstanding on the part of the military regarding the objectives of the Kennedy administration in imposing the quarantine. Henceforth the Navy would share a greater portion of its intelligence with the DIA.

The following day brought additional confirmation that most Soviet ships had altered their course to avoid the quarantine; only one dry cargo ship continued to advance toward Cuba. Although the danger of naval conflict in the Atlantic was receding, the danger of aerial attack over Cuba was increasing. On 25 October, the DIA judged that all of the occupied SA-2 SAM installations were now fully operational and that the MRBM sites were nearing operational readiness.<sup>101</sup> All were aware of the implications: the daily SAC U-2 missions were in jeopardy. The administration was confronted with a dilemma, for the flights were in greatest peril during the period they were most needed. Senior intelligence officials worried over the possibility that the loss of a U-2 aircraft over the island might escalate the conflict into formal hostilities. This fear was somewhat tempered by intelligence indicating that Soviet (as opposed to Cuban) commanders controlled the SAM installations: presumably the Soviet officers were more conservative and disciplined than their Cuban counterparts; thereby reducing the possibility of an attack on an American aircraft. In addition, the intelligence community believed that the risk to U-2 missions was diminished by a standing order from the Kremlin to Soviet SAM commanders in Cuba which prohibited attacks on US surveillance aircraft. Unfortunately, this belief was erroneous: Soviet air-defense forces in Cuba were authorized to fire the SAMs under "wartime" conditions. The term "wartime" was ambiguous; Soviet commanders were given the discretion to determine whether the condition was in existence at any given time. Two days later, a subjective judgment on this condition would propel the crisis to the verge of war.

Events on 26 October belied escalation, as events of the day gave the appearance that the crisis was receding. That day a party from the USS *Pierce* and *Kennedy* boarded the Lebanese freighter *Marucla*, which sailed under the charter of the USSR, to search for offensive armaments prohibited under the terms of the Quarantine Proclamation. No contraband was found, and the ship was allowed to proceed to Cuba. When coupled with the intelligence from the previous day which indicated that the majority of Soviet vessels had altered course away from the island, this discovery reinforced the American impression that the quarantine was effective.

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<sup>101</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 42. At the time, the CIA reported that the Soviet Union was placing twenty-four SS-4 launchers in Cuba. Each could be equipped with two missiles, for a possible total of forty-eight MRBMs. Twelve SS-5 launchers were reported to be under construction. Similarly, each could support two missiles, for a possible total of twenty-four IRBMs. The agency assumed that each missile carried one warhead, resulting in seventy-two possible warheads. See Central Intelligence Agency, "Memorandum on the construction of missile sites in Cuba," 19 October 1962 (No declassification date). National Security Archives, Washington, DC. Raymond Garthoff claims that although each launcher carried two missiles, only one warhead was provided (to counter reliability concerns), bringing the true total to thirty-six warheads. See Garthoff, *Reflections*, p. 20.

The next morning the DIA reported that which the United States government had long feared, that the MRBMs in Cuba would likely be fully operational within hours.<sup>102</sup> Though the quarantine proved effective in preventing additional military supplies and material from reaching the island, Soviet and Cuban technicians and specialists had been working continuously to assemble to missiles with preexisting stocks. Their labor was nearing fruition. ExCom now faced the imminent threat of a Soviet nuclear attack on the continental United States emanating not from the USSR, but the Caribbean. In a report issued that morning, the DIA maintained that the dual rationale for the deployment was the desire of the Soviet Union to improve its nuclear attack capabilities against the United States (in contrast to the conviction of the majority of ExCom participants that the deployment did little to alter the strategic nuclear balance) to demonstrate that the United States could not prevent the advance of Soviet offensive power into the Western Hemisphere.<sup>103</sup> In advancing this thesis, the DIA was explicitly embracing the extreme views of the JCS, summoning forth the apparition of a Soviet first strike and the repudiation of the Monroe Doctrine. The implications were clear: the United States should employ force to purge Russian expansionism from the Caribbean in order to remedy to strategic balance and ensure freedom in the Americas. The DIA assessment was a call to arms, cloaked in God and Country. It was a shrewd appeal to both emotion and reason, playing on the fears of Soviet nuclear supremacy (which was, ironically, the powerful current that Kennedy navigated on the rhetorical craft of the "missile gap" so successfully in the 1960 presidential election) and invoking the poignant historical theme of American opposition to European imperialism in the Western Hemisphere. The emotional force of the report was compelling. Additionally, it served the practical purpose of laying the policy foundations for the recommendations for a full-scale invasion that the JCS presented to McNamara later that morning.

That morning the military leaders informed the Secretary of Defense that all preparations for a comprehensive air and land attack on Cuba (in accordance with the provisions of OPLAN-312) were now complete. US forces were maintaining operational readiness and, following the order of the President, the operation could commence within twelve hours. The JCS urged McNamara to advise the President to authorize the invasion as soon as possible. Though McNamara demurred, the Chiefs pressed the issue. Time was on the side of the military; the administration was clearly losing room to maneuver as the looming activation of the missiles infused policy deliberations with a sense of urgency. Momentum was gathering behind calls for this military option. An ill-advised and lamentable action by Cuban military forces abetted this movement.

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<sup>102</sup> It should be noted that there was still no evidence that nuclear warheads were present on the isle. Ray Cline, the Deputy Director of Intelligence at the CIA during the crisis, reports that throughout the confrontation President Kennedy routinely asked about the presence of warheads at his daily intelligence briefing, and that CIA officials invariably responded that there was no hard evidence to indicate this. Personal interview, Ray S. Cline, 13 October 1992. It is curious that ExCom placed such emphasis on the operational status of the missiles when, in the absence of the warheads, the increased risk was negligible. See Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, pp. 56-57, 70, 126.

<sup>103</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 48.

At 10:00 AM that morning -- 27 October -- an American U-2 aircraft was shot down over Cuba and its pilot, Major Rudolph Anderson, Jr., was killed. Within several hours of the loss of the plane, the NSA confirmed what many in the intelligence community suspected, that the feared SA-2 SAM system was culpable. CIA and DIA officials scrambled to determine whether Soviet or Cuban military commanders were responsible for authorizing the attack, in an attempt to fix the blame and assess American alternatives for reprisal.<sup>104</sup> US military leaders were enraged at the loss and prepared for prompt retribution. In the event of the loss of a surveillance flight over Cuba, OPLAN-312 specifically called for a retaliatory air strike against one or more of the SAM installations within two hours of the incident. For this purpose, sixteen F-100 fighters were poised, fully armed and fueled, at Homestead Air Force Base in Florida. The aircraft were capable of striking targets in Cuba within thirty minutes upon the receiving attack orders from CINCLANT. Immediately following the receipt of the NSA intelligence confirming the loss of Anderson's U-2 plane, the JCS prepared to authorize the planned retaliatory strike against the SAM sites, only to be blocked by the White House.<sup>105</sup> President Kennedy refused to authorize the strikes, in spite of the fact that the contingency plan specifically called for such measures. The Air Staff was furious: an American pilot was dead and they wanted a fitting reprisal. Not a few in the Defense Department viewed the President's refusal to retaliate as another example of his predilection for delay over decision, for reflection over action; the corridors of the Pentagon were filled with talk of impotence and appeasement.

Such talk was augmented by reports circulating in the media that President Kennedy was considering an "arms-swapping" agreement with the USSR to solve the conflict, wherein the American Jupiter missiles recently deployed in Turkey and Italy (under the auspices of NATO) would be removed in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. Predictably, the JCS were repulsed by the idea, viewing the pact as Faustian. To the further dismay of the military leaders, the media organs of the Soviet Politburo soon endorsed the concept: an article in the Soviet military journal *Red Star* that morning (27 October) embraced the exchange. Any ambiguity concerning Khrushchev's position was dispelled later that morning, when Radio Moscow broadcast the substance of a letter from Khrushchev to President Kennedy demanding a public trade of the missiles in Cuba for those in Turkey.

Fearing that the administration would accept this *quid pro quo* (as it was later discovered, these fears were accurate: Robert Kennedy secretly met with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin the previous evening to suggest that the United States might accept the missile trade as a basis for agreement), military leaders vehemently expressed their opposition to such an exchange. Outgoing NATO supreme Allied commander General Lauris Norstad and his replacement, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Lyman Lemnitzer, communicated their strong opposition to the proposal to

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<sup>104</sup> Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 462. In fact, a Soviet commander, Lt. General Stephen Grechko, gave the order. Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>105</sup> See Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p. 140; and Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, pp. 463-64.

ExCom.<sup>106</sup> When the President convened ExCom that afternoon, emotions were running high. Deliberations were dominated by the proposed "missile swap," which appeared to be favored by President Kennedy.<sup>107</sup> However, the events of the day -- the attack upon the U-2 mission and the activation of the missiles -- were pushing many participants towards endorsing the use of force. Information available in the afternoon indicated that, in what appeared to be another direct challenge to American fortitude, the Soviet ship *Graznyy* was approaching the quarantine line. The hawks joined with the JCS in urging prompt military action and recommended that a massive air strike be executed promptly, followed by a full-scale invasion of the island. Though this recommendation was far from novel, the JCS position was now supported by events, the momentum was gathering in their favor. The quarantine was intended to be a signal of intent to the Russians; by 27 October it appeared to many in Washington that the signal was not being received. Douglas Dillon recalled:

My impression is that military operations looked like they were becoming increasingly necessary. We were drifting without wanting to into becoming victims of fait accompli, and some of us [ExCom participants] felt that we had to do something about it. Military action was beginning to look like it was going to be the only way to do it, and when the U-2 was shot down, it added enormously to the pressure to act. By Saturday the 27th, there was clear majority in ExCom in favor of taking military action . . .<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> The two generals argued that despite the fact that the Turkish missiles were obsolete, they could not be withdrawn unilaterally without damaging NATO unity: that although the missiles were inconsequential from a military standpoint, they were invaluable from a diplomatic perspective. Both generals believed that the Jupiter missiles should be withdrawn only when the USSR agreed to greater concessions (perhaps the removal of the SS-4 MRBMs or SS-5 IRBMs from Europe) and after American strategic forces were augmented in Western Europe through Polaris deployments in the Mediterranean. See Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 468-70; and Transcript, Lyman Lemnitzer oral history interview, 3 March 1982, by Ted Gittinger, pp. 30-31, LBJ Library.

<sup>107</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, "October 27, 1962: Transcripts of the Meetings of the ExCom." *International Security* 12 (Winter 1987/88): pp. 62-72.

<sup>108</sup> Quoted in Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, p. 72.

The crisis had reached the breaking point. Even McNamara, the champion of the quarantine, conceded that afternoon that the invasion was "almost inevitable."<sup>109</sup> That evening SAC went on full alert. A flurry of diplomatic activity followed: Robert Kennedy met with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and President Kennedy sent Khrushchev a carefully worded letter in an effort to discover a basis for settlement. The details need not detain us.

The following Sunday morning (28 October) McNamara authorized the Air Force to call additional units to duty. Meanwhile, the Army and Marine divisions deployed to Florida prepared for the invasion of Cuba, in anticipation of an order from Washington. Thankfully, these orders were not forthcoming. Shortly after 9:00 AM, Radio Moscow announced that the USSR would dismantle the missiles in Cuba. Kennedy and Khrushchev had reached an agreement: the United States offered a public guarantee against an invasion of Cuba and private assurances that the Jupiter missiles would be quietly removed from Turkey in the near future in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet offensive weapons from Cuba. The accord shocked the JCS, for they believed that approval of the long-planned invasion was imminent. After the compromise was announced, General LeMay, true to his ironic nickname "the Diplomat," was reported to have declared, "We attack Monday in any case."<sup>110</sup> Ignoring the agreement, General Taylor advised ExCom that the JCS recommend further military action against the Castro regime that day. Alluding to the invariable and interminable counsel of the military, Robert Kennedy remarked sardonically, "That was a surprise."<sup>111</sup>

The JCS were simply not convinced of the sincerity of the Russian offer. They suspected that the agreement was a ruse to lure the United States into complacency and gain time to assemble the missiles in Cuba. ("We have been had," remarked CNO Admiral Anderson when he learned of the agreement.<sup>112</sup>) The military leaders enjoined the DIA to support this perspective. The DIA dutifully complied and issued an estimate the following morning, 29 October, which concluded: "Khrushchev's 28 October message to the President ordering the dismantlement of Soviet bases in Cuba appeared to be an attempt to ward off any contemplated US action that might destroy the bases." The estimate warned that at present there was no evidence that the Soviets were dismantling the missile installations.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, on 31 October the DIA sent a memorandum to Roswell Gilpatric based on

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<sup>109</sup> See Marc Trachtenberg, "White House Tapes and Minutes of the Cuban Missile Crisis," *International Security* 10 (Summer, 1985): 164-203.

In recent years McNamara has denied that the administration was on the verge of military action on 27 October, once stating: "I believe that we would have done more with the blockade. We could have continued to turn the screw for quite some time, and I believe that's what we would have done." Transcript, Robert S. McNamara oral history interview, 27 May 1987, by James Blight, Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, p. 38. Many have criticized McNamara's statements as revisionist, accusing him of interpreting "the events of 1962 from the perspective of the cooled political climate of 1989 detente." Pierre Salinger in *New York Times*, 5 February 1989 (24:4). However, the so-called "Rusk Revelation," the recent allegation that on the evening of 27 October 1962 the President authorized Dean Rusk to open a channel to the United Nations to explore the possibility of a public missile trade, adds weight to McNamara's claim that the President would have opted for missile exchange rather than an invasion. See Blight and Welsh, *On the Brink*, pp. 113-15.

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Theodore Sorenson, *Kennedy*. London: Pan, p. 692.

<sup>111</sup> Confidential interview, ExCom participant.

<sup>112</sup> Quoted in Beschloss, *The Crisis Years*, p. 544.

<sup>113</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 55.

analysis of reconnaissance photographs taken 27 and 29 October observing that available evidence indicated that additional construction was underway at the Cuban missile sites and that Soviet personnel were engaged in sophisticated and extensive efforts to conceal this from scrutiny by American intelligence assets.<sup>114</sup> By all accounts, civilian policymakers were not influenced by these skeptical reports, and continued to view Khrushchev's proclamation as a pledge made in good faith.

Nevertheless, the DIA backed this assessment until 2 November, when, confronted with incontrovertible photographic intelligence from NPIC that the Soviets were abandoning all known MRBM and IRBM installations and removing all launching equipment and camouflage materials from these sites, the agency revised its position and concluded, belatedly, that the Soviet withdrawal was proceeding in earnest.<sup>115</sup> The DIA subsequently performed an impressive feat of bureaucratic versatility by issuing, on the very same day, an assessment of future Soviet actions in Cuba, in which the agency appeared to cast aside its previous appraisals that the USSR regarded Cuba as indispensable strategic asset by concluding that the Soviets were unlikely to respond militarily to the loss of the missile sites in the Caribbean. Agency analysts dismissed retributive measures in Berlin, asserting:

military actions which were, or could be construed to be, related to Cuba are probably viewed by the Soviets as too dangerous. Military actions which were not related to Cuba, or which could not be so construed, will depend on local issues and, in the main, are not indicated.<sup>116</sup>

This estimate was a far cry from earlier agency analyses which concluded that the USSR perceived the island and its missile installations to be an essential component of the Soviet Bloc, inferring that the Soviets could not suffer its loss lightly, if at all. Now the DIA concluded that the USSR would capitulate and suffer diplomatic humiliation with scarcely a struggle. The logic of the revision suggests that the Kremlin did not view Cuba as an integral strategic asset, but a valuable resource subject to relinquishment.<sup>117</sup> This reappraisal was nothing short of a sea-change. With this estimate the DIA, for the first time since the start of the crisis, broke from the JCS perspective and asserted analytical autonomy. Of course, by then it was inconsequential, as the crisis was effectively over.

The JCS were loathe to accept this reality. Concurrent with the publication of the aforementioned DIA estimate, the military leaders were opposing diplomatic initiatives in an effort to re-focus the attention of the Kennedy administration on military operations. Commenting on the composition of a

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<sup>114</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 60.

<sup>115</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 64.

<sup>116</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, DIA to Director J-5 (Plans and Policy), "Evaluation of Next Actions by USSR in Respect to the Cuban Situation, 2 November 1962. *Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, No. 1866, p. 3.

<sup>117</sup> The conclusion of the DIA that the USSR was unlikely to respond militarily to the loss of Cuba as a strategic base could be based on two premises: that the Soviets lacked the will or the capabilities to do so. The latter seems untenable: the Soviets possessed ample means to escalate regional conflicts, particularly in Berlin and Laos, with little risk of invoking an American nuclear reprisal. The fact that they rejected such recourse, clearly within their military means, suggests that the former factor was determinative.

proposed international United Nations observation team to monitor the withdrawal of Soviet offensive weapons from Cuba, the JCS repudiated the proposal and "advised that the threat from Cuban-based offensive weapons could not be entirely eliminated until a friendly government controlled the island, for the weapons in question could be easily hidden."<sup>118</sup> As Robert Kennedy might remark, no surprise there.

In the succeeding weeks, the DIA closely monitored the withdrawal of Soviet weapons from Cuba. Diplomatic struggles ensued between Washington and Moscow over the criteria for "offensive weapons" and the precise armaments to be withdrawn. After some dispute, on 20 November, the disagreement was resolved: the Soviets agreed to remove its IL-28 aircraft, and the United States allowed the MIG-21s to remain on the island. When tasked by General Taylor to evaluate the capabilities of the military forces that remained on the island, the DIA issued a cautious assessment. The agency noted that in the aftermath of the Soviet evacuation the Castro regime retained an impressive array of modern equipment and weaponry. This, in combination with the disciplined and proficient indigenous Cuban militia, resulted in a formidable communist military force on the island. Additionally, the agency drew attention to the continued presence of Soviet combat units on the island and contended that they would be a powerful source of support for the Castro regime.<sup>119</sup> The remaining Soviet forces were a source of concern for the intelligence community. The DIA enigmatically stated that their presence on the island indicated that Moscow had not fully abandoned the concept of Cuba as a future military base. Subsequently, the Watch Committee and the USIB supported this proposition, affirming that the presence of Russian troops "suggested" Soviet planning for the establishment of a permanent military installation in the Caribbean.<sup>120</sup> ExCom, however, did not seriously consider the issue, dismissing the Soviet military units as a token show of support for the Castro government.<sup>121</sup>

As the Kennedy administration grappled with the complex and politically sensitive questions of monitoring and verifying the Soviet withdrawal, reports that the Soviet Union was concealing missiles and storage equipment in the caves of Cuba resurfaced. The most prominent allegations were made by New York republican Senator Kenneth Keating, who on 4 November charged that the USSR was sequestering offensive weapons in tunnels and caves in the Matanzas province of the island. Summoned by the administration to rebut these reports, the intelligence community strove to discredit his allegations. After a thorough inquiry, on 11 December the DIA reported:

It is recognized that for the most part this information [the Keating allegations], carried in CIA Reports and other message traffic, originates from sources of unevaluated or questionable reliability. Yet the consistent frequency of these reports is disturbing, and the speculative interest generated by them in planning and policy circles cannot be disregarded.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 66.

<sup>119</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 85.

<sup>120</sup> JCS Chronology, p. 95.

<sup>121</sup> Memorandum from Evans to Hilsman, "Debriefing re Executive Committee Meeting," 29 November 1962. JFK Library. Cited in Brugioni, *Eyeball To Eyeball*, p. 537.

<sup>122</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, Director Carroll to DCI McCone, "Possible Concealment of Offensive Weapons in Cuba," 11 December 1962. *Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, No. 2723, p. 1.

Despite the best efforts of the administration to refute these allegations, they endured in the press and the media well into the new year. In a final attempt to resolve the issue, the Secretary of Defense and the Special Assistant to the Director of the DIA, John Hughes, appeared on national television on 6 February 1963 to give a detailed review of the Cuban situation. Employing briefing boards with detailed photographic intelligence, the pair presented a synopsis of the Soviet buildup and withdrawal, and repeatedly asserted that all offensive weapons had been removed from the island.<sup>123</sup> Thus, the Keating allegations were rebutted and the DIA, through the efforts of John Hughes, for a short time came to command the attention of the nation.

## An Evaluation: the Cuban Missile Crisis

It should be remembered that the DIA was -- and is -- an entity born of two discrete visions: distinct and irreconcilable. As a practical result the agency is Janus-faced: displaying dissimilar visages to its superiors. Yet, as the Cuban missile crisis clearly demonstrated, it is the JCS incarnation which most often prevails, particularly in times of national duress. It is then when the agency is enjoined to support prevailing military judgments and the influence of the military leadership becomes irresistible. The metamorphosis of the DIA during the crisis is revealing. Prior to the discovery of the missiles, the agency charted an independent course, in an admirable attempt to satisfy both of its constituents. However, after the missiles were uncovered, the analytical autonomy of the agency swiftly eroded. As the Defense Department moved toward the precipice of war, the DIA's discretion decayed. The causes of this decline are apparent and undisputed. Quite simply, the DIA lacked the will, authority, and manpower to challenge the threat assessments prepared by the military services in the face of an armed confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. The dearth of will was unfortunate; the deprivation of power and resources intentional. After all, military men argue, intelligence is a function of command, subordinate to the operational requirements of the military leaders (that is, the JCS and the general staffs). Civilians find the argument less convincing. For while the subjugation of intelligence is desirable, perhaps essential, to the military establishment, it is objectionable, maybe untenable, to the Secretary of Defense. At the very time that McNamara was in the greatest need of objective intelligence, free of organizational bias, to exercise civilian control over the Department of Defense, he was effectively denied it. When the DIA fell victim to the influence of its military brethren, McNamara lost his only independent source of intelligence and evaluation. The DIA became just another organ of the military establishment; peddling the sanctioned positions of the American generals and admirals. It did not dare diverge from the command on matters of substance. For instance, although the agency was well aware of the flaws in the proposed operational plans to invade Cuba, it did not advise McNamara of them. The DIA served the Secretary

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<sup>123</sup> McCone and much of the intelligence community was averse to such publicity, yet McNamara prevailed. It was not without its costs, however. Adam Yarmolinsky observed: "It did result in some significant losses in intelligence potential. It told the Russians how much we knew about crateology." Transcript, Adam Yarmolinsky oral history, third interview, p. 77.

poorly in the darkest days of the crisis. In the absence of objective DIA analyses, McNamara was forced to rely on perception and intuition to combat what he and other civilians judged to be a virtual obsession on the part of the American military to invade Cuba. Fortunately, his instincts were accurate: he correctly sensed the errors in military intelligence estimates and flaws in the operational plans, without the benefit of supporting DIA assessments. Through the efforts of McNamara and the doves, a potential nuclear disaster was averted. His labors did not go unappreciated. On the day that the superpower confrontation ended, President Kennedy remarked: "An invasion would have been a mistake -- a wrong use of our power. But the military are mad. They wanted to do this. It's lucky that we have McNamara over there."<sup>124</sup> There is no doubt that the President was gravely disappointed by the performance of the JCS during the crisis. "The first advice I am going to give my successor," Kennedy announced to his advisors, "is to watch the generals and avoid feeling that just because they were military men their opinions on military matters were worth a damn."<sup>125</sup> The President and his staff believed that the Chiefs had fallen prey to their dread of communism and so were unable to view the Soviet deployment in a rational and objective manner. For the Kennedy team the crisis demonstrated the truth of Winston Churchill's aphorism on the Chiefs of Staff system: "You may take the most gallant sailor, the most intrepid airman, or the most audacious soldier, put them at a table together -- what do you get? *The sum of their fears.*"<sup>126</sup> At the height of the crisis, this fear infected the DIA. It was only when the crisis receded, when the political pressures from the military brass subsided, that the agency dared to diverge from the command position. Of course, by then it was too late: the crisis was effectively over and the need for national intelligence was no longer so urgent. The achievements of the DIA in discovering the Soviet missiles was largely overshadowed by its pusillanimity during the escalation. Let us be blunt: despite the acknowledgement that the DIA was hampered by a lack of authority and resources, its behavior during the crisis was marked by timidity; a demonstrable aversion to challenging the prevailing military assumptions and preferences. The Cuban missile crisis revealed the agency to be far from the the powerful independent intelligence organization that McNamara desired and closer to the ancillary coordinating body favored by the JCS.

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<sup>124</sup> Quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1965, p. 831.

<sup>125</sup> Quoted in Benjamin C. Bradlee, *Conversations with Kennedy*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1975, p. 122. Also see Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 457-58.

<sup>126</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. Third Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. p. 150.

## Chapter Five

### Vietnam Bowling to the Wind

The Cuban missile crisis demonstrated the susceptibility of the DIA to the operational preferences of the military leadership. In an ideal world, intelligence is formulated apart from policy: an iron wall divides the two functions to ensure that intelligence is not "tainted" by partisan influences. In reality, the process is quite different. Intelligence is inexorably affected by policy considerations, some subtle, some blunt. Espionage operates in the realm of pragmatism wherein estimates and recommendations must be practical; practical in the sense that they are comprehensible, reasonable, and acceptable to high-level consumers. For if they are not, they possess no value. Thus intelligence analysts are always influenced, consciously or intuitively, by personal judgments of what will be practical to the consumer; their products are drafted accordingly. This process is neither insidious nor maleficent; rather it is natural when writing for an audience. In this regard, intelligence analysts are no different from other authors: one writes to be read and understood, perhaps accepted. Given these inclinations, the objective of intelligence professionals should be to curtail them as much as possible. Insofar as is feasible, objectivity should be cultivated, and outside influences kept to a minimum. As the forgoing chapter described, the DIA often falls far short of attaining this objective. It appears to regularly succumb to the operational aspirations of military leaders. Several factors contribute to this predilection: a dearth of analytical resources, limited jurisdiction, organizational subordination to the JCS, continuing opposition from the military departments, and, most importantly, the historical precedent that intelligence defer to command. While this propensity is by no means unique, it is especially disturbing in the case of the DIA because the agency is the primary intelligence agent of the Secretary of Defense. The principle of civilian control of the military establishment is contingent on equal access to information; data for the most part untainted by organizational bias. Although the OB controversy and the Cuban missile crisis demonstrated that the DIA could be swayed in its judgments by the military leadership, to date we have not witnessed a reciprocal relationship between OSD and the agency. The DIA has displayed no tendency to provide intelligence assessments skewed to support those policies promoted by OSD. This chapter explores the persistence of this disparity, centering on strategic intelligence produced by the DIA regarding South Vietnam. As the conflict defined the modern American military establishment, so too did it sculpt the temperament of the young intelligence agency. With the activation of the long-awaited Production Center in January 1963, the DIA finally possessed the evaluative resources to match the military departments and the U&S

Commands. In theory, the DIA was now the equal of the other military intelligence elements; in practice, its stature was still disputed, as events in 1963-64 clearly demonstrated. The first section of the chapter explores the provenance of sanguine intelligence on the Vietnam conflict, which infected not only the DIA but other organizations as well. It discusses the consequences of this officially-sanctioned optimism on the agency and recounts the labors of the DIA to combat it. The second section chronicles the growing sense of disillusionment with the war in Southeast Asia that descended upon Washington in the winter of 1963. It describes the endeavors of the JCS to prevent the DIA from affecting American policy in the conflict, contrary to the wishes of Robert McNamara. The third section illuminates the parallel efforts of the JCS and the military departments to oppose USIB reform, and so defeat the intent of the recommendations of the Joint Study Group. The JCS were ultimately successful in both efforts: further restraining the authority and jurisdiction of the DIA and increasing its vulnerability to manipulation. The consequences of these acts are explored in the fifth section, which details the inability of the DIA to influence the debate within the Johnson administration in 1964 over the future of American intervention in Southeast Asia. The final section provides an assessment of performance of the DIA after its first three years.

## The Creed of Optimism: Vietnam, Summer 1963

Robert McNamara and Joseph Carroll were frustrated by the DIA's analytical deficiencies during the Cuban missile crisis. In the aftermath of the confrontation, the two renewed their efforts to compel the military departments to provide the long-promised intelligence officers required activate to the DIA Production Center. They were rewarded for their efforts in January 1963, when the Production Center became operational. Although the 1961 activation plan of the DIA stipulated that the Center would be activated in July 1962, disagreements between the agency and the military departments over the transfer of resources (described in Chapter Three) delayed its activation until 1963. The Production Center was responsible for integrating the military intelligence production activities of the armed services. To achieve this ambitious mission, the Center was staffed with 1692 billets.<sup>1</sup> The Center produced and disseminated the highly-regarded "Defense Intelligence Digest" (later renamed the "Defense Intelligence Summary"), a daily publication which synthesized basic, current, and estimative intelligence on contemporary matters of national interest for use by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, U&S Commands, and other Defense Department elements. The Center also compiled basic intelligence for the Defense Department and managed relevant reference files, libraries, and data processing systems. In late 1963 the JSTPS, formerly located at SAC Headquarters, was moved into the Production Center. Thereafter, the Center provided intelligence support to this element and assisted in the perennial formulation of the National Strategic Target List and the SIOP. To facilitate these tasks, the Center was designated the overall manager of target data inventory, including related resource

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<sup>1</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 59, 96. With the activation of the Production Center, the Production Planning Group (DIAAP-1) was abolished.

management.<sup>2</sup> One of the most important activities of the Center in this realm was the preparation of the Bombing Encyclopedia, a comprehensive locational file which assigned numbers and terms to Soviet and Communist Bloc targets. Compilation of the tome was a demanding chore, requiring the Center to assemble, corroborate, assess, and designate, millions of disparate pieces of intelligence. By all accounts, the DIA's performance in this task was exemplary. With the assistance of SAC, the Production Center pioneered the use of computer data storage and retrieval systems.<sup>3</sup>

With the addition of the Defense Intelligence School (activated on 1 January 1963) and the Production Center to existing operations, the DIA swiftly outgrew its meager Pentagon offices. On 3 March 1963 several elements of the DIA were relocated across the Potomac into the former offices of the US Army Signal Communications Agency in Building A of Arlington Hall Station. (Building B was subsequently occupied by the agency, in September 1963.) The expansion was timely: ten days later McNamara elevated the Science and Technology Division of the Office of Estimates to a directorate (DIAAP-4) and assigned additional personnel to the element.<sup>4</sup> The Secretary ordered the reorganization to ensure that the DIA possessed sufficient capabilities to fulfill its management responsibilities for technical intelligence analysis. He was specifically concerned about the escalating requirements for this type of intelligence generated by the protracted conflict in South Vietnam. There the Viet Cong insurgency continued to prosper, in spite of the routine projections by the American military to the contrary.

Irrespective of the widely-reported disaster at the Battle of Ap Bac on 2 January 1963, where two companies of Viet Cong rebels thrashed three battalions of South Vietnamese soldiers and an armed personnel carrier (M-113) company, Harkins and MACV remained confident about the future prospects of the conflict. Two days after the battle, Admiral Felt (CINCPAC) declared it a South Vietnamese victory because the insurgents had abandoned their positions. He then announced that the defeat of the Viet Cong was "inevitable." When an incredulous Peter Arnett (later of Gulf War fame) challenged this assessment, the irritable admiral barked, "Get on the team."<sup>5</sup>

Get on the team. As the exhortation was directed at cynical reporters in Saigon, so too was it directed at skeptical DIA analysts in Washington. The seeds of doubt sown in the summer of 1962 now bore fruit: by the spring of 1963, agency analysts were openly cynical of official claims of progress in South Vietnam. In general, DIA intelligence officials agreed with their CIA counterparts that the situation remained a slowly escalating stalemate. Many analysts at both intelligence agencies were still skeptical of the OB statistics and the casualty figures issued by MACV. For example, in an intelligence report issued in January, the CIA noted that MACV claimed the South Vietnamese forces had inflicted 30,000 casualties on the Viet Cong, and observed that the Viet Cong OB was estimated only at 22,000-24,000 men. The discrepancy, remarked the agency, suggested, "that the casualty

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<sup>2</sup> On 9 February 1963, the charter of the DIA was modified to broaden the responsibilities of the agency in automatic data processing. The result of the revision was the establishment of the DIA Automatic Data Processing Systems Center on 19 February 1963. See Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Confidential interview, retired JSTPS analyst.

<sup>4</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*. New York: Viking, 1983, p. 262.

figures are exaggerated or that the VC have a remarkable capability -- or both."<sup>6</sup>

MACV moved to mollify critical commentary like this on the war from Washington in mid-April, as the intelligence community prepared to draft an estimate on future prospects in South Vietnam. In preliminary meetings, analysts from the DIA, CIA, and INR agreed that substantive progress in the counterinsurgency program was improbable in the short term: consequently, the initial draft of the estimate was pessimistic. Informed of the content of the draft, General Harkins promptly contacted General Carroll and suggested that the DIA revise its stance to coincide with the position of MACV and CINCPAC that the counterinsurgency program was showing impressive gains. His message to the military intelligence officers in Washington was blunt: Get on the team. The DIA at once deferred to the wishes of the command and modified its position accordingly. The military intelligence organizations were now unified against the civilians over the content of the estimate. Faced with this fissure, McCone, in his capacity as Chairman of BNE, ordered the estimate "remanded" or redrafted. MACV's bureaucratic strategy of unanimity was successful. The final estimate was balanced, if circumspect, concluding, "The situation remains fragile."

Thus the activation of the Production Center did little to shield the agency from the powerful influences of the military leadership. MACV constantly appealed to Washington military organizations, particularly the DIA, to support its assessments of the conflict. There is no doubt that organizational unanimity (some would say conformity) was an aspiration of MACV from the start of the conflict in Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> MACV exerted pressure on DIA officers to subscribe to its perspective through a subtle device, back-channel cables. These "eyes only" messages had a very limited distribution, normally restricted to two or three officers, which allowed military commanders to communicate among each other with little fear of disclosure. The back-channels were an enduring source of consternation for civilian officials, who suspected that military leaders employed the cables to privately discuss and decide important matters pertaining to American military operations and policies without civilian involvement and oversight. They feared that the back-channel was frequently used by military officers to resolve disputes without interference from civilian policymakers. This method of discreet resolution allowed the military to build unanimity and thereby strengthen the bureaucratic position of the Defense Department in policy deliberations. One DIA official confirmed these fears, remarking:

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<sup>6</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Current Intelligence Memorandum, 11 January 1963. Cited in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-63: Vietnam*. (Hereafter cited as DOS) Volume IV, Document 11, GPO 1988-91, pp. 19-22.

<sup>7</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, NIE 53-63, "Prospects in South Vietnam," 17 April 1963, DOS, 1963, Volume III, Document 94, pp. 232-5.

<sup>8</sup> In the field, MACV achieved this aim through the suppression of contradictory (that is, critical) reporting on the war effort from American intelligence advisors by a mechanism called the "directed report." All intelligence submitted to MACV from military intelligence units was reviewed by Winterbottom's intelligence shop, and altered if judged by the command to be overly pessimistic. The command assumed responsibility for the alterations, thereby removing the moral burden from the intelligence officer who submitted the report. The justification appears dubious. See Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, p. 328.

I have seen "eyes only" cables come in from the United States military commanders in Honolulu and Saigon to the director of DIA, requesting that he give more than passing consideration to the command viewpoint about this or that. The language is always moving. Such a cable is likely to start off complimenting the recipient for the fine job he is doing and then to work in high-sounding phrases which evoke motherhood, apple pie, the American flag, and, of course, the uniform. It then implies that the sender would like to see a judgment or a particular set of figures changed to conform to the command viewpoint. It rarely offers any evidence to support this request. It is sure to close with a veiled threat that the recipient's career is in jeopardy if he doesn't play the game and "get on the team." Many estimates have been changed or reworded because of an "eyes only" cable from a field commander. In one instance the Air Force chief of intelligence called my boss at DIA about a nearly completed estimate on United States bombing in Laos. He told him that he was sending a team down to change the estimate and that my boss had better remember what color his uniform was. Of course it was the same as the general's blue. The team arrived, and over the protest of the DIA analysts, a compromise was reached.<sup>9</sup>

The proclivity of the agency to acquiesce to the entreaties of the field commanders is illustrative of the DIA's deference senior military officers and commands, a subservience born of tradition and rank. Since the creation of the modern Defense Department in 1947, the JCS and its affiliated agencies have been conspicuously reluctant to question the tactics and intelligence of field commanders. The field commander is ultimately responsible for the performance of the forces under his command, and presumably has access to superior information due to his proximity to the battlefield. Thus the JCS, who are not themselves in the statutory chain of command (recall that they are advisors), are loathe to second-guess his judgment. Remarking on the role of the JCS during the Vietnam conflict, Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith wrote:

They viewed their role as supporters of the commanders in Vietnam and the Pacific. They used the vast flow of data from Vietnam as input material for keeping themselves informed of daily events in the war so that they could better argue General Westmoreland's case to top civilian officials. They did not attempt to organize the data for systematic assessment of strategy. They did not even establish an analysis group until late 1967, and then denied it the leeway necessary to analyze basic questions. In short, the JCS had not desire to second-guess General Westmoreland. The President and the Secretary of Defense always consulted the JCS before making decisions, but the advice was absolutely predictable: do what General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp ask, and increase the size of the remaining forces in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 155.

<sup>10</sup> Enthoven and Smith, *How Much Is Enough?*, pp. 299-300.

As an agent of the JCS, the DIA shared this view. The agency's propensity to acquiesce to the requirements of command was reinforced by the ancillary position of intelligence to operations in the American military. Historically, American military intelligence has suffered the impairment of low rank. In the U&S Commands, the so-called staff "lions" -- J-3 (Operations) and J-5 (Plans) -- are normally flag officers, while the J-2 (Intelligence) deputy is typically a colonel. The J-3 and J-5 are not only senior officers, but often decorated veterans. As one Air Force intelligence analyst observed, "Here [in the military commands] the intelligence ram is outgunned, outflanked, and outranked."<sup>11</sup> Intelligence officers are understandably reluctant to challenge the judgment of their superiors. The DIA is no exception. After all, the agency is staffed largely by military officers on temporary loan from their parent service. They are acutely aware of the reality that they will eventually return to the military departments, and that any confrontations with superiors while assigned to DIA might adversely affect their prospects for future promotion. Careerism is a powerful incentive for unanimity.

This unanimity made the military a formidable bureaucratic foe for the civilian intelligence organizations, often fragmented and diffident about aspects of the war. Given this fragmentation it was not surprising the military intelligence agencies swiftly began to dominate reporting from Southeast Asia. The ascendancy of military intelligence posed three acute problems for civilian policymakers. The first was the intrinsic optimism of military intelligence from the field (in contrast with the more sober intelligence produced by Washington organizations). There are several explanations for this optimism; the majority related to policy requirements and institutional predilections. With regard to the former, following the commitment of American forces to Vietnam official optimism was seen as necessary to maintain domestic support for the effort and the morale of our Vietnamese allies. As concerns the latter, the operative factors were cogently summarized in the Defense Department study that is now known as the *Pentagon Papers*. A compendium of top-secret assessments of the Vietnam conflict, the *Pentagon Papers* were commissioned in 1967 by McNamara, exhausted and disillusioned from the war effort, to explore the origins and evolution of American involvement in Southeast Asia. The completed work contains over three thousand pages of narrative history and more than four thousand pages of appended documents. Leaked to the *The New York Times* in 1971, and subsequently published in several forms, annotated and unedited, the *Pentagon Papers* are an invaluable source to historians. The contributions of the anonymous historians and analysts are frequently cogent and insightful. This is especially true of the examination of the sources of military optimism, and will therefore be quoted in some length here. Commenting on the disparity between the optimism of MACV intelligence and the pessimism of Washington intelligence, an anonymous defense analyst observed:

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in John Macartney, "Intelligence and Bureaucracy," in Keagle and Kozak, *Bureaucratic Politics and National Security*, p. 34. The other support deputies -- the J-1, J-4, and J-6 -- are also outranked by J-3 and J-5, but they work within their own specialties, whereas J-2 works directly with the "lions."

Most of the senior officers in-field in the direct line of operational responsibility tended to accept the more optimistic interpretation ... The lives of most senior officers charged with operational responsibility have been pointed to giving leadership in situations of stress. This leadership includes setting an example of high morale, by their own conduct, to encourage enthusiastic *esprit de corps* among subordinates, and to project an unflinching image of confidence to the outside world. Such men are likely to find it almost impossible to recognize and to acknowledge existence of a situation seriously adverse to their assigned mission. It is contrary to their lifetime training never to be daunted. This characteristic makes them good leaders for difficult missions but it does not especially qualify them for rendering dispassionate judgments of the feasibility of missions or of the progress they are making. Admiral Felt and General Harkins in the field, and General Krulak in Washington, appear to have been more cautious reflective weighers of complex circumstances and feasibilities, including political complications.

Officials and agencies in Washington who depended directly or primarily upon these officers for an understanding of the situation tended, very naturally, to put their greatest faith in the judgment of those in the field who were administratively responsible and who had access to the most comprehensive official reports and data. If there were disadvantages in the position of these people, a major one was that most of their information was supplied by GVN [South Vietnamese] officials, who often had a vested interest in making things look good. Moreover, the U.S. officials in positions of operational responsibility had a professional commitment to programs which, often, they had had a hand in establishing. This normally inhibited them from giving the worst interpretation to evidence that was incomplete, ambiguous, or inconclusive -- and most evidence was one or more of these. Moreover, the public relations aspects of most positions of operating responsibility make it seem necessary to put a good face on things as part of that operating responsibility. The morale of the organizations seemed to demand it. Finally, the intelligence provided on an official basis generally followed formats devised for uniform formal compilation and standard statistical treatment. All along the line, lower echelons were judged, rewarded, or penalized by higher echelons in terms of the progress revealed by the reports they turned in. This practice encouraged and facilitated feeding of unjustifiably optimistic data into the reporting machine.

The darker view was easier for those who lacked career commitment to the success of the programs in the form in which they had been adopted. The more pessimistic interpretations were generally based, also, upon sources of information which were intimate, personal, out-of-channels, and with non-official personages. They were particularistic rather than comprehensive, intimate and intuitive rather than formal, impressionistic rather than statistical.<sup>12</sup>

In short, good news suggested competence, and the military, like all specialists, are always keen to display their proficiency. One anecdote is particularly telling. When General Harkins first arrived in Saigon, he told American journalists that he was an optimist and that he would have only optimists on his staff.<sup>13</sup> True to his word, Harkins' weekly reports to his superiors in Washington were titled "Headway Reports," lest anyone doubt the inexorable progress of the military effort.

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<sup>12</sup> *GPP(III)*, pp. 24-25

<sup>13</sup> Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 229.

The second problem with the military intelligence agencies was their penchant for evaluating and judging situations and events outside of its exclusive sphere of competence. Ironically, this propensity was a direct consequence of the Bay of Pigs debacle. President Kennedy was exasperated by the failure of the JCS to evaluate those aspects of the mission crucial to its success which were unrelated to the narrow domain of the military operation. He held the Chiefs culpable for the failure of the invasion. Subsequently, Kennedy instructed the JCS to advise him on all aspects, military and otherwise, of operations submitted to them for review.<sup>14</sup> This directive greatly expanded the policy jurisdiction of the JCS, effectively amplifying the power and influence of the military in policy deliberations. The civilian agencies, especially the State Department and the CIA, were not given a comparable scope of commentary on military operations: military assessments remained the exclusive province of military men. The perils of this incongruity were soon revealed in Vietnam. MACV intelligence estimates were not confined to the state of the war: they also examined political and social phenomena, and ranged from assessments of popular support for the Diem government to the effectiveness of pacification efforts in the countryside. These estimates frequently contradicted the intelligence reports of the CIA and the Embassy, explicitly challenging the competence and credibility of the civilian intelligence analysts. While few doubted the prowess of the military to judge the progress of war in South Vietnam, many were skeptical of its capability to evaluate the subtle dynamics of Vietnamese culture. Civilians observed that the relationship was not reciprocal: whenever analysts from the State Department or the CIA questioned the validity of a military intelligence report on the war effort, military officers were quick to cry foul, asserting that these analyses were the solitary domain of the Defense Department. Thus the military sought to confine other agencies to their respective fields of expertise, while they themselves roamed freely through the provinces of others.

Ironically, it is not altogether clear that the Defense Department was competent at the time to judge the progress of the war in Indochina. The third problem with military reporting on Vietnam was that the principal defense intelligence organizations were directed by Air Force officers. In 1962, Colonel James Winterbottom was the chief of the MACV intelligence section; General Arthur Patterson directed CINCPAC intelligence; General Joseph Carroll ran the DIA. All were Air Force officers. The experience and expertise of the three men lay in nuclear targeting, strategic reconnaissance, and counterintelligence, respectively. The competence of these men to accurately measure and evaluate the state of a ground war, especially a guerrilla war, in Southeast Asia is questionable. The question is

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<sup>14</sup> National Security Council, National Security Action Memorandum Number 55, 28 June 1961. DDRS: 1985-11567. "I expect the Joint Chiefs of Staff to present the military viewpoint in government councils in such a way as to assure that the military factors are clearly understood before decisions are reached ... While I look to the Chiefs to present the military factor without reserve or hesitation, I regard them to be more than military men and expect their help in fitting military requirements into the overall context of any situation, recognizing that the most difficult problem in government is to combine all assets in a unified, effective pattern." Maxwell Taylor remarked: "He [Kennedy] looked to the Joint Chiefs not as military specialists, but as men of experience who had been about the world and had seen many aspects of foreign policy problems. He wanted the Chiefs to advise him in those terms as broad generalists in the field of foreign policy, not narrow military specialists. [Lyndon Johnson] neither approved nor disapproved, but with the knowledge that it was on the books he tacitly approved it because he never changed it." Transcript, Maxwell Taylor oral history interview, 9 January 1969, by Dorothy McSweeney, pp. 9-10, LBJ Library.

particularly salient in the case of Winterbottom, as several subordinates accused him of gross incompetence; in the military, a rare and serious charge. They claimed that his background in SAC intelligence was ill-suited for the demands of Vietnam, for he tended to focus on enemy threats as static military targets and field units, rather than ambiguous dynamic insurgent factions.<sup>15</sup> In short, they charge that he lacked the political sophistication and intellectual flexibility necessary to evaluate guerrilla war. After experiencing the manipulation of the OB under Winterbottom in the spring of 1962, the DIA analyst George Allen met with General Harkins to complain about the MACV intelligence chief. When the commander began to defend Winterbottom, Allen intervened:

“General Harkins,” the civilian [Allen] interrupted, “your intelligence chief doesn’t understand the threat at all. He’s an Air Force officer and his specialty is SAC reconnaissance and I’m sure he’s very good at picking nuclear targets, but he doesn’t understand this war and he’s not going to give you any feel for it.”<sup>16</sup>

To the surprise of the intelligence analyst, no action was taken. Apparently, Winterbottom retained the confidence of his commander, if not his subordinates, for Harkins, like Winterbottom, was an optimist. Given the optimism of the command staff, it is not unexpected that the intelligence produced by MACV reflected this proclivity and were routinely confident about the progress of the military effort. In contrast, as previously noted, the reports produced by the intelligence section of ARPAC, derived from precisely the same intelligence sources that MACV employed, were consistently doubtful about the prospects for the success of the counterinsurgency campaign during this period. The discrepancy between the Army intelligence element in the Pacific and the MACV intelligence shop in Saigon is stunning. The disparity lay in the statistics, the numbers listed in the OB. It was to be one of the peculiar aspects of the conflict in Vietnam that the war would be contested on paper with statistics as well as in the delta with carbines.

This creed of optimism, promulgated and enforced by MACV, had a powerful effect not only on DIA intelligence analysts, but civilian officials. This was illustrated at the Eighth Secretary of Defense Conference on 6 May 1963. The sanguine reporting on Vietnam heartened McNamara to such an extent that he ordered concrete plans to be drafted for the withdrawal of up to one thousand American forces by the end of year.<sup>17</sup> The hopefulness of the Secretary was short-lived. Three days later South

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<sup>15</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 173.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 231. The DIA officer was likely George Allen, who recounted the anecdote to John Newman. See Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 242.

<sup>17</sup> *GPP (II)*, p. 180; and Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 359-66, 407-10. The order was implemented as NSAM-263 of 11 October 1963. The withdrawal plan is a controversial historical issue, as it is often cited as evidence that Kennedy wished to reverse the course of American intervention in Vietnam. There is no doubt that at the time, the President expressed private doubts about the wisdom of remaining in Indochina, but it is difficult to discern whether this was a deliberate political posture or a candid personal assessment. See Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 321-25; and Shapley, *Promise and Power*, pp. 262-64. Incidentally, the 1000 man withdrawal plan was implemented in December 1963, but by then had become largely an accounting exercise, with no true reduction intended nor executed. See *GPP (II)*, pp. 190-91.

Vietnam was engulfed by the Buddhist Crisis, which would last five months. The affair strikingly revealed the incompetence and foolishness of the Diem regime, which miscalculated and mismanaged the political crisis from the beginning, resulting in discord between the governments of the United States and South Vietnam at all diplomatic levels.<sup>18</sup> After extensive analysis, the intelligence community concluded that although the Diem government was deficient, there was no alternative leadership for the United States to support. The Diem regime continued to receive American assistance by default; in the absence of a surrogate non-communist faction he was deemed to be capable of providing "reasonably effective leadership for the government and the war effort."<sup>19</sup> The essence of the precarious American policy was captured in the journalistic aphorism: "Sink or swim with Ngo Dinh Diem"<sup>20</sup>

The DIA monitored the hazardous situation in South Vietnam throughout May and June. During this period the DIA consolidated its nascent evaluative assets. On 28 June 1963 the J-2 element of the Joint Staff was dissolved and its staff support functions were formally transferred to DIA on 1 July 1963.<sup>21</sup> Thereafter the agency assumed planning and policy responsibility for COMINT, ELINT, and non-SIGINT functions, target intelligence support, security support of the Joint Staff, and Secretariat functions.<sup>22</sup>

The DIA had always answered to two masters, yet now the demands of the JCS were more immediate. The precarious state of Vietnam consumed the attention of the Chiefs, and the DIA labored to fulfill the intelligence requirements generated by the military leaders. The pressure from the JCS and MACV to find rays of encouraging information amid the gathering darkness was intense.<sup>23</sup> It was not coincidental that the DIA's assessment of the South Vietnamese counterinsurgency program shifted perceptibly in July 1963. On 17 July 1963 the agency reported on the number of Viet Cong-initiated military actions during the first six months of the year. The agency commented that the present trends were auspicious: insurgent combat operations during the period were considerably lower than those over the same period of the previous year. Battalion and company-size attacks were initiated at approximately half the 1962 level. However, the agency discreetly concluded that despite the reduction in rebel-initiated actions, Viet Cong capabilities remained essentially unimpaired. Once a critic, the

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<sup>18</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 113.

<sup>19</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, SNIE 53-2-63, "The Situation in South Vietnam," 10 July 1963. Cited in DOS, Volume III, Document 188, pp. 482-85.

<sup>20</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 165.

<sup>21</sup> Two thirds of the J-2 staff, the Current Intelligence Division and the Estimates Division, had been transferred to the agency when it was activated in October 1961. Thereafter, in accordance with the provisions of the activation plan, the DIA's activities had slowly protruded into the jurisdiction of the J-2. Finally, in June the agency formally absorbed all J-2 functions.

<sup>22</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>23</sup> Confidential interview, former DIA intelligence analyst.

agency was now cautiously optimistic about the prospects for the war, asserting the prospects of the Diem government "are certainly better than they were one year ago."<sup>24</sup>

The agency's prudent remark that Viet Cong capabilities largely were intact proved accurate. In late July and early August the DIA reported a steady increase in the number of rebel military operations, and concluded that the insurgents were on the offensive, in a belated bid to profit from the Buddhist Crisis.<sup>25</sup> The analysts who monitored the cables from MACV to Washington observed that the field reports disclosed a marked deterioration of war effort.<sup>26</sup> In the past, the DIA and CIA had been consistently skeptical of the ability of Diem government to resolve its social and political difficulties. Now this skepticism extended to the military counterinsurgency campaign. The intelligence analysts were not alone in their doubts; the State Department was openly cynical of MACV intelligence. Led by Undersecretary of State George W. Ball, the versatile W. Averell Harriman (at the time Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs and Chairman of the Special Group on Counterinsurgency) and Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Roger Hilsman, the department began to challenge the military's optimistic interpretation of the war effort in high-level policy meetings. Hilsman, the former Director of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), was the most outspoken critic, repeatedly questioning the accuracy and validity of MACV reporting. A West Point graduate who fought with Ramon Magsaysay in the successful American counter-guerrilla campaign in the Philippines against the Huk insurgents, Hilsman possessed the credibility to challenge military judgments. He swiftly became a formidable bureaucratic foe of Robert McNamara and the JCS.

In response to these challenges from the State Department, the Defense Department strove to consolidate its position on the conflict in Vietnam. Dissent was discouraged; adherence to the creed of interminable optimism was encouraged. General Victor Krulak, the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA), became the defender of the faith, the designated disciplinarian of the JCS on matters pertaining to Vietnam. Surprisingly, he, like Harkins, had no personal experience in guerrilla conflicts, suggesting that his assigned role was not analytic, but bureaucratic. Krulak assured that all factions in the Pentagon supported the command position on Vietnam, that everyone was on the team. "Don't knock Vietnam," went the Pentagon maxim, "it's the only war we have."

In the face of the challenges from the State Department, the DIA's lukewarm embrace of the counterinsurgency program appears to have been no longer acceptable. On 14 August 1963 Krulak sent a memorandum to McNamara that discounted the increase in Viet Cong activity over the past

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<sup>24</sup> *GPP(II)*, p. 183. It should be noted that on 12 August 1963, the charter of the DIA was revised to include responsibility for establishing and operating facilities to provide military photographic processing, printing, interpretation, analysis, and library services for the Secretary of Defense, JCS, U&S Commands, military departments, and other DOD agencies and officials. The charter was again modified on 6 September 1963, to include the development and supervision of a Defense Department intelligence dissemination program to provide information to all defense elements and related organizations. This responsibility ultimately resulted in the DIA Dissemination Center. See Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 58-60. Both revisions were a consequence of the rapid evolution of technical intelligence collection systems, developed in response to the Soviet strategic threat and deepening American involvement in Southeast Asia.

<sup>25</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, *DIA Intelligence Bulletin*, 4 August 1963. *GPP(II)*, p. 183.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with George Allen. Cited in Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 367.

month.<sup>27</sup> The report was a straightforward challenge to the DIA, as it directly contradicted an agency assessment issued ten days earlier. The leadership of the DIA understood its implications. Soon thereafter, agency analysts were discreetly instructed to mitigate their criticism of the war effort in Vietnam. Over the next few weeks, the pressures to conform to the MACV position mounted. DIA analysts were directed to refrain from commenting on MACV assessments and incorporate MACV information into DIA intelligence products without comment. The analysts reluctantly complied. George Allen, now on the DIA's Current Intelligence Review Panel, which edited intelligence articles before publication, deplored the agency's tendency to simply summarize field reports without providing judgments as to their significance. "It was like the nightly network news coverage of Wall Street," he observed.

Because any such interpretation could only call into question the overly optimistic views reflected in MACV and Embassy reporting, DIA's attempts (resulting from my editorial "pinging") drew unfavorable complaints from the field, and attracted criticism from elements in the JCS and DOD. As a result we were instructed to refrain from any analytical remarks which could not be directly attributed to the military command in Vietnam. If MACV failed to point out that there were more battalion-sized attacks this week than last, DIA was not able to make any such observation. Even if the statistical data in the annex to MACV's weekly report clearly showed an increase in the number of assaults on strategic hamlets, we were not to point out this to consumers of DIA intelligence summaries, unless MACV had explicitly noted the fact. General Carroll would not have DIA expressing an independent analytical or interpretive judgment on the course of events in Saigon.<sup>28</sup>

## Disillusionment: Autumn, 1963

The JCS were able to influence intelligence in Washington, but they were unable to influence events in Saigon. In spite of pledges to the Kennedy administration to adopt a more conciliatory towards domestic dissenters (made through Ambassador Nolting), on 21 August 1963 the Diem government ordered its Special Forces to execute midnight raids against Buddhist pagodas throughout the nation. As a consequence over fourteen hundred people, many of them monks, were arrested and beaten. The raids stunned Washington. Diem again proved to be an capricious ally. The DIA, in a flash of its renegade former self, concluded that the raids and the ensuing declaration of martial law "will have serious repercussions throughout the country." The agency remarked that a coup attempt was probable as there was widespread discontent among the South Vietnamese military. However, in a

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<sup>27</sup> *GPP(II)*, p. 184.

<sup>28</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 205-206.

extraordinary *non sequitur* the agency paid the obligatory homage to the MACV creed of optimism by remarking that the dissatisfaction had little military effect on the war effort.<sup>29</sup>

In the aftermath of the pagoda raids, American policy toward South Vietnam fell into disarray. The Kennedy administration was deeply divided over whether to support a coup or not. On 22 August a new American ambassador arrived in Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., charged by President Kennedy to “get tough” with Diem. While Lodge settled in, indecision wracked the White House. The administration was clearly adrift. President Kennedy responded to this dissension as he had in the past, by sending a fact-finding mission to Vietnam. The selected envoys were General Krulak (McNamara’s choice) and Joseph A. Mendenhall, the former political counselor in the Embassy in Saigon (Kennedy’s choice). The two arrived in Saigon on 8 September and returned to Washington two days later to present their respective reports to the President. The reports were strikingly dissimilar: Krulak stated the the shooting war was progressing at an impressive pace, Mendenhall asserted that the war was being lost. At the end of the briefings, Kennedy inquired, “You two did visit the same country, didn’t you”<sup>30</sup> The conflicting reports were a reflection of the growing rift between State and Defense over the war effort. Krulak, as expected, endorsed the optimism of MACV; Mendenhall embraced the growing pessimism of the State Department. The trip did not resolve the debate, the President’s advisors remained hopelessly divided over Vietnam. Kennedy ordered yet another fact-finding trip to the region, this one led by McNamara and General Taylor. The pair arrived in South Vietnam on 24 September and, through a series of meetings and briefings, were presented with a peculiar amalgam of battlefield optimism and political pessimism. This ambivalence was embodied in their final report to the President, which recommended a mixture of diplomatic pressure and persuasion towards the Diem regime. More importantly, the report concluded that the current American policies and tactics in support of the activities of the South Vietnamese military would ultimately result in victory.<sup>31</sup> After reviewing the report, the President decided to go forward with the one-thousand man phased withdrawal ordered by McNamara in May.

The McNamara-Taylor mission was significant for another reason: McNamara left Vietnam with serious doubts about the accuracy of the statistical reporting on the war. As Hilsman observed, the Secretary departed “doubting the statistics he loved so well and grasping that ‘unquantifiable’ political factors might be ‘more important’ than he previously allowed.”<sup>32</sup> McNamara also saw the discrepancy between the opinions of military officers in the field and those at Headquarters (that is, MACV). The military advisors in the field tended to be more pessimistic about the progress of the war and the effectiveness of the Diem government. Their opinion was illustrated in verses sung to the tune of “Twinkle, twinkle, little star:”

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<sup>29</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, Special Report, “Martial Law in South Viet-Nam,” 21 August 1963. DOS, Volume III, Document 188, pp. 600-601.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in *NYTPP*, p. 175.

<sup>31</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 89; also *NYTPP*, p. 176.

<sup>32</sup> Hilsman, *To Move A Nation*, p. 509.

We are winning, this we know.  
General Harkins tells us so.  
In the delta, things are rough.  
In the mountains, mighty tough.  
But we're winning, this we know.  
General Harkins tells us so.  
If you doubt this is true,  
McNamara says so too.<sup>33</sup>

In late October, the State Department launched its long-anticipated bureaucratic attack on the optimism of CINCPAC and MACV. On 22 October INR released a study entitled "RFE-90: Statistics on the War Effort in South Vietnam Shows Unfavorable Trends." The report asserted:

Since July 1963, the trend in Viet Cong casualties, weapons losses, and defections has been downward while the number of Viet Cong armed attacks and other incidents has been upward. Comparison with earlier periods suggests that the military position of the government of Vietnam may have been set back to the point it occupied six months to a year ago. These trends coincide with the sharp deterioration of the political situation.<sup>34</sup>

Its release caused a furor in Washington because it challenged not only the command perspective, but was shrewdly derived from MACV and DIA statistics. The military brass in Washington were enraged, claiming that State had no right to comment on military operations clearly outside of their sphere of diplomatic expertise.

Interestingly, the DIA was not allowed to respond to RFE-90, although the study bluntly disputed recent agency analyses. Instead, Krulak, the defense disciplinarian, was assigned the task of formal rebuttal. The assignment was complicated by a military coup in Saigon on 1 November 1963, a coup that the Kennedy administration rashly encouraged.<sup>35</sup> In the end, President Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu were killed and the former Vice President of South Vietnam Nguyen Ngoc Tho and several military generals took control of the government. The incident delayed Krulak's response. The general finally responded to RFE-90 on 6 November. His criticisms were three: (1) "Neither the memorandum itself nor its conclusions were coordinated with the Defense Department;" (2) the State Department study employed a "few select statistical indicators over a short period of time, while ignoring many others, to form an extrapolated military judgment;" and (3) although the study was of "little importance" its disclosure might lead foreign governments to conclude that the Defense Department and

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<sup>33</sup> Cited in Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 897.

<sup>34</sup> DOS, 1963, Volume IV, Document 205, pp. 418-19, "Editorial Note"; Also see *DODPP (XII)*, pp. 579-82.

<sup>35</sup> See *NYTPP*, p. 189; and Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 411-16.

the State Department were divided over the war in Vietnam, resulting in the “embarrassment of both Departments and of the Government.”<sup>36</sup>

McNamara joined the battle. On 7 November the Secretary sent a copy of RFE-90 and Krulak’s comments to Rusk. Also included was a personal note, which read, “Dean: If you promise me that the Department of State will not issue any more military appraisals without getting the approval of the Joint Chiefs, we will let this matter die. Bob.”<sup>37</sup> The note is emblematic of the informal means McNamara often employed to suppress dissent on Vietnam and so buttress the power and influence of the Defense Department. Rusk, a man averse to discord and predisposed to acquiesce to the military, agreed, but pointed out that RFE-90 was the result of close “contact” between INR and Krulak and the DIA.<sup>38</sup>

The following day the director of INR Thomas Hughes responded to Krulak’s criticism of RFE-90. In a memorandum to Rusk he answered the charges of the general: (1) “You may be assured that our working level officers maintain close contact with the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and with General Krulak’s office,” and (2):

As noted in the first page of the Research Memorandum, all statistics used in this report were compiled by the DIA and by General Krulak’s office. Recognizing limitations in these statistics, we have explained at some length, in the first two pages of our report, how the statistics are incomplete, sometimes unreliable, and omit other factors that are important but cannot be quantified. However, the statistics selected are among those regularly highlighted by the Military Assistance Command (MAC) and DIA in its weekly briefings of State’s Vietnam Working Group. We recall that Generals Krulak and Wheeler, during last spring’s discussions at CIA on the South Vietnam National Intelligence Estimate, declared that these statistics, then running in favor of the Vietnam Government, were not given sufficient emphasis in the estimate.<sup>39</sup>

Hughes apparently believed Krulak’s remark that the disclosure of the study might be exploited by foreign governments to embarrass the United States was puerile, for he deigned to address to it. Hughes concluded by noting that a recent CIA analysis produced independently of RFE-90 agreed with the findings of the INR report.<sup>40</sup>

Hughes effectively placed the DIA back in the line of fire. In fact, he shared working relationships with agency analysts, who frequently shared their doubts and reservations with him. The DIA’s role was spared further scrutiny, however, for the matter had already been settled by McNamara and Rusk.

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 422.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 316. Halberstam adds parenthetically, “The note, so revealing of the period, is now framed and hangs in the living room of one of the dissenters from that period.”

<sup>38</sup> Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 422.

<sup>39</sup> DOS, 1963, Volume IV, Document 306, pp. 582-86; Also see “Memorandum from the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes) to the Secretary of State,” pp. 582-83.

<sup>40</sup> DOS, 1963, Volume IV, Document 306, pp. 582-86. See “Memorandum from the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes) to the Secretary of State,” p. 584.

RFE-90 was not without consequences: the State Department report alarmed the JCS, "questioning as it did the basis foundations upon which MACV had set its counterinsurgency program."<sup>41</sup> Their concern was exacerbated by ominous developments in Vietnam. Following the demise of the Diem government, the elaborate South Vietnamese intelligence system collapsed, revealing itself to be corrupt and perfidious.<sup>42</sup> For the first time since the United States committed troops to the defense of the nation, American intelligence received candid and accurate reports from the ARVN on the progress of the South Vietnamese counterinsurgency campaign, largely free of political bias. The intelligence was alarming: the Viet Cong had far greater control of the countryside than the United States was led to believe; the acclaimed Strategic Hamlet program was in complete disarray.<sup>43</sup> As November unfolded, the Viet Cong launched a dramatic series of attacks on South Vietnamese forces. Reports from the State Department and the CIA to Presidential advisors were filled with gloom and foreboding.<sup>44</sup> Policymakers viewed MACV accounts of battlefield progress with mounting cynicism. Even the President was concerned about the deterioration of the war effort and toyed with the possibility of American disengagement.<sup>45</sup>

Kennedy's life, and with it the possibility of a dramatic shift in American policy toward Vietnam, ended abruptly on 22 November 1963. Word of the assassination of the President reached Washington shortly after one o'clock in the afternoon. The Army Signal Corp, who routinely monitored the White House switchboard, intercepted the frenzied telephone communications from the Presidential staff in Dallas and alerted the DIA of the demise of Kennedy. The DIA immediately informed McNamara of the tragedy (although the Secretary mistakenly believes that he was told by the CIA).<sup>46</sup> McNamara's response was, in the words of General Maxwell Taylor, "shocked disbelief."<sup>47</sup> Later that afternoon Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as the President of the United States. Four days later, on 26 November 1963, Johnson signed NSAM-273, directing a continuation of the basic Vietnam policies of the Kennedy administration.<sup>48</sup>

By December the counterinsurgency campaign had deteriorated to such an extent that the Army Staff, dubious of the endeavor from the beginning, became openly skeptical of the claims of progress from the command.<sup>49</sup> When confronted with unequivocal evidence that the war effort was atrophying,

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<sup>41</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> The revelation brings to mind an anecdote recounted by Roger Hilsman: "Ah, les statistiques," said a Vietnamese general to an American official. "We Vietnamese can give him [McNamara] all he wants. If you want then to go up, they will go up. If you want them to go down, they will go down." Quoted in Hilsman, *To Move A Nation*, p. 532.

<sup>43</sup> See Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 363; and Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, pp. 92, 373. Sheehan remarks that prior to November 1963 the protagonist of his work, the inscrutable John Paul Vann, regularly subtracted 50 percent from the kill estimates supplied to him by the ARVN as "exaggerations." His unconventional methodology proved to be reasonably accurate. In contrast, the DIA accepted the estimates *prima facie*.

<sup>44</sup> See *GPP(III)*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>45</sup> See Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 423-27.

<sup>46</sup> William Manchester, *The Death of a President*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967, p. 244.

<sup>47</sup> Maxwell Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1972, pp. 302-303.

<sup>48</sup> See Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, pp. 445-49.

<sup>49</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 91.

the military leaders in Washington started to distance themselves from MACV reporting. Apparently, the pressure on the DIA to conform to the command position eased. On 13 December General Carroll sent McNamara the most pessimistic DIA report on the Vietnam conflict to date. The report concluded that Viet Cong-initiated combat actions had increased significantly, and that the insurgents had strengthened their force structure and improved their battlefield effectiveness. The report commented that there were discrepancies between the reported Viet Cong casualties and the existing enemy order of battle. The implication was that the current OB was inaccurate, a conviction held by DIA analysts since the spring of 1962. The conclusion was grim:

In summary, the Communist capability to extend or escalate the insurgency has not been significantly negated. Available evidence indicates that while the Viet Cong have not made spectacular gains, they have prevented the RVNAF [South Vietnamese armed forces] from gaining effective control over much of the countryside. Communist safe havens, bases, and transient areas are available to them in North Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia.<sup>50</sup>

The memorandum is remarkable, aside from its sense of foreboding, in that it directly contradicted a report Krulak sent to McNamara in late October, a sanguine review of progress in the counterinsurgency campaign.<sup>51</sup> The situation in Southeast Asia had decayed to the point that Carroll, ever the prudent general, was confident enough to challenge both MACV and Krulak.

On 19 December McNamara personally visited South Vietnam to assess the condition of the theater. He left the country disillusioned: his suspicion that MACV was manipulating the statistical indicators, a suspicion fed by Carroll's memorandum of the preceding week, were confirmed during the brief tour. Two days later, he wrote President Johnson:

Viet Cong progress has been great during the period since the coup, with my best guess being that the situation has in fact been deteriorating in the countryside since July to a far greater extent than we realized because of our undue dependence on distorted Vietnamese reporting ... The situation is very disturbing.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, S-18982/P-3, "Memorandum from the Director of the DIA to the Secretary of Defense; Subject: The Viet Cong Improved Combat Effectiveness and Insurgency Posture," 13 December 1963. DOS, 1963, Volume IV, Document 366, pp. 707-10; also *GPP (II)*, p. 192.

<sup>51</sup> The report was titled "An Overview of the Vietnam War, 1960-63," and is summarized in *GPP (II)*, p. 192.

<sup>52</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense to the President," 21 December 1962. DOS, 1963, Volume IV, Document 374, pp. 732-35.

Although McNamara explicitly blamed the South Vietnamese for the erroneous intelligence, he noted that United States intelligence was also deficient, commenting, "As to the grave reporting weakness, both Defense and CIA must take major steps to improve this. John McCone and I have discussed it and are acting vigorously in our respective spheres."<sup>53</sup>

To correct these deficiencies, McNamara and McCone proposed to send a joint CIA-DIA team of intelligence analysts to survey the situation in South Vietnam and make recommendations. It is indicative of McNamara's despair with MACV intelligence that he advocated the proposal. He simply no longer trusted the MACV-ARVN reporting system and wanted an independent analysis of the region. When they learned of the proposal, the JCS immediately protested. In spite of the fact that the DIA was an agent of the JCS, the Chiefs opposed its participation in the survey. It was a matter of tradition: the Chiefs believed that agency analysts were not qualified to judge field commanders. Because of their vehement protests, McNamara acceded to the wishes of the JCS, yet he privately instructed McCone to proceed unilaterally with the survey. McCone then drafted a new proposal which called for a twelve-man team of CIA analysts to perform a comprehensive intelligence review of South Vietnam. Again the JCS protested: the new proposal appeared to establish an independent reporting system, undermining the authority of MACV. McNamara reviewed McCone's proposals, and reassured the Chiefs that this was not true. The JCS were not mollified and remained skeptical of the proposal. McNamara approved the proposal on 16 January 1964; thereafter the CIA team was assembled and briefed for its mission.<sup>54</sup> Although the DIA did not participate in the survey, the mission was still denoted to be a "joint" effort. The JCS sent a back-channel cable to MACV to advise them that the appellation was not accurate; it was entirely a CIA project.<sup>55</sup>

The "joint" survey team arrived in Saigon in late January to a wary reception. MACV provided little assistance to the CIA team and on several occasions hindered its efforts to collect information on the insurgents. As always, the military was protective of its exclusive prerogative to judge the war, and viewed the CIA team as interlopers. When the team returned to Washington to prepare their report, the Chairman of the JCS Maxwell Taylor kept MACV informed of developments through a series of back-channel cables. Harkins response to the third revision of the team's report is revealing, as it is illustrative of the perspective of military leaders on competing intelligence analyses during the Vietnam War. On 21 February 1964, Harkins wrote Taylor:

As a general comment this message [from Taylor on the draft report of the survey team] appears to be a combination of rehashing of old information previously reported, plus the reporting of unevaluated individual observations not necessarily in consonance with an overall analysis of the situation in a divisional tactical area. I am concerned over the disregard of the terms of reference for this group that is demonstrated by the scope of this report. JCS message 362-64 January 1964, indicates that the role of this group is to "assist in developing techniques to improve [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] intelligence collection." This example of unilateral reporting on matters outside their quarter and competency,

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<sup>53</sup> OSD, "Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense to the President," p. 733.

<sup>54</sup> See *GPP(III)*, p. 33.

<sup>55</sup> Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, pp. 374-75; and George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 215-18.

without the benefit of the advice of this headquarters and other interested agencies can only be detrimental to the achievement of a joint, inter-agency intelligence effort and more important, is likely to introduce misleading, if not incorrect, information into the national decision making process.

We have nothing to hide but do have updated info on many of the problems covered by the [less than 1 line of source text not declassified ] team report, and feel that such reports should be coordinated before being dispatched.<sup>56</sup>

This cable was indicative of MACV's attempts to challenge intelligence analyses which were not under its direct control and impede alternative assessments of the state of the conflict.

As the command feared, the final report of the "joint" team was highly critical of the American espionage apparatus in Southeast Asia. The report stated that there were serious "intelligence gaps" in the present system, concluding that the Viet Cong OB was probably understated.<sup>57</sup> This finding coincided with a DIA report of late February that acknowledged the need to correct analogous "intelligence gaps," particularly with regard to the flow of Viet Cong men and material along Laotian infiltration routes.<sup>58</sup> To correct the situation, the "joint" team report recommended the creation of an inter-agency intelligence component, comparable to the forsaken JEC. Surprisingly, in spite of rampant dissatisfaction with the present espionage system, the report largely was ignored in Washington. The fact that the DIA did not participate in the survey damaged the legitimacy of its findings, for it enabled the military command to dismiss the criticism as typical of cynical civilian analysts. Had the DIA participated, it might have been more difficult for military leaders to disregard its findings, for the DIA would have lent military credibility to the conclusions. But because the report was prepared by civilians the JCS spurned its findings, and McNamara, occupied by other matters, let the paper die. Thus the "joint" report was consigned to bureaucratic oblivion. For the DIA, it was yet another missed opportunity.

## A Pyrrhic Victory: USIB Reform, 1963-64

The shortcomings of American espionage operations in South Vietnam were symptoms of a deeper affliction: that of an intelligence community adrift, void of effective leadership. Recognizing this, and the perils it entailed, in December 1963 McNamara strove to resolve the matter of USIB reform once and for all. In accordance with the Joint Study Group recommendations, he attempted to consolidate military membership on the board by replacing the representatives of the military departments with the DIA. It should be remembered that this reform was intended to mitigate conflict on the board and enable it to take an active role in the management of the sprawling intelligence community. The

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<sup>56</sup> Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, "Telegram from the Commander, MACV to CJCS; Subject: CAS Survey Team," 21 February 1964. DOS, 1964, Volume I, Document 58, pp. 99-102.

<sup>57</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 215-18.

<sup>58</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, "North Vietnamese Support to the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao," 29 February 1964. *GPP(III)*, pp. 119, 158.

reorganization would not only enhance the power of the USIB, but it would increase the power of the Secretary of Defense and the DCI on the Board (as the potent military departments could no longer directly contest their decisions) and within the espionage community. In fact, USIB reform was yet another McNamara management tool; the centerpiece of his strategy to control the military intelligence organizations and, through them, the formulation of strategic intelligence estimates. Of course, the armed services swiftly perceived this threat to their traditional autonomy, and resisted the reforms with robust. Although the services had accepted the reforms in principle at the inception of the DIA, they fought specific proposals for implementation. As recounted in Chapter Three, McNamara discovered, much to his chagrin, that policy execution is neither foreordained nor inexorable. Rather implementation is simply another vehicle to impede or dilute disagreeable policies. Thus, despite its public rhetoric, the JCS privately continued to resist USIB reform. On this issue Gilpatric observed that the "services dug in their heels."<sup>59</sup>

McNamara met with little success. At his behest, the charter of the DIA was altered on 17 December 1962 to authorize the agency to coordinate, and where necessary provide finished intelligence and supporting information, all defense contributions to the National Intelligence Survey and the USIB.<sup>60</sup> These activities were centered in the DIA Estimates Office, which was fully activated on 2 January 1962. However, the military services ignored the DIA, and continued to submit contributions directly to the USIB. The services justified this practice as necessary to ensure that the judgments of the military departments were faithfully and accurately presented to the USIB (a variation on the versatile suppression of dissent argument). The military argued that the DIA, with its large component of civilian analysts, could not be trusted to integrate and impart military analyses because it was "liberal" and "gun-shy."<sup>61</sup> The services also claimed that the DIA could be easily swayed by OSD, that the agency might represent the interests of McNamara rather than the JCS on the USIB. An Air Force officer on the staff of ONE at the time, summarized the concerns of the services thus: "McNamara could get Carroll to tow the line."<sup>62</sup> A senior CIA official who witnessed the dispute dismisses these

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<sup>59</sup> Personal interview, Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>60</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 59. The National Intelligence Survey was an enormous (sixty chapters plus) encyclopedia detailing every nation on the globe. It contained terrain studies, ethnographic and demographic information, political and economic analysis, and military assessments. The Survey was commonly distributed throughout the American military establishment and to federal departments, and was continually revised by the intelligence agencies. The DIA coordinated all Defense Department contributions to the work. See McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 85.

<sup>61</sup> Confidential interview, former ASCI.

<sup>62</sup> Personal interview, Daniel Graham, 12 October 1992.

military explanations as a ruse to preserve military representation on the USIB, which he portrayed as "bureaucratic and particularistic."<sup>63</sup>

Finally in December 1963, with the situation in South Vietnam deteriorating precipitously, McNamara attempted to resolve the fate of the USIB reforms once and for all. He and McCone sent a memorandum to President Johnson on 21 December which stated:

Since the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) was created in 1961 to coordinate and supervise all intelligence functions in the Department of Defense (except those of the National Security Agency), it has been contemplated that the intelligence chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force would be removed from membership on the U. S. Intelligence Board at such time as the Director, DIA, had sufficient authority and resources to represent all the military services. Secretary McNamara and I believe that this change in membership on the Intelligence Board is now warranted in the interest of better management and more effective administration.<sup>64</sup>

The memorandum did not immediately reach the President. The JCS voiced strident opposition to the proposal, and asked McGeorge Bundy, who as the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs functioned as an informal gatekeeper for national policy papers, to hold the proposal for further consideration. After consulting McCone, Bundy consented. The JCS again presented their objections to McNamara, but the Secretary was unmoved. After a three day delay the Chairman of the JCS General Taylor informed Bundy that the proposal should now be forwarded to the President, although the JCS continued to express reservations. He noted, ominously:

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<sup>63</sup> Personal interview, Ray Cline, 13 October 1992. In one memorable interview with a general who served in Air Force intelligence during this period and was subsequently transferred to DIA, I was lectured on the value of the DIA's mission to coordinate and consolidate national estimates, and the need for greater compromise and accommodation within the intelligence community. I pointed out that the general had himself fought off the DIA's efforts in this realm in the sixties, bypassing the agency and submitting Air Force contributions to national estimates directly to the USIB. I suggested that there might be a contradiction between his past behavior and present perspective. He paused for a moment, then remarked, "As a representative of the Air Force, I was obligated to present the position of the Service to the USIB." I wondered aloud if all representatives of the armed services continued to honor this obligation, as they had in the past, was the mission of the DIA not doomed to failure? He replied that greater efforts must be made to emphasize the value of "joint-thinking" (that is, nonparochial perspectives). It is interesting that his personal epiphany did not occur until he was assigned to DIA late in his career. Yet another example of the veracity of the bureaucratic dictum of Arnold Miles that where you stand (on a given issue) depends on where you sit.

<sup>64</sup> Director of Central Intelligence, Memorandum for the President, "Proposed Reorganization of the United States Intelligence Board," 21 December 1963. National Security File, Agency File, Box 8, "Central Intelligence Agency, Volume 1," LBJ Library.

The individual Chiefs are not in favor of this action, preferring to keep their intelligence officers as members of USIB. In their discussion yesterday they decided to note the action being taken and indicate to the Secretary of Defense that they may desire to reopen the matter after a reasonable trial period."<sup>85</sup>

In effect, the JCS threatened to drag out a matter that had gone unresolved for two years.

The proposal went forward to the President and Johnson promptly approved it and set the implementation date for 1 January 1964. It appeared that McNamara had finally prevailed over the opposition of the military departments. The appearance was deceiving, however, for the JCS immediately attempted to reopen the matter. The documentary record is vague in this area, but it appears that the JCS directed Carroll to press their case to McCone. It is curious that Carroll assented: he was, in fact, weakening the authority of his own agency by supporting the desire of the military departments to retain USIB membership at the expense of the DIA. Yet this seemingly paradoxical act was consistent with his past behavior. Carroll was an Air Force officer first, the director of the DIA second. Whenever the interests of the military services collided with those of the DIA, Carroll tended to promote the former. Carroll proved to be a fine moderator, but a poor executive. He often became an advocate of the military departments rather than a disinterested intelligence officer. With the assistance of McGeorge Bundy (whose motives were unclear), Carroll pressed McCone to support the JCS contingency position: the armed services would participate on the USIB not as full members but "observers." The distinction was purely semantic. Although nominally termed "observers," the military departments would be allowed full participation in all USIB committee and subcommittee proceedings; tantamount to their privileges of the past. Any pretense to reform was, in the words of one Air Force general, "a polite fiction."<sup>86</sup>

McCone, after some thought, endorsed the JCS proposal. His change of heart is interesting: after all, he and McNamara championed the USIB recommendations since 1961. His reasons for abandoning his former stance at this late date are a matter of speculation; bureaucratic considerations were probably decisive. The alliance between McCone and McNamara was always fragile, being one of convenience. The two joined forces only when their interests coincided. McCone supported McNamara's drive to implement the JSG recommendations because the DCI believed they would buttress his authority over the intelligence community. This objective was especially important in view of the enduring struggle between the CIA and the Air Force over aerial reconnaissance. Despite President Kennedy's directive of 16 January 1962 that affirmed the primacy of the DCI in matters of national intelligence, the Air Force continued to contest McCone's authority. The friction between the CIA and the Air Force increased later that year, when Kennedy appointed Brockway McMillan, a Bell Telephone Laboratories executive who served on the defense committee of the Killian Technical Capabilities Panel in 1955, as the Undersecretary of the Air Force. McMillan was determined to break CIA's monopoly on the design and

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<sup>85</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Memorandum from Maxwell Taylor to McGeorge Bundy, 24 December 1963. National Security File, Agency File, Box 8, "Central Intelligence Agency, Volume 1," LBJ Library.

<sup>86</sup> Personal interview, Daniel Graham, 12 October 1992.

procurement of strategic surveillance systems. Under his direction, the efforts of the Air Force to wrest control of aerial reconnaissance from the CIA grew bolder. McMillan challenged the strategic authority of the CIA not only in equipment but in analysis. In 1963, the Air Force attempted to gain control of the national estimates on Soviet missile capabilities from ONE, arguing that it alone possessed the necessary technical expertise to coordinate and draft the influential assessments. In response, the CIA enhanced its scientific research and development capabilities by creating the Directorate of Science and Technology in August 1963. McCone hired the scientist Albert Wheelon to head the directorate. It was a daring move by the DCI: the new organization was an unmistakable assault on the missile expertise of the Air Force.<sup>67</sup> It added more fuel to fire. As the battle raged throughout 1963, CIA officials became uneasy with the prospect of a consolidated Defense Department representative on the USIB. Their apprehension was heightened by the dominance of the Air Force in the DIA; they worried that the DIA might be the Air Force in sheeps' clothing. The old fear of Allen Dulles was revived, that of a potent impenetrable military foe on the USIB. These officials urged McCone to oppose the JSG recommendation for the consolidation of military representation into a single DIA representative. It was preferable to preserve the status quo, they argued, in order to keep the military divided and relatively innocuous. In January 1964, McCone accepted this advice.

The JCS now had the support of McCone, Carroll, Bundy, and, of course, the military departments in their opposition to the removal of the service representatives from the USIB. Acknowledging the strength of the forces arrayed against the reforms, McNamara conceded the contest. It was not an easy decision for him to make, for it was an important cause, one in which he had invested considerable time and energy. But by 1964, USIB reform had lost much of its allure to the Secretary. The counterforce / no-cities doctrine, wherein putative NIEs on the Soviet strategic threat were essential, was in tatters. Time had shown it to be fiscally destructive, for the armed services tried to employ the doctrine to justify interminable appropriations for nuclear forces. (For example, the Air Force incessantly identified new Soviet targets and asserted that additional American nuclear weapons were required to strike the targets; if the supplemental weapons were approved and deployed, it was probable that the Soviet Union would respond with a comparable deployment, thereby generating new targets for the Air Force, *ad infinitum*.) The counterforce doctrine was officially abandoned on 6 December 1963 when McNamara sent a Draft Presidential Memorandum to Johnson that advocated a new nuclear doctrine that would come to be known by the acronym MAD, for Mutual Assured Destruction. The doctrine was a return to deterrence, forsaking the nuclear war-fighting doctrine. MAD was the result of computer analyses designed to answer Enthoven's timeless question, "How much is enough?" MAD postulated that a US nuclear force of four hundred megatons was sufficient to deter the Soviet Union from nuclear attack. Under the doctrine, each "leg" of the American nuclear triad -- land-based missiles,

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<sup>67</sup> Commenting on this struggle, Richard Bissell remarked: "Bud Wheelon, essentially, was battling to maintain the agency's influence in the reconnaissance programs, and also to have the agency designated by the NRO as the procurement agency for a lot of the payloads. The Air Force was battling for the exact opposite. They wanted to do as much as possible of the procurement and have as much influence as possible on the technical decisions and operational matters. And that was really the essence of Bud's continuing battles. What kind of program will receive what kind of funding? Who will be the procurement agency for this or that? And they went on, and on, and on . . ." Quoted in Burrows, *Deep Black*, pp. 199-214.

sea-based missiles, and bombers -- would carry four hundred megatons; providing the United States with three times the nuclear capability necessary to deter a Soviet attack. This excess capability was a conservative measure deemed prudent to ensure deterrence. The MAD doctrine targeted the more capacious "war-making capability" of the Soviet Union, rather than individual military and industrial targets.<sup>68</sup> The effect of this distinction on the American intelligence effort was profound. Under the discarded counterforce doctrine there had been a direct correlation between the size of the Soviet nuclear force and the US force structure, as each individual Soviet nuclear weapon was targeted by a corresponding American weapon. Consequently, the strategic intelligence requirements for counterforce centered on accurate and reliable assessments of the number of Soviet nuclear weapons and their precise location for targeting purposes. There could be no reoccurrence of the missile gap. McNamara recognized this, and perceived USIB reform to be a partial solution. It was his contention that the removal of the armed services from the USIB would reduce organizations bias from strategic estimates and improve precision. However, under MAD the American force structure was not contingent to the size of Soviet strategic forces; rather it was linked to demographic factors and industrial capabilities. Accurate strategic intelligence estimates on the Soviet strategic nuclear threat were no longer paramount to McNamara and his staff. There was little need for the putative and accurate strategic intelligence required for precision targeting. Thus the import of USIB reform to McNamara declined appreciably by 1964.

Moreover, the abstract intricacies of nuclear deterrence were overshadowed by more mundane matters. Events in Southeast Asia increasingly dominated McNamara's itinerary.<sup>69</sup> Crisis management demanded much of his attention; he often found himself reacting to events, rather than initiating them. At this time, the pressures on McNamara were enormous. In addition to crisis response, he was fighting the Pentagon bureaucracy on many fronts: pushing his Planning-Programming-Budgeting-System, MAD, systems control, and other organizational and management initiatives simultaneously. There was so much to do; no effort could be wasted. Given these conditions, it is probable that McNamara, recognizing the strength of the military opposition to USIB reform, simply decided that this issue was not worth the fight. Employing cost-benefit analysis (as was his wont), it appears that he concluded that the battle could not be won, that despite expending considerable time and prestige, his view was not likely to prevail. His predominant objective was to revolutionize the Pentagon: to introduce modern management controls, making it more efficient and more responsive to policymakers. Unfortunately, military intelligence reform was only a small facet of a much larger goal; a small battle in a great campaign. It was a battle that McNamara reluctantly conceded. As the Secretary once observed, "One can only slay so many dragons each day."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Civilians in OSD confide that MAD was adopted primarily as a policy tool to ward off military appropriations requests. The practical mechanics of the retaliatory force posture, which need not concern us, allowed McNamara to set a force ceiling of 400 megatons, and restrict military spending accordingly. In fact, for several years thereafter, the small Russian ICBM force allowed the United States to employ counterforce doctrine; not in rhetoric, but in practice. See Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, pp. 315-17; and Shapley, *Promise and Power*, pp. 187-201.

<sup>69</sup> Personal interview, Roswell Gilpatric, 23 July 1992.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Richard A. Stubbing with Richard Mendel, *The Defense Game*. New York: Harper and Row, 1986, p. 79.

As a result, the March 1964 reorganization of the USIB was largely superficial. Thereafter:

The Director, DIA, will represent on the USIB all elements of the Department of Defense (DOD) with the exception of the National Security Agency (NSA). However, the Military Departmental Intelligence Chiefs are invited and encouraged to attend as observers all USIB meetings which are of interest to them collectively or individually.

The intelligence chiefs of the military departments retain the right to express divergent or alternative views as they deem significant and to have such views footnoted in appropriate USIB documents such as NIEs, SNIEs, and Watch Committee reports. They are also encouraged to make such views known to the Board of National Estimates during the coordination of draft NIEs and SNIEs.<sup>71</sup>

In the end, the alterations were entirely semantic. The military departments retained membership on the USIB -- as "observers" rather than "participants" -- and kept the independence and prerogatives that they enjoyed in the past. They were allowed to submit intelligence assessments directly to the Board and express dissent in footnotes. More importantly, the armed services retained full membership privileges on USIB committees and subcommittees, where the actual staff work on the estimates was performed. Although Carroll was instructed in March to review the activities of the military departments on these committees and make further recommendations for reform, additional recommendations were never made. The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence of the Air Force at the time reflected on the reorganization years later and concluded that "nothing changed."<sup>72</sup>

The significance of the defeat of the USIB reforms cannot be overemphasized. McNamara's vision, however unrealistic, of a powerful USIB as the central manager of the American espionage community was shattered. So too was the promise of the DIA as the arbitrator of the intelligence elements of the armed services. Both proved to be will-o'-wisp; ephemeral illusions that dissolved before the cold reality of the might of the military departments. As a consequence there was no effective reduction of the military role in intelligence, which had been the original objective of the Joint Study Group Report. In fact, the converse was true: military representation on the USIB was increased by the addition of the DIA representative. The irony was poignant: it was intended that the DIA would reduce military influence; in the end, the agency augmented military influence. The agency was not the singular voice of the Defense Department, but another cry amid the cacophony.

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<sup>71</sup> See United States Intelligence Board, "Reorganization of USIB: USIB-M-315, Item 1, 4 March 1964," 16 March 1964; and National Security Council Intelligence Directive No. 1, "Basic Duties and Responsibilities," 4 March 1964. National Security File, Agency File, Box 8, "Central Intelligence Agency, Volume 1," LBJ Library.

<sup>72</sup> Confidential interview, former ASCI.

## One Foot in the Fire: Vietnam, 1964

The defeat of USIB reform left the intelligence community adrift; all the while the situation in South Vietnam continued to atrophy. A SNIE of 12 February 1964 concluded:

That the situation in South Vietnam is very serious and prospects uncertain. Even with U.S. assistance as it is now, we believe that, unless there is a marked improvement in the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese government and armed forces, South Vietnam has, at best, an even chance of withstanding the insurgency menace during the few weeks or months.<sup>73</sup>

A month later, the DIA ominously informed McNamara that recent aerial reconnaissance indicated that the South Vietnamese government was in control of far fewer fortified hamlets than it claimed.<sup>74</sup> In the spring of 1964, the consensus of senior American officials, both military and civilian, was that the insurgency campaign in South Vietnam was on the verge of collapse. A strategy conference at CINCPAC in early June marked a turning point in American policy towards Vietnam. The deterioration of domestic South Vietnamese politics -- the abandonment of social reforms, growing conflict among the leadership, and the proliferation of coup rumors -- led United States policymakers to reject further attempts to compel the military government to implement fundamental political reforms. Instead, policymakers decided to support the moribund government irrespective of the progress of the reforms. The only other alternative was to withdraw support from the South Vietnamese regime: in the end it was a Hobson's choice. As a consequence, the focus of American assistance shifted from the unorthodox pacification campaign toward a conventional military buildup.

Concurrent with this conventional buildup in South Vietnam, the American espionage agencies embarked on covert operations against North Vietnam. Codenamed Operation Plan 34-A, the program started in February 1964 and was scheduled to run for twelve months in a escalating series of covert actions, including U-2 and electronic intelligence collection flights, psychological operations (that is, leaflet droppings, radio broadcasts, etc.) and twenty sundry "destructive undertakings . . . designed to result in substantial destruction, economic loss, and harassment."<sup>75</sup> The operation, concealed from Congress and the American public, was supervised by an interagency committee in Washington (with the explicit authorization of the President and McNamara) and directed by General Harkins at MACV. The American intelligence community concluded that the operation had little chance of coercing North

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<sup>73</sup> Special National Intelligence Estimate 50-64, "Short Term Prospects in Southeast Asia," 12 February 1964. *GPP (II)*, pp. 8, 42.

<sup>74</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, "Status of Vietnamese Hamlet Survey," 17 April 1964. *GPP (II)*, p. 420.

<sup>75</sup> C. 2. (a), "Evolution of the War: Military Pressures Against Vietnam, Action and Debate, February - June 1964," *DODPP (IV)*, p. 5.

Vietnam to terminate its assistance to the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, the program went forward: a feeble act by the United States government, but an act nonetheless. As such it was emblematic of the mood of frustration and impotence in American policy circles at the time.

In early August the operation bore fruit. On 2 August, the destroyer USS *Maddox* was reportedly attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin by North Vietnamese torpedo boats while supporting 34-A operations along the coast of North Vietnam. The response of the Johnson administration was restrained. Congress was notified of the 34-A covert program (though not the role of the destroyer in the operation, which was to provoke North Vietnamese radar systems) and additional missions were authorized. Two days later, at 8:30 AM the new DIA Intelligence Support and Indications Center (a merger of the Office of Estimates and the Current Intelligence and Indications Center) received intelligence from the NSA (presumably based on SIGINT intercepts) that another attack on the *Maddox* by unidentified vessels appeared immanent. The DIA promptly informed McNamara and the new Chairman of the JCS General Earle Wheeler of the impending action. McNamara telephoned the President and advised him of the situation. Subsequently, it was unclear whether the *Maddox* was actually attacked by North Vietnamese forces: poor weather in the gulf impaired communications and added to the uncertainty of events. The DIA could not confirm if the *Maddox* or an accompanying destroyer, the USS *Turner Joy*, had been attacked.<sup>77</sup> In exasperation McNamara contacted Admiral Ulysses Grant Sharp, who replaced Admiral Felt as CINCPAC, and demanded a determination. Sharp tentatively concluded that the American ships had been attacked.<sup>78</sup> The President ordered an immediate reprisal. F-102 fighter-bombers from the American aircraft carriers *Ticonderoga* and *Constellation* subsequently bombed four North Vietnamese naval bases that harbored torpedo boats and an oil depot at Vinh. The administration did not publicly reveal the link between the 34-A covert operations and the alleged Tonkin incidents. In fact, in testimony before Congress McNamara denied that the two events were related, a claim he knew to be false. In the mistaken belief that the alleged North Vietnamese assaults were unprovoked, on 7 August Congress passed the infamous Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which granted the President broad authority to execute American military operations in Southeast Asia.

Armed with the legal authority to strike at North Vietnam, the JCS urged the President to order bold reprisals. The Chiefs advocated a comprehensive bombing campaign of North Vietnam in order to dissuade the communist regime from providing assistance to the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 240.

<sup>77</sup> DOS, 1964, Volume I, Document 272, "Editorial Note," pp. 604-5.

<sup>78</sup> In retrospect, it is doubtful that the American vessels were attacked. The circumstances of the conflict were muddled; and the sense of urgency in Washington exacerbated the confusion. Eight months later, when President Johnson complained about the American military establishment, he brought up the Gulf of Tonkin incident and pointed out how difficult it was to get precise information on what was occurring. He remarked sardonically, "For all I know, our Navy was shooting at whales out there." Quoted in Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 503.

<sup>79</sup> *GPP(II)*, pp. 203-205; and Perry, *Four Stars*, pp. 140-42. The hawks on the JCS were General Curtis LeMay of the Air Force, Admiral David L. McDonald of N, and General Wallace M. Green, Jr., of the Marine Corp. General Harold K. Johnson, the Army Chief of Staff, was reported to be dubious of the effectiveness of the proposed bombing campaign, and the Chairman, General Earle Wheeler was said to have reservations. However, both acceded to the views of the majority and voiced no formal dissent.

McNamara, who worried that the massive scope of the proposed campaign might incite a response from Communist China, preferred a moderate graduated approach, modeled on the American actions in the Cuban missile crisis. Again the DIA supported the position of the JCS. The agency assessed the most probable North Vietnamese response to the Tonkin reprisals to be an increased communist movement of men and supplies to the south.<sup>80</sup> This was certain to aggravate the precarious situation in South Vietnam, where the affairs of Khanh government were engulfed by turmoil. Dramatic actions were needed to turn the tide, the agency argued, and the bombing campaign might be a partial remedy. The argument was persuasive: at a White House strategy meeting on 7 September 1964 the Johnson administration reached a "general consensus" that air attacks against North Vietnam would likely be required within the next four months. However, the President accepted the prudent advice of his civilian advisors and postponed execution of the campaign.<sup>81</sup> The Presidential election loomed in November, and Johnson wished to portray himself as the candidate of moderation.

As the election approached, the disintegration of South Vietnam continued unabated. By now, the intelligence community was profoundly pessimistic about its prospects for the future. On 1 October 1964, a SNIE concluded:

we believe that the conditions favor a further decay of GVN [the government of South Vietnam] will and effectiveness. The likely pattern of this decay will be increasing defeatism, paralysis of leadership, friction with Americans, exploration of possible lines of political accommodation with the other side, and a general petering out of the war effort.<sup>82</sup>

As the DIA predicted, infiltration from North Vietnam increased significantly during the month of October.<sup>83</sup> The JCS continued to press for the implementation of the bombing campaign. Something must be done, they argued, to counter the increasing North Vietnamese support for the Viet Cong. Johnson reluctantly responded to their exhortations after the Viet Cong staged a devastating assault on the American air base at Ben Hoa on 1 November, killing four American soldiers. The President asked William Bundy, now the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, to draft political and military options for direct action against North Vietnam. The result was the NSC Working Group on South Vietnam / Southeast Asia. The DIA participated on the Intelligence Panel of the Working Group, with the CIA and INR.

The Intelligence Panel first met on election day, 3 November, when Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater with sixty-one percent of the national vote; the largest landslide in American history to date. The Panel assessed the South Vietnamese political situation as "extremely fragile," with the national government "plagued by confusion, apathy and poor morale" and the new leadership hampered.

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<sup>80</sup> *GPP(III)*, p. 192.

<sup>81</sup> *NYTPP*, pp. 314-16.

<sup>82</sup> SNIE 53-2-64, "Short Term Prospects in South Vietnam," 1 October 1964. DOS, 1964, Volume I, Document 368, pp. 806-11.

<sup>83</sup> See cable from Ambassador Maxwell Taylor, 14 October 1964. *GPP(III)*, p. 207.

by traditional factionalism. It was a fertile ground for insurgents: Viet Cong control of the countryside was slowly spreading. The future prospects were grim.<sup>84</sup> The Panel was doubtful that diplomatic and military pressure on North Vietnam would effect the conflict in the South. This assessment was based on the premise that the strength of the insurgency was derived largely from indigenous support. In the improbable event that aid from the North was withheld, the insurgency was likely to continue, albeit at a reduced intensity. The Panel suggested that the pacification and reform programs were essential if South Vietnam was to persevere and recommended substantial increases in American assistance in both areas.

The Intelligence Panel also examined the burning topic of the moment, the proposal to bomb North Vietnam. In this inquiry the intelligence agencies were influenced by the Sigma war games conducted by the JCS Joint War Games Agency in April and September. The simulations were, in fact, a test run for the Vietnam escalations of 1965; senior policymakers and military leaders participated in both games. The results were disappointing to American officials. They revealed that North Vietnam was surprisingly invulnerable to conventional bombing, even if executed on a massive scale. Moreover, in response the North could escalate the conflict at very little cost, by simply increasing its assistance to the Viet Cong. The bombing therefore provided no strategic leverage. It was also an ineffectual method to convey American resolve, for the actions of both America and North Vietnam were amenable to disparate interpretations. As the State Department official Robert Johnson, a member of the "Blue" (that is, United States) team, claimed that "the problem of communicating from one team to another a determination not to give in, or of intent to escalate the conflict, was evident in Sigma II."<sup>85</sup> The civilian intelligence agencies were skeptical that the bombing would be effective. The DIA was somewhat hopeful, despite that fact that its director, General Carroll, had participated in Sigma I on the "Red" (that is, North Vietnam) team, and personally witnessed the futility of the air campaign.<sup>86</sup> In the end, the Panel compromised, and concluded that bombing would injure South Vietnam, but not overly so.<sup>87</sup> Though ambiguous, by bureaucratic standards it was still a clear warning against the air campaign.

The JCS were incensed by this warning. Most of the principals supported the bombing proposal; the JCS desired an intelligence assessment to verify its effectiveness to persuade (or counter) the dissenters. Consequently, the assessment was promptly challenged by the JCS representative on the NSC Working Group Admiral Lloyd Mustin as being too "negative." The JCS persuaded the DIA to urge the Intelligence Panel to reconsider the assessment. A *Pentagon Papers* analyst reported:

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<sup>84</sup> *GPP(III)*, p. 212.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II*. New York: William Morrow and Co, 1986, p. 206.

<sup>86</sup> The Sigma I simulation was held from 6-9 April 1964. The Blue Team was composed of McGeorge Bundy, George Ball, U. Alexis Johnson, John McCone, John McNaughton, Maxwell Taylor, and Curtis LeMay. The Red Team was William Bundy, Earle Wheeler, Joseph Carroll, and Rollin Anthis (the successor of Krulak). See Prados, *President's Secret Wars*, pp. 204-06; Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, pp. 558-61; and Shapley, *Promise and Power*, p. 310.

<sup>87</sup> *GPP(III)*, p. 213.

Apparently as a result of these criticisms and their influence on other Working Group members, the Group's final assessment of DRV [North Vietnam] susceptibility to military pressures was somewhat modified. While continuing to emphasize that affecting Hanoi's will was important, the criticality of it was obscured by concessions to the possible impact of damage to DRV capabilities and by greater reliance on conditional phrasing . . . In general, the final assessment of DRV susceptibility to pressures was less discouraging than the intelligence panel's initial submission, although it could not be considered particularly encouraging either.<sup>88</sup>

The DIA again demonstrated its susceptibility to the political and organizational interests of the JCS. The estimate was notably deficient in failing to address the probable consequences of the bombing: it did not predict how Hanoi would respond to increased American pressure. It was a crucial issue, and the omission was startling. The Sigma war games offered the most likely response: North Vietnam would send additional men and material South. This was clearly not the response that the President and his advisors desired, which may explain why it was absent from the assessment of the Intelligence Panel. Now that senior administration officials were on board, the intelligence agencies were loathe to rock the ship.

In the end, the NSC Working Group offered Johnson three options in Southeast Asia, ranging from periodic covert operations to a sustained bombing campaign. On 1 December the President chose the "middle course," the moderate, graduated approach advocated by Taylor and McNamara. New 34-A covert operations were mounted by the South Vietnamese and "armed reconnaissance" flights by United States aircraft were authorized over Laos (under the code name YANKEE TEAM). These missions were supplemented by the clandestine bombing of infiltration trails in the Laotian panhandle (BARREL ROLL). The JCS were bitterly disappointed with the Presidential decision. They had hoped for the prompt implementation of the bombing campaign for North Vietnam; its execution was again delayed.<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, on 1 December -- in response to intelligence requirements from General Krulak's successor General Rollin Anthis (as Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Operations, Joint Staff) -- the DIA produced a country analysis of South Vietnam. What is noteworthy about the report is that in it DIA analysts abandoned a conviction that they had held since the establishment of the agency and expressed as recently as a fortnight ago: that the Viet Cong insurgency was an indigenous movement. The DIA reversed its established position, and now argued that the insurgency was a product of North Vietnam.<sup>90</sup> It was an analytic sea-change, with clear implications: the bombing of North Vietnam would degrade Viet Cong strength and capabilities. The timing of the turnabout is suspicious, coming as it did when the JCS were relentlessly advocating a massive bombing campaign of North Vietnam. Given the absence of evidence to support the curious reversal,

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<sup>88</sup> *GPP(III)*, p. 214.

<sup>89</sup> See Perry, *Four Stars*, pp. 145-47.

<sup>90</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, Production Center, "Cold War (Counterinsurgency) Analysis -- Republic of Vietnam," 1 December 1964. DDRS: 1990-3095.

one suspects the report was the product of political considerations rather than disinterested evaluation. Once more the DIA endorsed the policy aspirations of the JCS.

The American BARREL ROLL operations proceeded throughout November and December 1964. McNamara and his staff were amazed that the bombing missions elicited no public comment from North Vietnam or China. In the middle of December, defense officials asked the DIA to explain the dearth of response. The DIA observed that BARREL ROLL operations consisted of two missions by four aircraft per week, for a total of eight sorties per week over a vast region composed of thousands of square miles. Consequently, the communists were not able to differentiate between the meager BARREL ROLL missions and existing 34-A covert operations, which often employed combat aircraft. The agency concluded:

On balance, therefore, while the Communists are apparently aware of some increased use of US aircraft, they probably have not considered the BARREL ROLL strikes to date as a significant change in the pattern or as representing a new threat to their activities.<sup>91</sup>

The finding was important because it illustrated a fundamental flaw in the graduated Vietnam policies of the Johnson administration: that the enemy frequently did not interpret escalations in the manner that American policymakers hoped they would. The Sigma war games highlighted this dilemma, but the administration chose to ignore the lesson. The perils of gradualism were many. The other side did not use the same language, interpret events in the same fashion, and play by the same rules. The DIA's warning, like those that preceded it, went unheeded.

## Full Activation, 1964

Throughout 1964, the DIA strove to become fully operational in the midst of widening American intervention in Southeast. For good or ill, after June 1964 McNamara and the Defense Department were the preeminent players in Vietnam policymaking. The DIA was the principal provider of quantitative intelligence on the conflict to the Secretary and his staff. In addition, the DIA also monitored and assessed the Soviet strategic buildup, China's successful attempt to detonate an atomic bomb, the growing disorder in Africa, and regional conflicts in Malaysia and Cyprus. To meet the disparate requirements of these assignments three reorganizations were executed in 1964. On 21 March, the DIA Dissemination Center was created to coordinate the distribution of agency intelligence products. On 30 April, the DIA Scientific and Technical Directorate was established, mimicking and challenging the CIA's corresponding directorate. As previously noted, on 1 August the Office of Estimates was merged with the Current Intelligence and Indications Center to form the Intelligence

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<sup>91</sup> *GPP(III)*, p. 254.

Support and Indications Center (ISIC or DIAAP-2). The reorganization was noteworthy as it was the result of pressure from the armed services to improve the agency's capability to evaluate current intelligence and anticipate foreign crises. The new organizational arrangement made it easier for DIA analysts to monitor incoming cable traffic from the field -- traffic that had increased tremendously in the preceding two years, as American involvement in Southeast Asia deepened -- by abolishing the operational distinction between the current intelligence and estimates. This eliminated many of the complexities of inter-agency coordination and streamlined the reporting requirements.<sup>92</sup>

The advent of the ISIC marked the full activation of the DIA, an arduous process that had taken almost three years. In August General Carroll informed the PFIAB that:

All of the major organization transfers contemplated in the initial and subsequent organizational directives have been effected. We are therefore devoting our major efforts now to refinements in organization, plans, management controls, and intelligence techniques in order to improve our intelligence production, support, and management capabilities for the job ahead.<sup>93</sup>

PFIAB members reportedly were concerned that the services might attempt to replace the personnel and resources transferred to DIA, thereby offsetting the long-promised reductions in the intelligence budget. Carroll's answer, reminiscent of his testimony before the House of Representatives Special Subcommittee on Defense Agencies in 1962 (recounted in Chapter Three), was ambiguous and evasive. He asserted that there were savings in some areas of intelligence operations, increases in others, and refused to provide an aggregate assessment. Rather, he stated that further efforts by the DIA were likely to increase economy and efficiency, but doubted whether these actions would result in a reduction of overall manpower.<sup>94</sup> What Carroll did not tell the PFIAB was that an internal study group recently recommended a radical reorganization of the DIA. Unbeknownst to the board, Carroll personally commissioned the study in early 1964 to examine future organizational arrangements for the DIA. The director was concerned about the spiraling costs of technical intelligence collection and the escalating requirements for data processing systems. In May, the group recommended a fundamental reorganization of the functions and activities of the DIA. It was a remarkable finding: the agency was

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<sup>92</sup> The ISIC was composed of five divisions: Indications, Soviet Bloc, Eastern, Western, and Latin America. Three groups were established: Administration, Liaison, and Editorial and Briefing. See Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 102-105.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 108.

<sup>94</sup> Carroll: "... while savings had been effected in certain areas, these savings are offset by increases in other areas; further, that while the resources transferred to DIA were those identified some time ago, the workload being carried today was not the same workload that equated with the resources which were initially identified." Furthermore: "... it was now incumbent upon DIA to give added stress to economy and efficiency after essentially completing the period of organizing, manning and transfer of functions; and that while further economies will be forthcoming, they will not likely result in a reduction of overall personnel." Quoted in Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 110-11. These statements are almost identical to Carroll's statements before the House subcommittee in 1962. See USC (87/2) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, pp. 6772-73.

not yet fully operational and already serious deficiencies were evident. After deliberating the recommendations carefully, Carroll approved several superficial "structural refinements" but decided against a comprehensive reorganization, which he deemed "too disruptive." The DIA historian concluded that Carroll rejected the organization because, "More time was needed to allow the initial structural arrangements to gel."<sup>95</sup> To critics of the agency, this explanation is disingenuous. The agency had been in existence for almost three years: How much additional time was required? The decision should be viewed in the political context of the times, recognizing that Carroll was under considerable political pressure from the Defense Department and, more importantly Congress, to get the agency fully operational. McNamara, the JCS, and the military commands were eager for intelligence support on the conflict in Southeast Asia. Congress was impatient to achieve the long-promised savings resulting from the consolidation of military intelligence. None of the parties would view further reorganization and the accompanying delay and disruption kindly. Therefore it seems likely that Carroll, ever the shrewd professional, rejected the reorganization due to political, as opposed to organizational, considerations. It was a familiar pattern. Though many academics and professionals like to believe that organizational reform is initiated or rejected by purely objective factors such as economy and efficiency, in fact political concerns are most often decisive. Despite lofty rhetoric to the contrary, the DIA was no different from other government organizations. In the end intelligence, like agriculture and commerce, is an intensely political affair.

McNamara found himself encumbered by similar political concerns. Summoned before Congress in the summer of 1964, McNamara conceded that the consolidation of the military intelligence effort was far from complete. The question of whether the DIA would truly provide a more effective intelligence capabilities for the Defense Department remained unanswered. He observed that there were "divergent views" within the espionage community over the efficiency benefits of the DIA, but insisted that in the "long run" greater efficacy would result. McNamara reassured Congress that the "capability within the individual services for preparing detailed intelligence reports has, of course, been transferred to the DIA" and that the service representatives were being removed from the USIB.<sup>96</sup> The Secretary of Defense knew better: the claim was simply untrue. Yet had he told the truth, that USIB reform had been effectively abandoned, the implications would have been grave. For USIB reform was the singular achievement that McNamara, the JCS, and the military departments could (and did) cite repeatedly before Congress to justify the existence of the agency. If this claim was shown to be false, Congressional wrath would be inevitable. The legislature could rightly ask, What then had the DIA truly accomplished?

What had the agency truly accomplished? The question was surprisingly difficult to answer. Aside from several functional consolidations, in the three years since its creation the DIA had done little to reform the American strategic intelligence process -- the original intent of the Joint Study Group and McNamara in establishing the agency. By 1964, the primary vehicle of reform -- USIB reorganization -- was for all intents and purposes defeated. The agent of reform -- the consolidated military intelligence agency -- had repeatedly proved itself unwilling and incapable of managing the strategic

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<sup>95</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 110.

<sup>96</sup> USC (88/1) House Armed Services. *Hearings*, Washington: GPO, 1964, p. 221.

intelligence process. Defenders of the agency assert that the failings of the DIA during the order of battle controversy and the Cuban missile crisis -- its timidity and imprecise reporting -- were primarily the result of its lack of analytical resources. Yet the events of 1963-64 appear to refute these claims. Following the activation of the Production Center in January, the DIA certainly possessed sufficient expertise to objectively assess the state of the conflict in Southeast Asia. Indeed, the agency did evaluate nascent trends in the counterinsurgency effort, and repeatedly offered its pessimistic findings. In nearly all cases, these conclusions were rejected by MACV and SACSA; consequently the agency revised its position, typically adopting a more sanguine perspective. It is surprising that the agency was so amenable to the influence of both organizations: after all, the DIA nominally outranked both and possessed comparable intelligence and analysts. Why should the DIA value the judgments of MACV and SACSA analysts over its own? The probable answer, as this chapter has gone to great lengths to demonstrate, is that DIA intelligence assessments were subordinate to the operational and policy preferences of the military leadership. When military aspirations and DIA intelligence came into conflict, the latter consistently yielded. Sometimes the pressure to conform was subtle, like the back-channels; sometimes veiled, as in the case of Krulak's rebuttals of the DIA reports of August 1963; and sometimes blunt, as occurred during the deliberations of the NSC Working Group on South Vietnam / Southeast Asia. Yet the messages were identical: the DIA was allowed to exercise its evaluative function insofar as it did not conflict with the reporting of the commander in the field and the preferences of his superiors in Washington. For the most part, the DIA accepted its fate quietly, with neither protestations nor resistance. One can not fault the agency for the precarious situation into which it was born, nor for relenting to the powerful pressures placed upon it. However, the fact that the agency did not contest its fate, did not defend the judgments of its analysts, is a notable failing: one which demands our attention and disapproval. Like the young willow, the DIA survived the violent storms of Vietnam policy deliberations by yielding to the powerful gales of the military chieftains.

## Chapter Six

### Vietnam The Air War

The trials of Vietnam and Cuba in the early 1960s revealed a disturbing passivity in the DIA, a predilection to support the common military wisdom. Events in Southeast Asia in 1965 made this propensity more prominent: the commencement of the sustained bombing campaign of North Vietnam, codenamed ROLLING THUNDER, tested the ability of the agency to conciliate military tenets with disinterested analysis. The military departments, particularly the Air Force (whose officers, it should be recalled, composed much of the leadership of the DIA), were great believers in strategic bombing, contending that it was an effective means of destroying enemy military and industrial capabilities and rupturing national resolve. This belief was so fundamental to many officers that it was rarely questioned: in many ways it was an article of faith. God, country, and ordnance. Intelligence analysts, on the other hand, were not similarly convinced. They tended to be skeptical of the assumption that enduring aerial assault could force an enemy to the brink of capitulation. They pointed out that the evidence from the American bombing campaigns of World War II and Korea was, at best, inconclusive; at worst, unpersuasive. DIA analysts, many both intelligence professionals and military officers, were caught between conviction and judgment. Whereas the civilian intelligence organizations were consistently doubtful that the bombing campaign would have any effect on North Vietnam, the DIA was initially confident. This optimism faded swiftly as it became apparent that the aerial assaults were largely ineffectual. For the next year, as the JCS modified the campaign and groped for alternative program rationales, the DIA strove to reconcile its grave doubts about the potency of the air war with its inclination to endorse the operational aspirations of the military leadership. It was an impractical goal: the disparity between the JCS and the civilian espionage organizations was simply too great to overcome. In attempting to placate both sides, the agency ultimately satisfied neither. Moreover, in the process the DIA alienated the Secretary of Defense, who viewed the agency's attempts at accommodation as vacillations that revealed its pusillanimity. This chapter describes the events that led to this estrangement. The first section recounts the stubborn initial optimism of the DIA concerning the bombing campaign, despite the skepticism of civilian intelligence officials and policymakers. The gradual disenchantment of the agency in the face of renewed justification for the operations is detailed in the second section. The third relates the failure of air strikes against North Vietnamese oil facilities and the disillusionment of the Secretary of Defense

with the military leadership and its chosen instrument of intelligence, the DIA. The fourth section briefly describes a bitter legacy of the air war: the DIA's search for American prisoners-of-war. The chapter ends with an evaluation.

## Clinging to Hope: Rolling Thunder, Spring 1965

In the spring of 1965, a presidential decision on escalation in Vietnam, long-postponed, was imminent. As the decision loomed, tensions within the Johnson administration intensified. The President felt cornered. The critical decisions on bombing and combat troops were ineluctable. He, more than anyone else in the American government, clearly perceived the political risks present and the threat they posed to the posterity of the Great Society programs. He confided to his close friends:

If we get into this war I know what's going to happen. Those damn conservatives are going to sit in Congress and they're going to use this war as a way of opposing my Great Society legislation . . . They hate this stuff, they don't want to help the poor and the Negroes but they're afraid to be against it at a time like this when there's been all this prosperity. But the war, oh, they'll like the war. They'll take the war as their weapon. They'll be against my programs because of the war. I know what they'll say, they'll say they're not against it, against the poor, but we have this job to do, beating the Communists. We beat the Communists first, then we can look around and maybe give something to the poor.<sup>1</sup>

Johnson found himself in a dilemma: he believed that intervention was essential if he was to protect his administration from political attacks by the Right that he was soft on communism, yet such intervention might ultimately destroy his domestic agenda. In the end, it was a Hobson's choice: he thought there was no real alternative to escalation. This recognition (accurate or not) made Johnson bitter, and as he moved closer to a decision on Vietnam, he became more reticent, more insular. The circle of advisors from whom he sought foreign policy advice contracted. Consequently, the influence of McNamara, strong from the start, strengthened still further. Yet McNamara was now a compromised figure, his celebrated objectivity corroded, for he was increasingly affected by the demands of his constituency, the JCS. The Chiefs relentlessly pressed for bombing, and the Secretary, who had few alternatives to offer, grew more amenable as the situation in South Vietnam deteriorated. McNamara did not ask the DIA to examine the JCS bombing proposals. Echoing the circumstances of the fateful decision to send American combat forces to South Vietnam in the fall of 1962, the Secretary neither solicited the judgment of the DIA on the proposal, nor did the agency offer one. As in the past, the DIA had little effect on the formulation of defense policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 615.

Once again events outpaced due deliberation. On 7 February 1965, the Viet Cong attacked an United States military advisors' compound at Pleiku in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam, killing nine Americans and wounding seventy-six. Though the attack was not unprecedented -- it was staged by a company or less of local insurgents with no evidence of complicity by Hanoi -- the assault proved to be a watershed event. The Johnson administration was poised to strike the North.<sup>2</sup> The President promptly authorized a military reprisal under the code name FLAMING DART. Within fourteen hours, forty-nine United States Navy jets bombed targets in North Vietnam. This raid set in motion a succession of events that culminated in the Presidential decision of 13 February to implement a sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam under the now infamous code name ROLLING THUNDER. Despite considerable misgivings, McNamara did not oppose the operation. Tragically, when the exigency was greatest, McNamara set aside his war experience in the Statistical Control Division of the Air Force that demonstrated the limits of conventional bombing, and endorsed the military campaign. It was a telling action, for it showed McNamara to be the consummate team player. Though he had grave reservations about its prospects for success, McNamara was unwilling to dissent from the policy and so compromise his considerable influence with the President. In the end, the Secretary of Defense would remain on the team. "Bob is a company man," remarked his old friend Willard Goodwin, as good an insight as any into the former President of the Ford Motor Company.<sup>3</sup>

The approval of ROLLING THUNDER was primarily the result of the desperation of American policymakers. Its punitive program of "sustained reprisal" was supported by different parts of the government for different reasons. Numerous arguments were advanced -- some substantive, some not -- for bombing the North. Yet, in the end, the decision to implement the policy was the result of the dearth of alternative proposals rather than an act to attain a common policy objective.<sup>4</sup> It was yet another example of planning driving policy.<sup>5</sup>

The President, Secretary of Defense, and civilian advisors generally viewed the bombing as a political act, a means to communicate the American resolve to support South Vietnam to communist leaders. Like the naval blockade imposed against Cuba during the missile crisis of 1962, ROLLING THUNDER was seen as a limited military measure to achieve a diplomatic objective. This perspective was evident in a memorandum of 17 February 1965 from McNamara to the Chairman of the JCS

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<sup>2</sup> Several weeks later, a reporter asked McGeorge Bundy the difference between Pleiku and other similar incidents. Bundy paused for a moment, then replied, "Pleikus are like streetcars" (that is, there's one along every ten minutes). Recounted in Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 646.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Shapley, *Promise and Power*, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> See *NYTPP*, p. 344.

<sup>5</sup> George Kennan, a diplomatic historian of distinction, remarked on the phenomenon thus: "When, in a given military establishment, the idea of a possible war with a specific power is laid down as a basic framework for military planning, the months and years that follow see the emergence of many thousands of documents, and the holding of a comparable number of planning conferences, in which the presumed adversary figures as 'the enemy.' Gradually, but inevitably, as this long planning process runs its course, what was first considered a hypothesis insensibly becomes a probability, and finally attains, in the minds of those who conduct it, the status of an inevitability. When this happens, people find that they are planning and preparing not for a possible conflict but for one which they regard as unavoidable and inevitable, the occurrence of which is now only a matter of time." George Kennan, *Around the Cragged Hill: A Personal and Political Philosophy*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1993, pp. 226-27.

General Earle Wheeler. Commenting on the FLAMING DART reprisals (and by implication, its successor ROLLING THUNDER), McNamara emphasized: "Our primary objective, of course, was to communicate our political resolve. This I believe we did."<sup>6</sup> Years later the Secretary elaborated:

I had been an Army Air Force's officer during World War II, and I knew something about bombing. I never did believe bombing could win wars. And I didn't believe bombing could stop infiltration or destroy the war-making capacity of North Vietnam.

I did not believe it was likely we could win a military victory. I did believe that the military action should be used as a prod towards moving to a political track: to increase the chance of initiating or achieving movement on the political track.<sup>7</sup>

It is an interesting perspective; bombing as pedagogical experience. Wisdom and prudence are not the result of reflection and contemplation, but sufficient quantities of ordnance. As a polemical practice, it was remarkably simple: Why struggle with complex logic when a well-placed payload will achieve the same effect? The quotation is noteworthy because it sheds light on McNamara's motive in endorsing the bombing. He perceived it as one of two complimentary means (the other being negotiations) to resolve the conflict; not as an end as itself.<sup>8</sup>

The American military did not share this perspective. The admirals and generals perceived ROLLING THUNDER to be a conventional military operation to degrade enemy combat strength and capabilities. Though several officers referred to the bombing as a means of "strategic persuasion," for the most part this was mere rhetoric, to placate civilian concerns.<sup>9</sup> Most military men understood the bombing to be a routine military operation, and executed it with elan. The political aim of the

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<sup>6</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense to the Chairman of the JCS, 17 February 1965. *GPP(III)*, p. 333.

<sup>7</sup> McNamara interview, quoted in Shapley, *Promise and Power*, p. 323.

<sup>8</sup> Cyrus Vance -- who served as General Counsel of the Defense Department, Secretary of the Army, and Deputy Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam conflict -- later recalled: "I think that the great concern of the civilians, and again I'm talking in generalities, was particularly -- in relation to the North -- that if there was too large an application of force, that one ran the risk of bringing the Chinese and/or the Soviet Union into the war and this expanding the war, which is certainly contrary to the stated objectives and contrary to the interests of the United States. You've got to go back on this. I think that a lot of us felt that by the gradual application of force the North Vietnamese and the NLF would be forced to seek a political settlement of the problem. We had seen the gradual application of force applied in the Cuban missile crisis, and had seen a very successful result. We believed that if this same gradual and restrained application of force were applied in South Vietnam, that one would expect the same kind of result; that rational people on the other side would respond to increasing military pressure and would therefore try and seek a political solution. We did not sufficiently understand the North Vietnamese, nor what would motivate them; and I think that this is one of the great problems that faced us and the whole conduct of the war in Vietnam." Transcript, Cyrus Vance oral history interview, 9 March 1970, by Ted Gittinger, p. 11, LBJ Library.

<sup>9</sup> In a speech to Detroit Economics Club on 6 December 1965, Air Force Chief of Staff General John P. McConnell publicly referred to the bombing campaign as "strategic persuasion," and characterized it as "a heavily flexible tool in inducing the North Vietnamese eventually to accept [the President's] offer of unconditional discussions."

operation was rarely explored. The assumption appeared to be that so long as the enemy was swiftly subdued there would be no conflict between the disparate objectives. The perspective was similar to that of the French General de Boissdeffre, who remarked to his Russian counterpart in 1894: "Let us begin by beating them; after that it will be easy."<sup>10</sup> Thus did history repeat itself: as in the Cuban missile crisis, civilian and military officials did not share common objectives. As a result, ROLLING THUNDER operations would be impaired by misperception and controversy.

The absence of finite political aims also complicated the efforts of the American intelligence community to assess the bombing campaign. It was difficult to assess the effectiveness of an operation when there was confusion as to its goal. In any event, the opinions neither the CIA nor the DIA were solicited on the probable effectiveness of ROLLING THUNDER prior to Presidential approval. The President and his advisors made the decision with virtually no intelligence support. It was only after the operation was approved that the intelligence community was asked for a strategic assessment. The assessment appeared to be a mere formality: the decision to bomb had already been made and the espionage agencies could do little more than assent. In a tactful SNIE of 18 February, the intelligence community concluded that ROLLING THUNDER might cause North Vietnam to reduce its support to the Viet Cong. The estimate asserted, however, that this reduction in assistance was not likely to degrade Viet Cong strength and capabilities in the near future.<sup>11</sup> The SNIE was, at best, a lukewarm endorsement of the operation.

The cautious nature of the estimate was a reflection of the skepticism of intelligence analysts towards the bombing campaign. World War II and Korea had made much of the American intelligence community doubt the effectiveness of strategic bombing. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey refuted the notion that massive bombing had been decisive in the defeat of Nazi Germany.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, American strategic bombing campaigns during Korea failed to hasten the end of the war. To many intelligence analysts, the lesson of both conflicts was not to overestimate the consequences of strategic bombing. They were well aware of the fact that North Vietnam was not suitable for conventional strategic bombing. To be effective, strategic bombing should be conducted against modern industrialized nation with a fully developed infrastructure. North Vietnam was the antithesis of this archetype. The country possessed only sparse and rudimentary industry (the industrial sector was merely twelve percent of a Gross National Product of 1.6 billion dollars), with embryonic lines of communication.<sup>13</sup> In short, the communist nation was a poor choice for air attack. The American threat to destroy North Vietnamese industry if the nation did not stop its support of the insurgency in the South was a hollow one: there was little to destroy. Consequently, although they gave the JCS the benefit of doubt in the 18 February SNIE, intelligence analysts watched the campaign unfold with critical eyes.

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Kennan, *Around the Cragged Hill*, pp. 216-17.

<sup>11</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, SNIE 10-3/65, 18 February 1965. *GPP(III)*, pp. 277, 400.

<sup>12</sup> The survey is neatly summarized in Bruce Bobbit, Lawrence Freedman and Gregory Treverton. *U.S. Nuclear Strategy: A Reader*. London: Macmillan, 1989, pp. 38-57.

<sup>13</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 469.

ROLLING THUNDER was made public on 28 February, two weeks after President Johnson endorsed it. The first air strike of the operation was executed on 2 March, when American F-100 Super Sabres and F-105 Thunderchiefs jets bombed a North Vietnamese ammunition depot at Xombang. Additional strikes were performed on 14 and 15 March. Thereafter McNamara instructed the DIA to compile "a standardized and streamlined system of after-action reporting so that prompt and responsive analysis of strike results can be made available to those who require it."<sup>14</sup> For subsequent strikes, the agency compiled data from MACV, CINCPAC, and the NSA; assessed the results; and evaluated the effectiveness of individual strikes. These evaluations were disseminated to the White House and Defense Department agencies. In mid-March, Johnson routinized the bombing campaign. Air strikes were no longer authorized in response to specific communist atrocities, but implemented automatically and systematically. Targets were now selected in weekly packages with the precise timing of strikes to be determined at the discretion of the field commander. Consequently, DIA evaluations were standardized and disseminated weekly to the JCS and senior policymakers. The preliminary evaluations by the agency were encouraging and suggested that the recurring strikes had impaired communist capabilities in South Vietnam.<sup>15</sup>

In light of these sanguine assessments, senior military men were eager to expand the scope of the operation. They were led by CINCPAC Admiral Sharp, who had long advocated air strikes on North Vietnamese radar equipment and lines of communication (abbreviated LOCs; that is, roads and rail lines). In March, the LOC proposals of Sharp were adopted by the JCS and formally recommended to the President and the Secretary of Defense. In support of the policy, the JCS offered a February 1965 DIA analysis of Viet Cong attacks on the South Vietnamese railway system from 1963 to 1964 that concluded the strikes had effectively impaired South Vietnamese military operations. The JCS inferred that a comparable campaign against the rail lines of North Vietnam would yield similar results. McNamara and Johnson found the inference unpersuasive.<sup>16</sup> They rejected a discrete LOC program, but, in a concession to the JCS, allowed numerous LOC targets to be incorporated into the weekly target packages.

As a result of the routinization of the air strikes and the inclusion of LOC targets, by the spring of 1965 -- against the wishes of the civilian war managers -- ROLLING THUNDER had evolved from an exercise in air power dominated by diplomatic and psychological considerations to a substantive military campaign to destroy North Vietnamese military capabilities.<sup>17</sup> The military objectives had prevailed over the diplomatic. This was the result not only of the growing influence of the JCS over Vietnam policy, but of the recognition of Johnson administration officials that strategic persuasion had

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<sup>14</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense to the Chairman of the JCS, 17 February 1965. *GPP(III)*, p. 333.

<sup>15</sup> See *GPP(III)*, pp. 336-42.

<sup>16</sup> See *GPP(III)*, p. 341.

<sup>17</sup> See *NYTPP*, p. 398.

failed: North Vietnamese support to the Viet Cong continued unabated. Consequently, in early April the President crossed the Rubicon and committed American ground forces to offensive operations in South Vietnam in an attempt to stem the tide of insurgents.<sup>18</sup>

The intelligence community monitored ROLLING THUNDER operations with mounting apprehension. In early June it published a SNIE which explicitly stated what had been apparent to official Washington for several months: that is was improbable that North Vietnam would seek respite from the bombing campaign through negotiations.<sup>19</sup> Though all the intelligence organizations agreed with this judgment, they were divided over the military effectiveness of the air strikes. In general, the CIA and State Department believed that the strikes had not significantly damaged North Vietnamese military and industrial capabilities, while the military agencies -- led by the DIA -- were convinced of the converse. DIA damage assessments bolstered the latter claim, concluding that the aggregate result of the aerial campaign had "eroded national capabilities in such areas as ammunition storage, supply depots, POL [petroleum, oil, and lubricant facilities], power plants, and military facilities, as well as causing near paralysis of many facets of the national economy."<sup>20</sup> This 26 June assessment represented the pinnacle of optimism for the agency. July 1965 would be a month of disillusionment.

The May and June damage assessments belied the disquiet of many DIA analysts over ROLLING THUNDER operations. In early July the DIA collaborated with the CIA on an extensive evaluation of the consequences of the bombing campaign. The evaluation was distinct from earlier DIA reports in that it was not based exclusively on damage assessments but on an exhaustive review of all-source intelligence. The completed evaluation concluded that despite numerous B-52 bomber air strikes (codenamed ARC LIGHT) upon North Vietnam (combined United States-South Vietnam sorties totaled approximately 3,600 in April; 4,000 in May; and 4,800 in June), the ability of the communist regime to defend its borders, train forces, and infiltrate men and supplies into South Vietnam and Laos was not reduced appreciably.<sup>21</sup> The implications of the evaluation were obvious: the bombing campaign had caused considerably less damage than previously judged. It was significant because the two most prominent members of the intelligence community concluded that ROLLING THUNDER had little effect, explicitly refuting the JCS stratagem of strategic intimidation.

In what might be described as a *non sequitur de profundis*, the response of the JCS to the evaluation that ROLLING THUNDER was ineffectual was to recommend not the cancellation of the operation, but its augmentation. CIA analysts were bewildered by the proposal: as the prescription was clearly ineffective, additional dosage was foolish. Undeterred by the skeptics, the JCS pressed McNamara to expand the number of ROLLING THUNDER sorties from two thousand to five thousand a month; concentrating the attacks upon communist airfields, SAM sites, and LOCs (especially from

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<sup>18</sup> In a White House strategy conference on 1-2 April, Johnson changed the mission of the US Marine battalions at Danang from defensive to offensive. The decision is embodied in NSAM-328 of 6 April 1965. See *GPP(III)*, pp. 354-54.

<sup>19</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, SNIE 10-6-65, 2 June 1965. *GPP(III)*, pp. 283-84.

<sup>20</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, Summary, "Impact of Air Strikes on North Vietnam," 26 June 1965. George C. Herring (ed.), *Vietnam: National Security Files*. Volume III: LBJ Library, Vietnam: National Security Files, Special Subjects, 1963-69. Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1989, film no. 3, frame no. 319.

<sup>21</sup> See *GPP(III)*, p. 384.

China); targets previously restricted by policymakers apprehensive about provoking a Chinese response. The intelligence community was split along military and civilian lines over the proposal. The CIA maintained that if the proposed sorties were executed the Chinese might deliberately engage American aircraft over North Vietnam from airbases in China. The CIA thought the chances were "about even" that this might occur; State thought the chances were "better than even.," and the DIA and the service intelligence agencies thought the clashes were "unlikely."<sup>22</sup> When presented with these differences in judgment, McNamara and White House policymakers requested that an SNIE be prepared to evaluate fully the JCS recommendations to intensify ROLLING THUNDER.

It was a critical estimate. By mid-July, the sustained bombing campaign was perceived by President Johnson and his counselors to be ineffective: the looming political decision was whether to escalate or moderate it. The JCS vociferously advocated the former. Since the start of ROLLING THUNDER they had consistently promoted air strikes against the North Vietnamese LOCs and POL facilities, as the decisive blow to break the will of the communist regime. The CIA and State, and to a lesser extent the Army, were dubious of this claim. They believed that the strikes would be militarily ineffective and diplomatically perilous, and risked bringing China into the conflict (a concern shared by McNamara). Since the estimate was likely to influence the President's imminent decision to escalate the bombing campaign, its judgments were contested. The Air Force and DIA argued vigorously in support of the JCS, asserting that increased bombing would significantly injure Hanoi. However, by now many intelligence analysts found this claim unpersuasive. Even the Army and Navy, normally great believers in the use of force, were skeptical that further bombing would be effective. The DIA lobbied to persuade them otherwise. Banished were its earlier reservations on ROLLING THUNDER; for the purposes of the SNIE, the DIA embraced the escalation with uncharacteristic certitude. It was a curious, if timely, change of heart. Although the military circumstances in Southeast Asia had changed little, the political circumstances in Washington had altered drastically. The continuation of the bombing campaign was threatened. Military unanimity was imperative to preserve ROLLING THUNDER; individual reservations were set aside.

The estimate, published on 25 July 1965, examined three bombing options against North Vietnam: (1) additional sorties against purely military targets, (2) strikes against LOCs, and (3) strikes directed against POL facilities. It concluded that the extension of air attacks to military targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong area was not likely to affect the resolve of the government of North Vietnam. The estimate conceded that sustained bombing of LOC from China would probably have a serious impact on the economy of North Vietnam and make communist assistance to the Viet Cong more problematic; yet it would not have a "critical impact" on communist determination nor would it seriously impair Viet Cong capabilities in the South, "at least for the short term." Finally, it opined that POL strikes on targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area might cause some strains on war effort, possibly forcing the communists to consider negotiations.<sup>23</sup> In short, the SNIE concluded that additional bombing would have little effect; LOC strikes might cause some pain; and POL strikes might injure, but not

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<sup>22</sup> See *GPP (IV)*, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> SNIE, 25 July 1965, *GPP (IV)*, p. 25.

seriously threaten the communist regime.<sup>24</sup> In spite of the best efforts of the DIA and Air Force to the contrary, the Army and the State Department (strange bedfellows, indeed) dissented on the proposed LOC strikes. In a footnote both argued that bombing the targets was futile: they were expansive and remarkably durable, sufficient to support the war effort in South Vietnam despite the most optimistic results of American bombing. Yet both agencies reluctantly endorsed the POL strikes, the centerpiece of the JCS recommendations. In all, the SNIE came close to predicting that the intensification of the air war would favorably affect the situation in South Vietnam, in spite of the reservations of the majority of the intelligence community. More importantly, the estimate did not conclude that additional bombing would be ineffective, and so contradict the assertions of the military leadership.

The SNIE was sufficient for the purposes of the JCS: an endorsement of increased bombing; albeit guarded, but an endorsement nonetheless. Neither McNamara nor Johnson was impressed with the estimate. Ultimately, the President approved a modest, gradual increase in the bombing campaign. The JCS were disappointed by this result for they believed the nascent policy of gradual escalation was doomed to failure. Many military leaders believed that the Army dissent on the SNIE had crippled the JCS recommendations. Thereafter, the Chairman of the JCS General Earle Wheeler implemented an informal rule of unanimity and mutual accommodation among the JCS. Dissent was discouraged in order to preserve unity of purpose. Whereas in the past, MACV had brooked no dissent, now the JCS censored itself. Individual reservations were to be set aside to assure agreement and prevent outside agencies from wielding differences within the military establishment to their advantage. The strategy was remarkably successful. According to one source, from 1966-68 the JCS split (that is, cast dissenting votes) on only two-thirds of one percent of all the issues they considered. In 1969, the JCS were unanimous on all but eight-tenths of one percent of the issues considered.<sup>25</sup> General Wheeler himself played down the rare dissents, recalling: "Insofar as the war in Southeast Asia, there hasn't been a divergency of views among the Joint Chiefs of Staff since the fall of 1964."<sup>26</sup> Thus the military hierarchy promoted unanimity at the expense of critical evaluation; evaluation that was by its very nature often a fractious process. Accordingly, DIA assessments which bolstered the command position were praised; the rare assessment which questioned it was censured.

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<sup>24</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 25. A former head of BNE, John Huizenga, remarked on the bureaucratic politics of the era: "In doing Estimates about Vietnam, the problem was that if you believed that the policy being pursued was going to be a flat failure, and you said so, then you were going to be out of business. In expressing such an opinion you would lose all influence. You'd be written off as unprofessional or irrelevant or some such euphemism." Interview cited in Ranelagh, *The Agency*, p. 455.

<sup>25</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 126. This rule was not unprecedented: from 1955 to 1959 the JCS recorded 2977 decisions; in only 23 cases was a dissenting vote cast. See Hadley, *Straw Giant*, p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> Transcript, General Earle Wheeler oral history interview, p. 15.

## From Negotiation to Interdiction: Growing Disenchantment

An important transformation occurred in the summer of 1965, a subtle shift in the American war objectives. At its inception, the primary objective of the bombing campaign was to bring Hanoi to the negotiating table. As it became apparent that this was improbable, a new objective replaced negotiations: that of interdicting the flow of men and materials from the North to the South. Strategic persuasion had failed; now the bombing campaign would serve conventional military ends. McNamara reluctantly endorsed this transformation.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout the summer and fall of 1965 the DIA continued to monitor ROLLING THUNDER operations and prepare damage assessments. Despite the shift in objective and a moderate increase in the number of sorties, it was apparent to agency analysts that the bombing campaign had little effect on North Vietnamese support to the Viet Cong. In mid-November the DIA informed McNamara that, "The air strikes do not appear to have altered Hanoi's determination to continue supporting the war in South Vietnam." More importantly, further bombing would be ineffective because "the primarily rural nature of the area permits continued functioning of the subsistence economy." In spite of the escalations of the summer, the DIA believed that the resolve of North Vietnam had not diminished, its military and industrial capabilities were largely intact, and therefore it was probable that the communist regime would continue to assist the insurgents in the South.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, the JCS advocated a sharp intensification of ROLLING THUNDER. They repeatedly urged the Johnson administration to authorize air strikes on North Vietnamese POL facilities currently restricted.<sup>29</sup> The DIA provided tepid support for these proposals, concluding (parallel to the 23 July SNIE) that POL strikes might cause some strains on the war effort and force the communists to consider negotiations. McNamara, aware that the charged political environment might be corroding the impartiality of the DIA, was skeptical of this intelligence and asked the CIA to duplicate the DIA study. Specifically, the Secretary asked the CIA to assess the probable impact of air attacks on the POL facilities of North Vietnam and whether the general escalation of the American war effort would appreciably change the course of the war in South Vietnam. The request was a watershed event. For the first time, McNamara looked outside the Defense Department for evaluations of the war effort. It was a sign of his growing disenchantment with the defense apparatus, particularly with the intelligence that the DIA was providing him.

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<sup>27</sup> In response to a request from President Johnson, McNamara reviewed and evaluated ROLLING THUNDER in July. In a memorandum of 30 July 1965, the Secretary of Defense set forth the rationale for the bombing as: (a) To promote a settlement, (b) to interdict infiltration, (c) to demonstrate to South Vietnam, North Vietnam and the world the US commitment to see this thing through, (d) to raise morale in South Vietnam by punishing North Vietnam, the source of the suffering in the South, and (e) to reduce criticism of the Administration from advocates of a bombing program. This document officially espoused interdiction as the program rationale. Office of the Secretary of Defense, Memorandum to the President, 30 July 1965. *GPP (III)*, p. 385.

<sup>28</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, Memorandum from the Director of the DIA to the Secretary of Defense, 17 November 1965. *GPP (IV)*, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> *GPP (IV)*, pp. 58-62.

The CIA's BNE responded to McNamara's requests by issuing two intelligence assessments, on 27 November and 3 December respectively. The first concluded that POL strikes would cause minor dislocations but no major military or economic impact. The second concluded that a general escalation of American military efforts would not palpably alter the insurgency. The assessments were by far the most gloomy to date. A *Pentagon Papers* analysts remarked: "The Board's [BNE] picture of Hanoi was one of almost unbelievably strong commitment and dogged determination, by contrast with previous estimates."<sup>30</sup> After he received the POL assessment, McNamara immediately sent a copy to General Wheeler, in a vain attempt to halt the torrent of JCS recommendations for POL strikes.

Wheeler promptly sent McNamara a Joint Staff-DIA study of the POL target system accompanied by a short personal memorandum which commented that the destruction of the POL system would force Hanoi into a compromised position which would likely result in negotiations. Curiously, the accompanying report did not support Wheeler's assertion. In fact, the study concluded the opposite: that it was improbable that POL strikes would seriously damage North Vietnam, causing only minor dislocations and obstacles.<sup>31</sup> It is not known if the Secretary of Defense or his staff noted the incongruity. It is known that Wheeler's comments caused McNamara to ask the CIA to explicate its earlier assessments. This, coupled with pressure from the JCS for an updated estimate, led BNE to prepare a new SNIE on the probable effects of bombing POL facilities in North Vietnam.

From the start, it was a contentious estimate. In line with the informal rule of accord, the military intelligence agencies were unanimous in supporting the position espoused by the JCS. Because the bombing campaign was widely perceived to be ineffective against North Vietnamese industrial and military capabilities, the JCS and its agents subtly modified their past position and now argued that bombing would be an effective instrument of interdiction and a means of destroying communist resolve. Where one program rationale had failed, it was hoped that another might succeed. Though the CIA and the State Department were skeptical of the efficacy of further escalations of the bombing campaign, it was difficult for the civilian intelligence agencies to refute both claims, as there was insufficient evidence to disprove (or, for that matter, prove) either one. It was difficult enough to measure the North Vietnamese supply efforts; virtually impossible to calibrate communist will. In the end, it was largely a matter of faith, and the military were great believers in bombing. CIA and State did not share that faith. Their interpretation of American bombing efforts in the Second World War and Korea made them pessimistic about its effectiveness in Southeast Asia. After considerable dispute, the CIA grudgingly supported the interdiction argument while it opposed the communist will proposition. The tactic was simple: calculating that it could not oppose the military on both rationales and prevail, the agency concentrated its opposition on one. Ultimately, the tactic was

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<sup>30</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 64.

<sup>31</sup> The *Pentagon Papers* analyst summarizes the report thus: "The Joint Staff-DIA study showed that NVN's bulk POL storage capacity was greatly in excess of what NVN required to sustain current consumption levels -- 179,000 metric tons available as compared with 32,000 metric tons needed -- indicating the strikes would have to be very damaging in order to cause NVN any major difficulties. They study also hinted that an adequate substitute system could be improvised, with lighterage from ocean takers and dispersed storage, but it nonetheless concluded that the strikes would result in 'a reduction of essential transport capabilities for military logistic and infiltration support operations,' i.e. as a result of a deprivation of necessary POL." *GPP (IV)*, p. 6.

effective. The final SNIE, approved on 10 December 1965, asserted that intensified American air attacks, beginning with POL facilities (and later including power plants and mining harbors), would not alter North Vietnamese policy, but might hamper its efforts to support the insurgency in the South.<sup>32</sup> Thus the estimate supported intensified bombing as a legitimate means of interdiction, but rejected any appreciable impact on communist resolve. The military were annoyed by this rejection, yet somewhat mollified by the endorsement of interdiction operations. They limited their dissension to a footnote, wherein the DIA, NSA, and the three service intelligence elements suggested that intensified air strikes, combined with the projected augmentation of American ground forces in South Vietnam might ultimately result in a change of heart in Hanoi:

... that as time goes on and as the impact of sustained bombing in NVN [North Vietnam] merges with the adverse effects of the other courses of action as they begin to unfold, the DRV [North Vietnam] would become clearly aware of the extent of US determination and thus might reconsider its position and seek a means to achieve a cessation of hostilities.<sup>33</sup>

The dissent is significant because it demonstrated that the DIA once again inexplicably modified its estimative posture, presumably under pressure from the JCS. Two weeks prior to the publication of the estimate, the DIA had been skeptical that POL strikes would effect Hanoi's military capabilities, yet alone her determination. Now the DIA asserted that North Vietnamese will might be destroyed through POL operations; a remarkable change over a mere fortnight. In the absence of new evidence or improved methodology, it appears that the DIA's change of heart was principally the result of bureaucratic pressure. The DIA succumbed to the military code of unanimity.

In contrast, the State Department rejected both arguments, interdiction and resolve. In a compelling dissent in the estimate the Director of INR Thomas L Hughes asserted that escalation would cause a stronger reaction in Hanoi than the SNIE posited, remarking:

The distinction between such operations and all-out war would appear increasingly tenuous. As these attacks expanded, Hanoi would be less and less likely to soften its opposition to negotiations and at some point it would come to feel that it had little left to lose by continuing the fighting.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The SNIE stated: "We believe that Hanoi's leaders would not decide to quit and that PAVN [North Vietnamese] infiltration southward would continue. Though damage from the strikes would make it considerably more difficult to support the war in South Vietnam, these difficulties would not be immediate. Over the long run, the sustained damage inflicted upon North Vietnam might impose significant limitations on the numbers of PAVN [North Vietnamese] and VC mainforce units which could be actively supported in South Vietnam from North Vietnam." See *GPP (IV)*, p. 66.

<sup>33</sup> See *GPP (IV)*, p. 66.

<sup>34</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 66.

Hughes suggested that, contrary to the belief of the American military, escalation is not a one-sided affair. Provocation by the United States might result not in communist capitulation, but in communist escalation. Hughes had learned the lessons of the Sigma wargames well. The Korean War had instilled many State Department intelligence analysts with a robust skepticism of strategic bombing. They recalled that the then-acclaimed aerial interdiction campaigns, "Operation Strangle" and "Operation Saturate," failed miserably. Between 10 August 1950 (one month after the start of the war) and 25 September 1950, the United States Far East Air Forces Bomber Command leveled every urban and industrial target above the thirty-eighth parallel in Korea (with the exception of several naval oil tanks in close proximity to the Russian border). Yet the war continued for three years. McNamara, never a believer in strategic bombing, found the arguments of the State Department analysts persuasive. He again rejected the POL proposals and pursued a more conciliatory policy toward North Vietnam by advocating a bombing pause.

By December 1965, McNamara, unbeknownst to nearly all government officials, was privately convinced that the war in Southeast Asia could not be won militarily. He had long been skeptical of the promises of the military leadership concerning the bombing, and embraced the campaign reluctantly. As the operation unfolded the Secretary grew increasingly distrustful of the reliability and accuracy of the statistical indicators provided by the military and disillusioned by the strategies pursued by his generals.<sup>35</sup> Nearly twenty years later, an evasive McNamara recalled that he was:

skeptical as to whether a military victory could be achieved and I believed considerable emphasis should be put on developing what was called a political track, which would lead to negotiations with the North Vietnamese ... The view that a political track should be developed to complement the military action I held early on and I don't want to put a date on it other than to say that it was probably as early as 1965 or earlier.<sup>36</sup>

He formally informed the President of his personal epiphany in a memorandum 6 December 1965.<sup>37</sup> Thereafter, although the Secretary of Defense continued to publicly support the policies of the administration, in private McNamara pressed Johnson for a bombing pause: a proposal fiercely resisted by the the JCS, who were convinced that it would ease the pressure on Hanoi without achieving substantive concessions from the communist regime. McNamara, nothing if not persuasive, convinced

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<sup>35</sup> The first indications of McNamara's change of heart were made known to the President in early March, when McGeorge Bundy informed Johnson of a private conversation he had with the Secretaries of Defense and State. Bundy wrote: "Last night for the first time Bob McNamara said what many others have thought for a long time -- that the Pentagon and the military have been going at this thing the wrong way from the very beginning: they have been concentrating on military results against guerrillas in the field when they should have been concentrating on intense police control from the individual villager on up." McGeorge Bundy, Memorandum to the President, 6 March 1965, Aides Files, LBJ Library.

<sup>36</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Robert S. McNamara, 26 March 1984, fiche no. 331, pp. 8-10.

<sup>37</sup> Robert McNamara, Memorandum to the President, NSF Country File, Vietnam Box 74, 75, File Folder "Vietnam LEE," Document 39a, LBJ Library.

the President to temporarily suspend ROLLING THUNDER operations in order to provide an opportunity for the communists to enter into negotiations. On 24 December 1965 Johnson announced a bombing pause that would last thirty-seven days.<sup>38</sup>

Four days later, BNE sent McNamara an explication of its POL assessment of 27 November. The report concluded that there was no probable combination of POL targets in North Vietnam that might be bombed to alter North Vietnamese support for the insurgency in the south.<sup>39</sup> The BNE report was in stark contrast to the SNIE disseminated two weeks earlier wherein the intelligence community, with the exception of the State Department, viewed the bombing favorably. Here then was the CIA's true judgment of the bombing campaign, unobscured by compromise and unencumbered by bureaucratic concessions. The JCS were shocked by the assessment, and promptly tasked the DIA to duplicate the study. The DIA hastily produced a report more favorable to the operational desires of the JCS, but not by much. The document asserted that the exceptionally high ratio of storage capacity to consumption allowed the North Vietnamese POL system "to absorb a high degree of degradation," and concluded that the dispersed sites were "relatively invulnerable." Oddly, the report then asserted that despite the near invulnerability of the system, the loss of storage capability at the Haiphong facility would be "critical to the entire bulk distribution system" and the destruction of the other facilities would produce local POL shortages and transportation bottlenecks until substitutes and alternatives could be obtained and devised.<sup>40</sup> In other words, the POL strikes probably would cause some unpleasant short-term disorders. This was hardly a ringing endorsement of the JCS recommendations for a POL campaign. The report is especially interesting when coupled with a strategic assessment issued by the agency two weeks later. In a Special Intelligence Supplement entitled "The Big Picture in Southeast Asia" the agency stated:

In conclusion, as the year 1966 commences on a note of increased pressures and power in Southeast Asia, there is a strong foreboding of greatly intensified combat and escalating political tensions. The continued US buildup will be recognized by the Communists that US determination is still strong and that the forces in Vietnam face a long struggle. Nevertheless, the Communists certainly believe that their motivation is superior, that lack of clearcut victory combined with domestic and foreign pressures will erode US determination, and that they can outlast the US in this contest -- even in the face of extremely heavy troop losses.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> It was the second bombing pause of the conflict. The first, from 8 May to 13 May 1965, was ineffectual: McNamara complained that it was hastily arranged and too short to be productive.

<sup>39</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Board of National Estimates, Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, 28 December 1965. *GPP (IV)*, p. 65. The report noted that POL strikes would cause dislocations, however: "Although there presumably is a point at which one more turn of the screw would crack the enemy resistance to negotiations, past experience indicates that we are unlikely to have clear evidence when that point has been reached. . . . Though granting that each increase of pressure on the DRV bears with it the possibility that it may be decisive, we do not believe the bombing of the Haiphong facility is likely to have such an effect."

<sup>40</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 68.

<sup>41</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, Special Intelligence Supplement, "The Big Picture in South East Asia," 13 January 1966. Herring, *Vietnam: National Security Files*, Volume III, film no. 4, frame no. 71.

Taken together, both intelligence reports represented a retreat from the agency's posture in the hawkish 10 December SNIE. A mere month after its publication, the DIA abandoned the twin foundations of the argument for increased bombing -- doubting the additional strikes would interdict the flow of supplies to the south and weaken communist resolve -- despite bureaucratic pressure to conform to the command position. This was nothing less than a reassertion of the DIA's analytical autonomy. It was largely lost on McNamara and his staff however.

The DIA's change of heart gave the CIA and the State Department the opportunity to overturn the 10 December SNIE. On 4 February BNE released a new SNIE that concluded that an increase in the scope and intensity of bombing, including attacks on POL facilities, would not prevent Hanoi from assisting the Viet Cong to a greater extent than in the preceding year.<sup>42</sup> In short, the POL attacks were not an effective means of interdiction. This time only the Air Force, its self-interest manifest, dissented. The February SNIE was an explicit reversal of the December SNIE, which postulated that the POL campaign might be efficacious. The bombing pause had strengthened the hand of the doubters on BNE, and weakened that of the true believers. The bureaucratic equilibrium appeared to be shifting. Both interdiction and resolution were refuted as plausible program rationales for continued ROLLING THUNDER operations.

This shift in opinion within the intelligence community coincided with the disenchantment of senior defense officials. During the bombing pause, McNamara and his top aide, the former Harvard Law School professor John McNaughton, wrote lengthy memoranda outlining their growing skepticism. McNaughton concluded in a 19 January 1966 memoranda that, "We are in an escalating military stalemate."<sup>43</sup> McNamara echoed this pessimism in a memorandum to the President on 24 January.<sup>44</sup> When the hoped for negotiations did not ensue, the Johnson administration resumed ROLLING THUNDER.

Subsequently, the JCS grew more strident in their advocacy of the POL strikes. Their cause was bolstered by a political crisis in South Vietnam instigated on 12 March 1966, when the Premier, Vice Air Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky, dismissed the powerful military commander General Nguyen Chanh Thi from his post. Buddhist monks and students hastily joined demonstrations, and Saigon was rife with coup rumors. The administration felt compelled to take action. Lacking other alternatives, McNamara

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<sup>42</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, SNIE 10-1-66, "Possible Effects of a Proposed US Course of Action on DRV Capability to Support the Insurgency in South Vietnam," 4 February 1966. Paul Kesaris (ed.), *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*. CIA Research Reports Series. Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1987, reel 1, no. 985. The conclusion: "The combined impact of destroying in-country stockpiles, restricting import capabilities, and attacking the southward LOCs would greatly complicate the DRV [North Vietnamese] war effort. The cumulative drain on material resources and human energy would be severe. The postulated bombing and interdiction campaign would harass, disrupt, and impede the movement of men and material into South Vietnam and impose great overall difficulty on the DRV. However, we believe that, with a determined effort, the DRV could still move substantially greater amounts than in 1965." The Air Force dissented from the estimate, arguing that the omission of psychological factors (that is, communist resolve) from the estimate resulted in a grave miscalculation of the overall impact of the postulated bombing program.

<sup>43</sup> Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, "Some Paragraphs on Vietnam," Third Draft, 19 January 1966. *NYTPP*, pp. 491-93.

<sup>44</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 473.

reluctantly referred the JCS recommendations for POL bombing to Johnson for approval. Johnson delayed a decision, as several international leaders were attempting to bring Hanoi and Washington to the negotiating table.<sup>45</sup> It seemed an inauspicious moment for escalation.

## The POL Strikes and the Disillusionment of Robert McNamara

As the POL decision, and with it the fate of ROLLING THUNDER, hung in the balance in March 1966, McGeorge Bundy resigned from his post as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Bundy was privately said to be disillusioned with the war in Southeast Asia, and left the tumultuous White House for the placid environs of the Ford Foundation. Bundy was replaced by Walt W. Rostow, Bundy's former deputy and the then director of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department. The appointment had profound implications. Bundy had acted as an informal gatekeeper for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, filtering and integrating intelligence and memoranda from government agencies for the encumbered chief executive. Under Johnson, Bundy's role grew more influential, for the President was indifferent toward the espionage community and rarely read unabridged intelligence assessments. Since McNamara often employed DIA intelligence to support Defense Department positions, Bundy, to preserve interpretive balance, became the informal champion of CIA intelligence in the renowned Tuesday Luncheons.<sup>46</sup> Above all, Bundy ensured that Johnson was exposed to the incongruous opinions of disparate organizations on controversial matters; that the President heard wide counsel before making a decision. His successor did not share this commitment to equity. Rostow, who had served in the Office of Strategic Services (the precursor of the CIA) during the Second World War and helped plan and evaluate the bombing campaign against Nazi Germany, was a staunch supporter of strategic bombing, forthright in his commitment to air power. He was, in the colloquialism of the time, a true hawk, and as the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs he displayed a commitment not to objectivity and discourse, but to ideological fervor and prejudice. He could always find the silver lining in the dark cloud; even if, as in the case of Southeast Asia, the ominous cumulation foretold a terrible eruption. After a grim briefing on Vietnam in 1967 by John Paul Vann, Rostow -- seeking light amid the darkness -- approached Vann and asked,

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<sup>45</sup> These include endeavors by President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Prime Minister Harold Wilson of Great Britain, President Charles De Gaulle of France, and Secretary General Thant of the United Nations.

<sup>46</sup> Personal interview, McGeorge Bundy, 21 September 1993. Ray Cline noted the significance of this forum and the importance of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs: "As the Vietnam War became more worrisome, Johnson retreated more and more from an orderly reviewing of evidence and systematic consultation. Kennedy had converted Eisenhower's methodical NSC process to a fast-break, executive task force process, which worked well if the President really focused on the problem. Lyndon Johnson further narrowed the circle of participants in the NSC to the principals, whom he began to meet at a weekly [Tuesday] luncheon -- Dean Rusk, McNamara, and Bundy, who was replaced later by Walt Rostow. There were other groups: but this was the critical policy forum, and intelligence did not have a place at the table." Cline, *The CIA under Reagan, Bush, and Casey*, pp. 225-26.

“But you do admit that it’ll all be over in six months?” “Oh,” replied Vann loftily, “I think we can hold out longer than that.”<sup>47</sup> As American involvement in Vietnam deepened, and the White House was beset by melancholy, an aide observed that Rostow’s relationship to Johnson was “like Rasputin to a tsar under siege.”<sup>48</sup>

Accordingly, Rostow immediately began to slight pessimistic CIA and State Departments assessments on Vietnam in the spring of 1966, while enthusiastically forwarding sanguine military estimates to the President. Optimistic DIA assessments were favorably received by the Rostow; gloomy assessments were often ignored. Accordingly, the JCS discovered a willing supporter and collaborator Rostow. As expected, Rostow endorsed the POL strikes with ardor. On 6 May, Rostow wrote Johnson:

With an understanding that simple analogies are dangerous, I nevertheless feel it is quite possible that military effects of systematic and sustained bombing of POL in North Vietnam may be more prompt and direct than conventional intelligence analysis would suggest.<sup>49</sup>

Soon thereafter, Johnson approved the POL campaign. Air strikes against targets in North Vietnam were scheduled for June.

To assist Pentagon planners, the DIA collected and evaluated intelligence on probable POL facilities. These efforts were temporarily disrupted on 12 May 1966, when an American aircraft on a bombing run over North Vietnam was shot down. The incident was promptly reported to espionage agencies in Washington by field intelligence collection stations in Southeast Asia. Available technical intelligence, in the form of radar tracking data, indicated that the American plane had inadvertently penetrated Chinese airspace before it was attacked. However, this data contradicted the personal accounts of the American pilots who accompanied the lost aircraft, which arrived in Washington an hour after the radar tracking data was received. The pilots claimed that the aircraft did not stray over Chinese airspace, rather it was engaged by Chinese fighters over North Vietnam. The discrepancy was serious: if the accounts of the pilots was accurate, the incident might result in a widening of war and a direct confrontation between the United States and the Republic of China. In recognition of the greater precision of technical intelligence, the CIA accepted the radar tracking data and dismissed the claims of the pilots. In reporting the incident to the President the civilian agency concluded that the American plane had violated Chinese airspace. In contrast, the DIA did not resolve the discrepancy between both sources, in spite of the fact that technical intelligence was regarded to be far more accurate and reliable than human intelligence, and issued a now partly-declassified intelligence assessment to the Defense Department which concluded:

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<sup>47</sup> Recounted in Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 774.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 763.

<sup>49</sup> See *NYTPP*, p. 478.

Based on information now available, the true picture of events is somewhat clouded. There are distinct discrepancies between [One line deleted] US pilot reports of the shootdown. Therefore, as of now, a true determination as to which side of the border the actual shootdown occurred cannot be stated with certainty.<sup>50</sup>

The failure of the DIA to resolve the incongruity troubled one agency analyst. Patrick McGarvey believes that the report should have emphasized that the discrepancy in the incident was between SIGINT and HUMINT and stressed the fact that the former was more credible.<sup>51</sup> He notes that this omission was another example of the propensity of the DIA to defer to a military department: it evaluated the word of the pilots to be equatable with SIGINT, a facile symmetry. It was a costly error. The Air Force Chief of Staff John P. McConnell read the DIA report and, unaware that SIGINT contrasted the reports of his aviators, publicly discussed the incident and categorically denied that an American plane had entered Chinese airspace. Johnson was enraged. He demanded to know why the intelligence provided to him by the CIA was at odds with the information provided to the JCS by the DIA. To exacerbate the error, the following day the Chinese government released photographs of the captured pilot and the wreckage of his plane, indisputably on Chinese soil. On 16 May McNamara informed the President that, "Careful re-evaluation of the evidence . . . leaves no doubt that the incident took place over China and was the result of a US intrusion into Chinese airspace. A US reconnaissance aircraft accompanied by fighter cover got off course and flew across the Chinese border."<sup>52</sup> Four days later, the Chairman of the PFIAB Clark Clifford confirmed this finding.<sup>53</sup> In all, it was a dangerous mistake: the DIA invoked needless confusion through a lack of precision. Fortunately, there was ample time to discover the mistake; unlike the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the exigency of events did not result in a precipitous American response.

Throughout June, while the United States military prepared to execute the POL strikes the CIA reiterated its skepticism that the operations be an effective means of interdiction. On 8 June, the agency concluded: "It is estimated that the infiltration of men and supplies into SVN [South Vietnam] can be sustained."<sup>54</sup> The POL campaign began in earnest on 29 June 1966, amid great fanfare. The Seventh Air Force, based in Saigon, praised the initial bombing strike, calling it "the most significant, the most important strike of the war."<sup>55</sup> The campaign continued throughout July and August. McNamara monitored the bombing through specially commissioned reports compiled by the DIA. The early reports were encouraging: by 20 July the DIA reported that almost sixty percent of North

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<sup>50</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, "Peiping Claims US Fighters Downed A Chinese Aircraft," 12 May 1966. Herring, *Vietnam: National Security Files*. Volume III, film no. 3, frame no. 943.

<sup>51</sup> See McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>52</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, Memorandum to the President, 16 May 1966. Herring, *Vietnam: National Security Files*. Volume III, film no. 3, frame no. 940.

<sup>53</sup> President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, Memorandum from the Chairman to the President, 20 May 1966. DDARS: 1991-589.

<sup>54</sup> The estimate, requested by the principals, was disseminated on 8 June 1966. See *GPP (IV)*, p. 104.

<sup>55</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 480.

Vietnam's original POL capacity was destroyed; by 1 August the figure rose to seventy percent.<sup>56</sup> The CIA was critical of the DIA intelligence reports, asserting that they tended to be myopic, focusing exclusively on the effectiveness of the strikes in destruction of some percentage of North Vietnamese POL storage capacity without directly relating this statistical information to industrial requirements and import potential.<sup>57</sup> DIA analysts themselves expressed frustration with the pedantic and mechanical nature of the intelligence reports, often citing the agency's truck inventory for illustration. Throughout ROLLING THUNDER, the DIA compiled and updated a database of the truck inventory of North Vietnam. The Air Force and the Navy regularly sent computerized reports to the DIA that specified the number of trucks observed on North Vietnamese roads and designated the vehicles as operable, damaged, or destroyed. These statistics were entered into the database and contrasted against figures of communist truck imports and repair capabilities in an attempt to predict exactly when North Vietnam would run out of trucks, and presumably abandon the war. Events revealed the methodology or the computer program was flawed (perhaps both). One analyst who worked at the North Vietnam desk at the DIA recalled that the truck inventory was reduced to zero seven or eight times during his tenure, indicating that the communists were out of trucks. In all incidents, it was at once apparent that the intelligence was erroneous, as numerous trucks were sighted on the roads in the North. When his superiors demanded an explanation for the error, the analyst explained that the raw intelligence, in the form of the computerized reports submitted to DIA, were summaries of the personal observations of American pilots during flights over North Vietnam. As such, they were highly subjective: it was difficult for pilots to discern and count the vehicles, as they were frequently traveling at high altitude at high speeds. Furthermore, there was a natural tendency for the fighter pilots to exaggerate the trucks they had damaged and destroyed to enhance their reputation and demonstrate their prowess. All things considered, the analyst concluded, the raw intelligence was unreliable and inaccurate. The analyst recalled:

The J-3 [intelligence element of the Joint Staff] would not accept reasoning which suggested the possibility of error in American pilot reporting. In reverent tones such arguments were rebutted with, "The data base indicates that the truck kill for 3 June was 182. Can you disprove that figure?" This kind of thinking prevailed in all aspects of the war which could be quantified -- body count, North Vietnamese infiltration, MIG sorties, SA-2 [SAM] missile firings, weapons captured, and pacification statistics.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See *GPP (IV)*, p. 110. By 1 August, the residual POL storage capacity had declined from approximately 185,000 metric tons to almost 75,000 tons; two-thirds of which remained in relatively vulnerable large storage centers (two of the sites were at airfields designated off-limits for bombing) and one-third in smaller dispersed sites. It was, in the words of the anonymous *Pentagon Papers* analyst, "a fat cushion."

<sup>57</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 111.

<sup>58</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, pp. 113-14.

As the summer progressed it was manifest to Defense Department officials that although a large portion of North Vietnam's POL storage capacity was destroyed by the bombing campaign, the nation retained a sufficient dispersed capacity (supplemented by steady imports) to meet its industrial and military requirements. Moreover, the remaining POL capacity was located in smaller, dispersed sites that were virtually impregnable to air attack. Assaults against these sites would incur a substantial cost in munitions, fuel, aircraft, and men. By August, it was evident to McNamara and his staff that the costs of attacking the remaining sites were prohibitive. It was simply impractical and infeasible to continue the POL campaign.<sup>59</sup>

Not only had the bombing failed to destroy critical POL reserves, but by early September both the CIA and the DIA concluded that the bombing failed to interdict the supply of men and materials into South Vietnam; that North Vietnamese assistance to the Viet Cong proceeded "undiminished." Furthermore, the two intelligence agencies asserted that there was no evidence of insurmountable transport difficulties from the bombing, no significant economic dislocation and no weakening of popular morale in North Vietnam.<sup>60</sup> In fact, in a bitter irony it appeared that North Vietnam actually benefited from the campaign. A SNIE of 4 August concluded that the communist regime was employing the American POL attacks as a lever to extract more aid from the Red China and the Soviet Union.<sup>61</sup>

For McNamara, the failure of the POL strikes to provide the United States with the decisive advantage the JCS had promised left him profoundly disillusioned. By September 1966, it was manifest that the POL strikes had failed, that they had not staunched the flow of men and material from the North to the South. To his mind, ROLLING THUNDER was thoroughly discredited and the grandiose claims of the JCS proven to be spurious. In the spring of 1965 the JCS claimed the bombing would bring Hanoi to the negotiating table; it did not. The JCS claimed that the bombing would injure the military capabilities of North Vietnam; it did not. The JCS claimed the bombing would interdict the flow of men and materials south; they continued unabated. Finally, the JCS asserted that the bombing would destroy the resolve of the communists; yet they persevered.<sup>62</sup> The POL strikes were the last major escalation of the air war recommended by McNamara. Afterward McNamara delighted in recalling the glaring discrepancy between the optimistic military estimates for the POL and the indisputable failure of raids to reduce infiltration whenever the Air Force and Navy pressed for further escalations.

As a consequence of this disillusionment, the Secretary of Defense was now a compromised figure. Publicly, he defended the American military effort in Southeast Asia; privately, he wanted to withdraw from the conflict. In December 1965 he had concluded that the war could not be won militarily; thereafter he viewed American military operations as a necessary evil to promote negotiations. By

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<sup>59</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 109.

<sup>60</sup> The Joint CIA/DIA Assessment of POL Bombing was released on 12 September 1966. *GPP (IV)*, pp. 6, 111, 354.

<sup>61</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, SNIE 13-66, 4 August 1966. *GPP (IV)*, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> In August 1966 the CIA issued the most damning indictment of the bombing to date. The memorandum, entitled "The Vietnamese Communists' Will to Persist" concluded that the resolve of the communists, both North and South, was probably greater than that of the United States. By all accounts, the memorandum had a profound effect on the Secretary of Defense.

September 1966 he had come to hate the bombing campaign as a cruel and indiscriminate tool of statecraft. Some months before, in March of 1966, when his disquiet was growing, McNamara had approached a group of intellectuals, academics, and social scientists and asked them to perform a comprehensive evaluation of ROLLING THUNDER. McNamara instructed his top assistant John McNaughton to supervise the project (an indication of the importance the Secretary attached to the study) and directed the forty-seven scientists selected for the study to explore the feasibility of constructing an anti-infiltration barrier across the demilitarized zone in Vietnam. The ostensible justification for the barrier was to stop the flow of men and material from the North to the South, but McNamara's real motive was more subtle, to take the rationale for the bombing campaign away from the military. That the Secretary was willing to take the dubious concept of an interdiction fence seriously, and examine its feasibility, was an illustration of his desperation to halt the bombing. The study was performed in secret from June to August 1966 under the aegis of the Jason Division of the Institute for Defense Analyses. The Jason Group submitted four proposals on the Vietnam war to McNamara on 19 August 1966 which stressed the ineffectiveness of the bombing campaign (including the POL strikes) and recommend the construction of an anti-infiltration barrier across northern South Vietnam and Laos.<sup>63</sup> The Group was particularly critical of the military intelligence effort. They suggested that the enemy body count was probably inflated, as were the American bomb damage assessments. The Group concluded:

The fragmented nature of current analyses and the lack of an adequate methodology for assessing the net effects of a given set of military operations leaves a major gap between the quantifiable data on bomb damage effects, on the one hand, and policy judgments about the feasibility of achieving a given set of objectives, on the other. Bridging this gap still requires the exercise of broad political-military judgments that cannot be supported or rejected on the basis of systematic intelligence indicators. It must be concluded, therefore, that there is currently no adequate basis for predicting the levels of US military effort that would be required to achieve the stated objectives -- indeed, there is no firm basis for determining if there is any feasible level of effort that would achieve these objectives.<sup>64</sup>

Thus the Jason Group implicitly condemned the mechanical methodology of the DIA. It was that last straw for McNamara; he had been repeatedly frustrated by the DIA intelligence throughout ROLLING THUNDER -- which he believed to be parochial and superficial -- and the predilection of agency analysts to modify their products in accordance with the policy aspirations of the military

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<sup>63</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 6. The anti-infiltration barrier was never constructed. Years later, with the full benefit of hindsight, Jason Group member Marvin Goldberg concluded that the barrier was naive: "It was part of our arrogance at the time to believe that if the system worked perfectly, the military would support us and abandon the air war. I learned then a fundamental aspect of the military mentality: Any incremental advantage is worthwhile. I regard this as a fundamental mistake that I made, and that all of the rest of the 'gang' made. It was the only thing that we could see to direct the war against combatants. But what we should have done when Mr. McNamara came to us with this proposal was to spit in his eye." Quoted in Gregg Herken, *Counsels of War*. New York: Knopf, 1985, p. 212.

<sup>64</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 120.

leadership. The agency's bungled investigation of the May 1966 loss of the American aircraft, the erroneous enemy truck inventory, and the consistently inaccurate bombing evaluations finally took their toll. To McNamara, the DIA was discredited. Consequently, he proposed to the President that a special bombing evaluation unit be created in the CIA, to monitor the progress of the bombing campaign apart from military influences. Johnson agreed and ordered the new DCI Richard Helms to form the element. McNamara recalled the decision years later:

[the] special bombing evaluation unit was established in the CIA at my request for just the reason that I have referred to earlier, I didn't believe the DIA was trying to deceive me on the results of the bombing, or for that matter, strength figure. But I did believe that parties of interest frequently looking at their operations through rose, what I call "rose colored glasses." That started in World War II, it has been true in every human enterprise that I've ever been part of -- business, academic, military; and I've always sought to have the evaluation of one's actions made by a person other than the actor. And particularly with respect to the bombing operations, I believed that we needed an independent evaluation. I asked the president for his permission to ask CIA to do that. He authorized me to do so.<sup>65</sup>

Thereafter McNamara valued CIA intelligence over all else. Beginning in September 1966 throughout the remainder of his tenure as Secretary of Defense, he met with the CIA officials in person every Monday morning to be briefed on the situation in Vietnam.<sup>66</sup> McNamara continued to read DIA products and commission evaluations, but was skeptical of the findings, believing them to be myopic and biased. The former Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric remarked:

McNamara has told me subsequently that he placed his principal reliance on information that came to him through CIA rather than through the military channels. He didn't have the confidence in military-generated intelligence that he did have in the agency. He read them all; saw them all, but he's indicated to me that his principal reliance was on intelligence that came from the CIA.<sup>67</sup>

The irony is poignant: McNamara created the DIA to serve his intelligence needs, but in 1966 he abandoned it. He judged that the agency had been compromised from the beginning, and could not effectively fulfill his intelligence requirements.

McNamara traveled to South Vietnam in mid-October to confirm his doubts about the war. The trip served its purpose only too well. On the plane ride back to Washington, McNamara was uncharacteristically taciturn. Two defense officials who had accompanied the Secretary, Daniel Ellsberg and Robert Komer, discussed the situation in Vietnam among themselves. Ellsberg argued that the

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<sup>65</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Robert S. McNamara, 26 March 1984, fiche no. 331, pp.87-88.

<sup>66</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 264.

<sup>67</sup> Transcript, Roswell Gilpatric oral history interview, 2 November 1982, by Ted Gittinger, p. 14, LBJ Library; and personal interview, 23 July 1992.

situation had deteriorated; Komer maintained that it was no worse than six months ago. "But it is worse," McNamara interjected, "because if things are the same, then they're worse, because we have invested so much more of our resources."<sup>68</sup> When he returned to Washington McNamara sent the President a gloomy report with recommendations for leveling off the American military effort and seeking a solution through diplomatic channels.<sup>69</sup>

The reaction of the JCS to the McNamara recommendation was, in the words of the *Pentagon Papers* analyst, "predictably rapid -- and violent."<sup>70</sup> The Chiefs urged the President to intensify the bombing and called for a full-scale mobilization of 688,500 Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine reservists to provide more personnel for Vietnam and augment American forces worldwide.<sup>71</sup> McNamara was opposed to any escalation, and advocated the anti-infiltration barrier as a substitute for increased bombing.<sup>72</sup> Determined to check the air war, the Secretary at last allowed the Whiz Kids, based in the Office of Systems Analyses (OSA) in the Pentagon, to perform statistical control assessments on the ROLLING THUNDER operation.

Thereafter OSA substituted for the DIA as the primary provider of assessments of the air war in Southeast Asia to the Secretary of Defense and his staff. On 6 October Systems Analyses fired the first shot in the bureaucratic battle to limit the bombing campaign. The office released twenty-eight "issue papers" which *in toto* argued that additional deployments of air power in Southeast Asia would not be effective. The JCS were enraged. They recognized that the thrust of the OSD analysis was to make a case for the barrier at the expense of the bombing, and were diametrically opposed to any diversion of resources to barrier construction.<sup>73</sup> The military attempted to rebut the OSA evaluations in a 4 November memorandum. Later the CIA issued a comprehensive analysis of ROLLING THUNDER which concluded that the campaign was politically and militarily ineffectual.<sup>74</sup> The estimate marked a turning point for the CIA. Thereafter, the position of the CIA on the air war was constant and immutable -- the bombing had a marginal effect at best -- irrespective of proposed escalations.<sup>75</sup> Thus analytical support for McNamara's opposition to the air war was provided by OSA and CIA; the DIA was no longer a player. For the rest of the conflict, its impact on the policy debate over ROLLING THUNDER was marginal at best.

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<sup>68</sup> Recounted in Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 768.

<sup>69</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 125.

<sup>70</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 519.

<sup>71</sup> *GPP (IV)*, pp. 128-29.

<sup>72</sup> *GPP (IV)*, p. 107.

<sup>73</sup> *GPP (IV)*, pp. 132-33.

<sup>74</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Intelligence Memorandum, "The Effectiveness of the Rolling Thunder Program on North Vietnam, 1 January - 30 September 1966," 7 November 1966. Herring, *Vietnam: National Security Files*. Volume III, film no. 7, frame no. 935.

<sup>75</sup> See Powers, *Man Who Kept the Secrets*, p. 174; and Ranelagh, *The Agency*, p. 454.

## A Bitter Legacy: The Search for POWs and MIAs

Though removed from policy deliberations, in 1966 the DIA inherited an important set of responsibilities derived from the air war: that of investigating and evaluating the reports of American pilots and soldiers assumed to be prisoners-of-war (POWs) and missing-in-action (MIAs) in Southeast Asia. Prior to 1966, the military departments (specifically the Secretaries) had the legal responsibility for making POW/MIA determinations for lost personnel under the provisions of the Missing Persons Act.<sup>76</sup> This task was complicated by the nature of the conflict in Vietnam: the armed services had little proficiency in classifying soldiers unaccounted for by guerrilla activity; their experiences and procedures were derived from conventional wars. In the absence of a formal declaration of war, the military services were unsure if the 1948 Geneva Convention applied to captured servicemen. This ambiguity was exacerbated by the semantic decision of the White House, motivated by political considerations, early in the conflict to refer to American prisoners as "detainees." In spite of these problems, in September 1963 the Defense Department began to compile information on POW/MIA in order to replace lost soldiers and determine entitlements for the family members of missing servicemen.<sup>77</sup> Before and during the 1965 American military buildup in South Vietnam the DIA established procedures for the collection and processing of raw intelligence relevant to POW/MIA matters by units in the field.<sup>78</sup> The DIA had only limited responsibility for analysis, the bulk of which remained with the military departments.

The expansion of the responsibilities of the DIA in this realm was a consequence of the increased loss of American servicemen by 1966. In July the agency assumed the chairmanship of the Interagency POW Intelligence Ad Hoc Committee, which enhanced its role in the processing and evaluation of POW information.<sup>79</sup> The task of the agency was facilitated by a coinciding Defense Department directive that stipulated "United States military personnel captured in Vietnam will be categorized as captured or interned rather than detainees."<sup>80</sup> Later that year, the JCS assigned the DIA primary responsibility for POW intelligence. Although the military departments continued to account for lost personnel and assess intelligence concerning the fate of casualties, the DIA supervised the collection of intelligence related to POWs. Accordingly, the armed services sent copies of their detailed weekly casualty lists to the DIA POW/MIA Office, where the information was collated with other sources (enemy news, captured documents, prisoner interrogations, and COMINT) and stored in files and databases.

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<sup>76</sup> USC (103/1) Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. *Final Report*, GPO, 1993. pp. 134, 139.

<sup>77</sup> USC (103/1) Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. *Final Report*, p. 134.

<sup>78</sup> USC (103/1) Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. *Final Report*, p. 136.

<sup>79</sup> The Interagency POW Intelligence Ad Hoc Committee was composed of representatives from the military departments, DIA, CIA, and the State Department. USC (103/1) Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. *Final Report*, p. 136.

<sup>80</sup> USC (103/1) Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. *Final Report*, p. 135.

The assignment was complicated by the failure of the military departments to establish a authoritative criterion for POWs. The legal authority to determine the status of missing servicemen remained with the services; each established dissimilar standards. Consequently, the DIA was forced to compile unofficial "working lists" of POWs. The military departments and the DIA often differed on particular judgments: the same serviceman might be listed by the agency as POW, while listed by his service as MIA. Inclusion on the "working lists" of the DIA was a subjective matter. Surprisingly, no written criteria or procedures were established, during and after the war, to determine POWs. It was an "analytical judgment."<sup>81</sup> This judgment was impaired by the failure of the agency to place formal collection requirements with the NSA for SIGINT related to POWs and the ignorance of DIA analysts about current Escape and Evasion symbols employed by American pilots solicit assistance.<sup>82</sup> Later, the decision of the White House to falsify "location of loss" information on American casualties to conceal military operations in Cambodia and Laos added to the plight of agency analysts in tracking prisoners.<sup>83</sup> Once again the DIA did not actively coordinate and manage the intelligence operation; rather it fell into a reactive, largely passive, role in deference to the efforts, however feeble and fragmented, of the armed services. It is not surprising that the families of missing military men were outraged by the the performance of the Defense Department and the DIA.

## The DIA and the Air War: An Evaluation

The final verdict on the performance of the agency in assessing the military and diplomatic effectiveness of ROLLING THUNDER is split. On one hand, the lingering optimism over the results of the bombing campaign is understandable given the military character of the agency. Later the agency adopted a consistently pessimistic position on further bombing, asserting that increased ordnance and additional targets were unlikely to have a significant impact on North Vietnamese capabilities and will. It was a gallant posture, as the political pressure to conform to the military aspirations of the JCS was formidable. On the other hand, such pessimism was ineluctable in the face of overwhelming evidence that the bombing was ineffectual. Moreover, the agency did appear to succumb to the influence of the military leadership on two critical estimates -- 25 July and 10 December 1965 -- during the period under consideration. Though the agency later recanted, by then it was too late: its credibility had eroded among civilian defense officials; the damage was done. McNamara subsequently spurned the very agency he had created in his search for impartial military intelligence and turned to the CIA to confirm his doubts about the bombing. Similarly, the JCS disregarded the agency out of fear that the agency, like its creator, had gone "dovish." In the end, the DIA voiced its apprehension over the air war to a vacant theater, for its audience had forsaken it.

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<sup>81</sup> USC (103/1) Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. *Final Report*, p. 137.

<sup>82</sup> USC (103/1) Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. *Final Report*, pp. 17, 24.

<sup>83</sup> USC (103/1) Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. *Final Report*, p. 17.

# Chapter Seven

## Vietnam

### The Order of Battle Dispute

As chronicled in Chapter Three, the communist OB estimate emerged as a conspicuous American intelligence dispute in early 1962. At that time, the DIA was compelled to draft the estimate in accordance with the desires of MACV; the agency offered surprisingly little resistance. Although further dispute surrounding the estimate for the most part was obscured for several years, in late 1966 the estimate assumed renewed prominence. General Westmoreland based his celebrated "search-and-destroy" strategy on an attrition methodology whereby American and South Vietnamese military forces would eradicate the communist insurgents at a greater rate than they could be replaced. As the OB was the central measure of the success of this strategy, MACV had effectively staked its credibility on a declining OB. Goaded by the skepticism of CIA analyst Sam Adams, by late 1966 much of the American espionage community was doubtful that the communist OB in fact was declining, despite recurrent assessments of MACV to the contrary. The implications were clear: victory was not imminent. Accordingly, for a military intelligence agency to doubt the accuracy of the official MACV OB was tantamount to heresy. Yet events in 1967 compelled the DIA, in the name of analytic veracity, to do just that. It was in many ways the great moment of truth for the agency. Could the DIA -- now in its sixth year of existence -- effectively challenge the prevailing powers of the American military establishment? Or was the agency consigned to secondary status, a perennial dwarf among giants? As men are defined by great trials, so too are organizations. Respect and trust are attained not through departmental directive, but bold words and deeds. In 1967, the DIA was given a rare opportunity to compensate for past failures; a chance at redemption. Its failure to seize the occasion is recounted in this chapter. The first section reviews the importance of the OB, its evolution, and the considerable doubts that came to be associated with it. The following section explores the efforts of MACV to quell the mounting apprehension of its peers and reassert primacy over the estimate. The third details the disillusionment and dismissal of Robert McNamara; his hopes for the DIA and the future of military intelligence destroyed. The fourth section examines the ignominious contribution of the DIA to the capture of the *USS Pueblo* by North Korea. The fifth section recounts the Tet Offensive, the fallibility of the MACV, and the tempestuous search for a precise OB. The actions of the DIA are shown to be Protean, marked by inconstancy and irresolution.

## Anxiety over the Enemy Order of Battle

In the spring of 1965, the counterinsurgency campaign in South Vietnam was going badly. The Viet Cong were growing in strength and boldness, and the military efforts of the Army of South Vietnam were hampered by political disorder. Many intelligence analysts, particularly those of the civilian organizations, thought it unlikely that the situation could be soon reversed. It did not believe that the domestic political conditions would improve in the coming months; thus the nation would remain bereft of the political stability necessary for a successful counterinsurgency campaign.<sup>1</sup> When it became apparent that ROLLING THUNDER would neither bring North Vietnam to the negotiating table nor deter it from supporting the Viet Cong, the JCS lobbied the President to allow American troops in South Vietnam to mount offensive operations in support of the South Vietnamese Army. On 1 April 1965, Johnson agreed to this proposal and committed additional American troops to Southeast Asia to augment the two United States Marine Corp battalions at Danang.<sup>2</sup> DCI John McCone resigned thereafter, believing that his influence with the President had reached its nadir. The intelligence community judged that the decision would have little effect on the battlefield. In an assessment prepared with the assistance of the CIA and INR, on 21 April the DIA opined that the large-scale introduction of US ground forces into South Vietnam would not initially cause the enemy to pull back. The new DCI William Raborn shared this judgment.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the deployment went ahead.

The military leadership was not content with the additional forces approved by the President. The JCS and the new American commander in Vietnam General William Westmoreland petitioned Johnson for further forces to implement a new strategy in Vietnam. They wished to abandon the static enclave strategy for a more aggressive posture. Johnson was initially hesitant to approve the revision, for the bold strategy was likely to result in greater American casualties. The position of McNamara on the recommendation is unclear. An anonymous *Pentagon Papers* analyst observed:

It is difficult to be precise about the position of the Secretary of Defense during the build-up debate because there is so little of him in the files. There are plenty of other indications in the files that the Secretary was very carefully and personally insuring that the Defense Establishment was ready to provide efficient and sufficient support to the fighting elements in Vietnam. From the records, the Secretary comes out much more clearly for good management than he does for any particular strategy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, SNIE 53-65, "Short Term Prospects in South Vietnam," 4 February 1965. *GPP (III)*, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> *GPP (III)*, p.16. The President's decision is embodied in NSAM 328 of 1 April 1965.

<sup>3</sup> CIA-DIA Memorandum, "An Assessment of Present VC Military Capabilities," 21 April 1965. *GPP (III)* p.410; Central Intelligence Agency, Director of Central Intelligence William Raborn to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, 6 May 1965. DDRS: 1989-3207.

<sup>4</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 415.

Events in Southeast Asia buttressed the recommendation of the JCS. In June the DIA reported that the Viet Cong had started the anticipated summer campaign. The insurgents mounted regiment size attacks against South Vietnamese forces and casualties multiplied on both sides.<sup>5</sup> The South Vietnamese military was ill-prepared to meet these assaults, and labored to meet the growing challenge. Washington watched the situation with alarm.

By July, the plight of South Vietnam was desperate. President Johnson reluctantly approved the deployment of forty-four United States combat battalions to Vietnam and endorsed the aggressive "search-and-destroy" strategy of General Westmoreland. With the change of command in Saigon, a new MACV intelligence chief was appointed, General Joseph McChristian. For the preceding two years McChristian had served as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence for ARPAC. He approached his new assignment warily, for he was knowledgeable about the dispute over the communist OB and skeptical of the sanguine intelligence disseminated by MACV. Prior to his departure for Saigon, the Army Chief of Staff General Harold K Johnson instructed him to "Find the enemy."<sup>6</sup> McChristian arrived in Saigon on 13 July 1965, to an unexpected welcome. General Carroll, in Southeast Asia to review Defense Department intelligence requirements, greeted him and informed him that McNamara would arrive in Vietnam in three days later to assess the resources needed by American personnel to transform their role from that of war advisors to participants.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, McChristian and Carroll were briefed by the chief of intelligence production at MACV Colonel William H. Crosson. McChristian recalls that Crosson "told me that he could not write a valid estimate of enemy capabilities and vulnerabilities because intelligence available was neither timely nor adequate and we were unable to evaluate much of it accurately."<sup>8</sup> Thus the OB reemerged as the critical intelligence issue of ground war.

McChristian took immediate steps to separate intelligence from operations within the command, and thereby reduce the influence of operation bias on intelligence production. Within a week, the Viet Cong OB was revised, retroactive from 17 March 1965. Within the OB, the most significant category, regular communist combatants, was increased from 37,000 to 53,000.<sup>9</sup> The alteration was reminiscent of the revision of the OB made by then-Ambassador Maxwell Taylor almost precisely one year before. On 15 July 1964 Taylor raised the Viet Cong OB from 28,000 to 34,000. In a cable to Washington at the time he explained:

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<sup>5</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, Intelligence Report, "Casualties High in South Vietnam as Viet Cong Activities Increase," 2 June 1965; Defense Intelligence Agency, Intelligence Report, "DIA Report on Viet Cong Activities," 17 June 1965. George C. Herring (ed.), *Vietnam: National Security Files*. Volume II: Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Vietnam: National Security Files, November 1963 -- June 1965. Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1989, film no. 17, frame no. 41; and film no. 17, frame no. 703.

<sup>6</sup> McChristian, *Military Intelligence*, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> McChristian, *Military Intelligence*, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> McChristian, *Military Intelligence*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> *GPP(III)*, pp. 276, 406, 441.

This is not a sudden or dramatic increase but rather the acceptance of the existence of units suspected for two or three years for which confirmatory evidence has become available only in the last few months.

This increased estimate of enemy strength and recent upward trend in VC activity in the North should not occasion over-concern. We have been coping with this strength for some time without being accurately aware of its dimensions.<sup>10</sup>

One year later McChristian offered a similar explanation. Due to the use of a new OB methodology and increased infiltration from the North, by November the number of regular forces in the Viet Cong OB swelled to 63,550.<sup>11</sup> The precise size of the so-called "irregulars" (that is, combined guerrilla, self-defense, and secret self-defense forces) remained unknown, but was estimated to be approximately 100,000.

In Washington General Carroll instructed his analysts to assist the efforts of McChristian and MACV to assess the communist build-up. For the most part, this assistance centered on the compilation of the Viet Cong OB. The estimate was by then the primary indicator of the progress of the ground war. This was due in part to the unconventional nature of the war. The fluid character of the guerrilla conflict militated against the use of conventional measures of battlefield success, land held and cities captured. The results of guerrilla combat were more ambiguous; consequently, judgments were more subjective:

Since progress could not be measured by such traditional yardsticks as miles gained or cities won or armies destroyed, both Secretary of Defense McNamara and the upper echelon of his military followers sought other ways to compute the relative advantage of the United States over its adversaries . . . The "solution," acclaimed by both military and civilian parties, was to apply statistics to the battlefield: search for significant factors that would lend themselves to statistical manipulation; tabulate relative position semiannually, or monthly, or weekly, or daily, or hourly, then do it again and compare results with those previously determined.<sup>12</sup>

The ascendancy of the OB as a meter of progress can also be attributed in part to emphasis on quantification in the Defense Department during the nineteen-sixties. The predilection to quantify the war effort, which would later become a celebrated *idée fixe* among the military brass, is commonly blamed on McNamara and his civilian staff. Critics allege that the Secretary was only receptive to military operations and policy proposals couched in numbers, his language of choice. What the high-ranking military establishment derided as "Hitchcraft" (after the Defense Department Controller Charles

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<sup>10</sup> DOS, 1964, Volume 1, Document 233, pp. 547-8; and *GPP(III)*, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> *NYTPP*, p. 465.

<sup>12</sup> "Cincinnatus," *Self-Destruction: The Disintegration of the United States Army during the Vietnam Era*. New York: Norton, 1981, p. 84.

Hitch) -- the emphasis on quantification, statistics, and systems analysis in the McNamara Pentagon -- was, paradoxically, their own creation. After all, McNamara and Hitch were products of the Air Force and its affiliates: McNamara cultivated his management craft at Statistical Control Division of the Air Force during the Second World War, while Hitch wielded systems analysis in support of the strategic programs of the service at RAND in the nineteen-fifties. Prior to McNamara's appointment as the Secretary of Defense, the Air Force embraced quantification: to prove the effectiveness of strategic bombing, to demonstrate SAC vulnerability, and to advocate the counterforce / no cities nuclear doctrine. They spurned quantification only when it failed to serve their purposes. As we shall see, the military departments were eager to generate statistical studies to support the policies and programs they advocated. In fact, the services aided and abetted the trend toward quantification in the early years of the Vietnam conflict in order to bolster their arguments for increased intervention. It was only after the war went bad that the military leaders condemned this proclivity, blaming McNamara and his statistical requirements for their present plight. The allegation is spurious: it was the policies, not the measurements, which failed the defense establishment. Both the Secretary of Defense and the military departments are culpable for this failure. Quantification was not the cause, but the symptom of a deeper affliction.

Finally, the prominence of the OB as a statistical indicator was enhanced by the decision of the American military establishment during the February 1966 Honolulu Conference to pursue a strategy of attrition against the Vietnamese communists. The fundamental objective of American forces in South Vietnam thereafter was to "attrit [sic], by year's end, VC/NVA [South and North Vietnamese] forces at a rate as high as their capability to put men into the field."<sup>13</sup> The order of battle -- a synopsis of the body count, estimates of North Vietnamese infiltration, insurgent recruitment, and the condition of specific enemy units -- was employed to measure progress in attaining this elusive objective.<sup>14</sup>

Although Carroll promised McChristian that the DIA would assist MACV in compiling the Viet Cong OB, the pledge was more symbolic than practical. The DIA simply lacked the manpower and resources to provide substantive support to the MACV effort. The agency normally assigned less than a dozen analysts to the OB who had minimal technical support. In contrast, MACV ultimately committed over fifteen hundred intelligence officers to the OB and provided them with extensive computer support. Acknowledging the deficiencies of the DIA to generate the OB, a former agency analyst wrote:

Needless to say, DIA simply became a transmission belt for the Saigon view, rather than an active, supervisory participant in the process of informing the President of the enemy's strength and capabilities as their charter requires.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Department of Defense, Memorandum, "1966 Program to Increase the Effectiveness of Military Operations and Anticipated Results Thereof." *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibit 215-B

<sup>14</sup> The Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense from 1966-70 Pierre M. Sprey observed: "The OB . . . were the critical indicator of progress -- or lack of progress -- in the war in Vietnam." *Westmoreland*, Affidavit, Pierre Sprey, 18 April 1984, p. B5999.

<sup>15</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and Madness*, p. 134.

As he had in 1962, General Carroll continued to defer to the commander the OB matters. As might be expected the military analysts in Saigon (MACV and CINCPAC) tended to focus their intelligence efforts on proximate, tactical issues, while the DIA concerned itself with strategic matters. These included assessments contrasting American and communist strategies; North Vietnamese and Soviet perceptions of the conflict; North Vietnamese capabilities to wage a protracted war; evaluations of communist solidarity; and North Vietnamese dependence on external aid.<sup>16</sup> The DIA also regularly published a Bibliographic Register of communist officials and military officers. The strategic intelligence responsibilities in support of the military operations in Vietnam resulted in large staff increases in the current intelligence and indications elements of the agency. However, the preoccupation with strategic and warning intelligence resulted in a general neglect of basic intelligence. For example, the National Intelligence Studies series, started in 1962, gradually withered away.<sup>17</sup>

As was true of intelligence assessments of the air campaign, the DIA displayed a troubling predilection to indiscriminately support the operational preferences of the command. It was rare for the agency to actively participate in and influence policy decisions; more often than not the agency provided *post facto* analysis; placing its imprimatur on decisions already made. A former agency analyst observed:

J-3 [operations] is king. All career servicemen aspire to this role, the command of a combat unit. All the staffs bow in deference. At DIA the common expression among the working troops is "DIA exists solely to provide justification for whatever J-3 wants to do." During the crucial years of the Vietnam War, from 1966 to 1969, the major strategic decisions on how the war was to be fought came out of the Pentagon's Joint Staff, where DIA serves in the function of J-2. The J-3 staff never consulted with intelligence about the effect of United States strategy from the enemy viewpoint. Since DIA was studying the enemy and his style of fighting, J-3 could have benefited by asking intelligence what they thought might be the best way to thwart the enemy's plans and the impact of the plans on US operations.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the strategic assessments of the DIA had a tendency to be rather narrow and mundane, concerned with specific events, measures, and consequences. The larger conceptual issues were often left unexplored: the trees were scrutinized at the expense of the forest. Accordingly, the DIA never performed a serious systematic exploration of the importance of South Vietnam to the national interests of the United States. This is surprising given the fact that in 1964 BNE discredited the infamous "domino effect," which posited that the fall of South Vietnam would precipitate the collapse

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<sup>16</sup> See Palmer, *The Twenty-Five Year War*, p. 163.

<sup>17</sup> Personal interview, Captain Richard Bates, 12 May 1992.

<sup>18</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 149.

of additional Southeast Asian nations to communist aggression.<sup>19</sup> In spite of this assessment, South Vietnam was commonly perceived by policymakers to be an indispensable American ally: in the judgment of one analyst, "Endless assertions passed for analysis."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the agency never evaluated the long-term objectives of the American military strategy and assessed the prospects for success. At the start of American intervention, such an evaluation seemed extraneous because preventing the fall of South Vietnam was an unequivocal purpose. But as the war progressed American interests grew muddled and murky. The new military objectives were left largely unexplored, however, simply because the JCS did not have an alternative to Westmoreland's search-and-destroy strategy and therefore no inducement to request intelligence assessments that might call into doubt the strategy of attrition. Options from outside the Defense Department (such as General James M. Gavin's "enclave strategy") were viewed by the current military leadership as threatening criticisms, not to be considered seriously, but rebutted.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, no systematic evaluation of the allocation of American resources to different missions was undertaken. The DIA never developed the analytical capability to assess the performance of United States and South Vietnamese military units. The agency did employ some crude statistical measures such as casualty ratios, but as the former director of the American pacification effort observed, "Even these were regarded mostly as progress indicators. Little systematic attempt (comparable to that of OSD/SA [OSA]) was made to discern operationally meaningful patterns."<sup>22</sup> The failure of the DIA to provide McNamara with comprehensive systematic assessments of the war led the Secretary to turn to OSA, the bastion of the Whiz Kids in the Pentagon, for these products. In late 1966, OSA began to produce Southeast Asia Reports, released monthly or bimonthly. The reports were valued by senior Defense Department officials; all but ignored by MACV and the JCS. The military were not receptive to external analyses of their performance. The Chairman of the JCS General Wheeler at least twice formally complained to McNamara about OSA reports critical of the field command. The Secretary ignored the complaint, for OSA was providing him with sorely needed intelligence, intelligence that the DIA failed to provide. The director of the American pacification campaign called the Southeast Asia Reports "by far the best running analytical account of the war."<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, the strength of the DIA lay in current intelligence. The agency consistently produced and disseminated consolidated intelligence on events in Southeast Asia. Although the quality of these reports was high, timely evaluation was impaired by complicated dispersal procedures and the sheer volume of raw intelligence. The DIA received most of its raw intelligence from MACV.

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<sup>19</sup> On 9 June 1964, in response to President Johnson's question, "Would the rest of Southeast Asia necessarily fall if Laos and South Vietnam came under North Vietnam control?" BNE concluded: "With the possible exception of Cambodia, it is likely that no nation in the area would quickly succumb to communism as a result of the fall of Laos and South Vietnam. Furthermore, a continuation of the spread of communism in the area would not be inexorable, and any spread which did occur would take time -- time in which the total situation might change in any of a number of ways unfavorable to the communist cause." DOS, 1964, Volume 1, Document 209, pp. 484-87.

<sup>20</sup> Leslie Gelb, "How the System Worked," in Kimball, *To Reason Why*, p. 157.

<sup>21</sup> Enthoven and Smith, *How Much is Enough?*, p. 199.

<sup>22</sup> Komer, *Bureaucracy at War*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>23</sup> Komer, *Bureaucracy at War*, p. 75. The reports were produced on the 15th day of each month. For examples see "Southeast Asia Analysis Reports," DDRS: 1982-73-90.

Consequently, the intelligence required an inordinate amount of time to travel from Saigon to Washington. Once at the Pentagon, the field intelligence reports slowly passed up the chain of command before arriving on the area desks of DIA analysts. As a result, DIA analysts often received information several days after their MACV counterparts. Evaluation was also delayed by the bulk of information. By 1966, the agency received over three thousand intelligence reports every week. Upon receipt, the reports and documents were copied and distributed to the DIA's geographical area production elements, related intelligence agencies, and the Minicard Section of the Automatic Data Processing Center (the latter copy was reduced in size on film clips for filing). When a report arrived at the geographical area elements it was promptly scanned by a reading panel of four to five area analysts, for an initial determination as to significance. Important ("hot") intelligence was sent directly to the Dissemination Center or to ISIC. As the foregoing suggests, the copying and screening process took a considerable amount of time. An 1968 review of DIA operations by the House Appropriations Committee concluded that within the agency it took an average of eight workdays from the time of receipt of a document for it to reach a staff analyst. It noted that the locations of various DIA directorates in separate buildings contributed to the delay.<sup>24</sup> After dispersal, routine documents and reports were assigned to desk analysts for processing, corroboration, and evaluation. Finished intelligence was disseminated daily in a documentary format and an electronic bulletin, with Secret and Top Secret supplements. By 1968, the Daily Intelligence Summary (DIS) was distributed to over two hundred consumers in the Defense Department, White House, and espionage community. The summary averaged fifty-five pages in length, but could range as high as seventy-five pages. Weekly summaries were slightly longer.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the spring of 1966 the DIA monitored the growing strength of the Viet Cong with trepidation. In February the agency confirmed that the insurgents were now equipped with powerful 7.62-millimeter weapons (carbines and mortars) that enabled them to defeat American armored units.<sup>26</sup> In the face of improved communist capabilities, the JCS pressed McNamara and Johnson for more ground forces, to double American military might, to "square the error" as the British counter-revolutionary strategist Sir Robert Thompson wryly observed.<sup>27</sup> The Secretary and the President were reluctant to grant approval: McNamara because he believed that military victory was unattainable; Johnson because he wished to avoid mobilization and reveal the true dimensions of the conflict to Congress and the American public. Thus the dynamic of escalation evolved: the Chiefs would recommend more troops, Johnson would demur, the Chiefs would press, and Johnson would eventually relent, agreeing to a smaller deployment than the Chiefs desired. Half the pie, instead of the whole. When considered alone, each step up the ladder of escalation appeared small and incremental. Yet when viewed in its entirety, the deployment was great, and American combat forces rapidly accumulated in

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<sup>24</sup> USC (90/2) House Appropriations. *Hearings: Department of Defense Appropriations, FY1969*. GPO, 1968, p. 438.

<sup>25</sup> USC (90/2) House Appropriations. *Hearings*, pp. 424, 436, 437-40, 484.

<sup>26</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, DIA Intelligence Summary Supplement, "The Communist 120-mm Mortar in South Vietnam," 26 February 1966. Herring, *Vietnam: National Security Files*, Volume II, film no.7, frame no. 331.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, p. 667.

South Vietnam throughout 1966. By November 1966, President Johnson had enough. He informed the JCS that he would not approve any additional deployments, that he would hold the line at 500,000 American forces in the theater by the middle of 1968.

In the summer in 1966 the intelligence organizations in Washington remained dissatisfied with the MACV Viet Cong OB. They believed that the command was collecting OB intelligence too slowly, noting that official confirmation of changes in the OB by Saigon were typically one to two years behind the fact. This delay was largely the result of the refusal of MACV to incorporate communist units on the OB until the units physically arrived in South Vietnam. Washington intelligence agencies, notably the Watch Committee, believed that the units should be listed into the OB as soon as they were mobilized (or "called-up") in North Vietnam. A comprehensive study of the OB by the National Indications Center fueled the debate by concluding that, in contrast to the modest increase of about 40,000 in the North Vietnamese military accepted by MACV in the official OB over the last year, an increase of 200,000 to 250,000 appeared justified and might in fact be conservative. The study assessed the MACV OB criterion to be too rigid, dismissive of open source intelligence and preoccupied with COMINT.<sup>28</sup>

The National Indications Center study paralleled the work of a young CIA analyst named Samuel Adams. In August 1966 Adams reviewed captured Viet Cong documents and other intelligence and arrived at the conclusion that the official MACV OB was too low, that it should be increased by at least 200,000. In the two preceding years (1964-65) three of the four categories in the OB (guerrilla-militia, service troops, and political cadres) had not been altered; only the regular forces were increased. Adams recalled:

Basically the only number that changed for a long period was the regulars -- the guys with uniforms and pith helmets and little red stars attached. The other ones, the guerrilla self-defense, the service troops, and the political cadres, hadn't changed for a long time. In a guerrilla war, we hadn't tried to discover the number of guerrillas! We carried roughly 100,000 guerrillas for years.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Cynthia Grabo, "The Watch Committee and the National Indications Center: The Evolution of US Strategic Warning, 1950-75." *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence* 3 (Fall 1989), pp. 376-77.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Ranelagh, *The Agency*, p. 456. Adams later asserted: "Prior to late 1966 the problem about strength estimates was mainly that the intelligence community did virtually no research on any enemy force components other than the Main and Local Forces . . . Also it might be noted . . . that the probable reason the Washington intelligence community "largely deferred" to J-2's analyses prior to mid-1967 was not because of J-2's greater access to raw intelligence data, but because of a general unwillingness to rock the boat." Central Intelligence Agency, "Comments on Draft Memo to the Director, 19 March 1968," 19 March 1968. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 5, no. 911.

Adams believed that the discovery was significant:

All our other intelligence estimates were tied to the order of battle: how much rice the VC ate, how much ammunition they shot off, and so forth. If the Vietcong Army suddenly doubled in size, our whole statistical system would collapse. We'd be fighting a war twice as big as the one we thought we were fighting.<sup>30</sup>

Senior CIA officials were impressed with Adams' analyses, but treated them with caution. They were well aware of the political volatility of the matter and initially restricted the dissemination of his reports. Adams, eager to challenge the MACV OB, pressed his superiors to send the reports to Saigon for comment. His superiors reluctantly consented, and on 9 September the CIA sent a "draft working paper" -- a synopsis of Adams' assessments that concluded that the official OB was 200,000 men too low -- to MACV. The working paper was personally carried to Saigon by George Fowler of the DIA. Fowler, the chief of the DIA OB section, was amenable to Adams' analysis. As previously discussed, DIA analysts had long been skeptical of the MACV OB. In the summer of 1966, they reviewed copies of the same captured communist documents exploited by Adams. One DIA analyst in the ISIC recalled: "Well, when we started translating these captured documents and everything, it suddenly appeared to some of the best analysts in the business that, hey, there ain't 44,000 guerrillas. There could be as many as 112,000 guerrillas."<sup>31</sup> The DIA believed that the MACV OB needed to be increased, although the total should not be as high as Adams advocated.<sup>32</sup>

In Saigon McChristian was receptive to Adams' analyses. He instructed his new OB chief, Colonel Gains Hawkins to commission two comprehensive studies of the Viet Cong guerrillas. The studies, codenamed RITZ and CORRAL, examined the composition and size of the self-defense forces and the political cadres, respectively; two of the three OB categories that Adams observed to be static. The studies were completed in spring 1967. Both concluded that Adams' analyses were essentially correct: that the size of the guerrilla forces was grossly underestimated.

The widespread dissatisfaction with the official OB led General Wheeler to direct General Carroll in January 1967 to convene a conference to resolve the intelligence estimate.<sup>33</sup> Carroll invited MACV, CINCPAC, CIA, NSA, OSA and of course DIA officials to attend the conference, held from 6-12 February at Camp Smith, Hawaii (the home of CINCPAC). In a heroic effort to reconcile the numerous and contradictory estimates, participants attempted to establish procedures and guidelines for

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<sup>30</sup> Adams, "Vietnam Cover-Up," p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> By January 1967, the DIA believed that the Viet Cong OB (277,150 as of 3 January 1967) should be increased by approximately 100,000. The CIA thought the OB should be doubled. See Central Intelligence Agency, Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs to Deputy Director for Intelligence, "Revising the Viet Cong Order of Battle," 11 January 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 4, no. 54.

<sup>33</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff [CM-2068-67] Chairman of JCS (General Earle Wheeler) to Director of DIA (General Joseph Carroll), "Statistics on Order of Battle and Infiltration," 19 January 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 5, no. 218.

formulating the OB. The disparity between competing estimates was so great that military men wryly referred to the affair as “the Tower of Babel Conference.” Although the representatives concurred that the current MACV OB was too low, the magnitude of the increase was disputed. In general, MACV and CINCPAC desired modest increases in all four OB categories: CIA and DIA favored substantial additions; and NSA and OSD oscillated.<sup>34</sup> In the end, to the delight of civilians, MACV agreed to increase the number of insurgents in all OB categories. Sam Adams, a CIA representative, was particularly surprised by Hawkins’ admission regarding the irregular forces (based on the preliminary results of the RITZ and CORRAL studies) that “there’s a lot more of these little bastards out there than we thought there were.”<sup>35</sup> Although the MACV J-2 did not agree with Adams proposal that the guerrilla-militia should be raised by 200,000, he did agree to an increase of 95,000: from 103,573 to 198,000. These changes were unofficial: due to unresolved differences over the communist desertion rate and the composition of irregular forces (notably the so-called “assault youths”), representatives agreed that the irregular units required further study to quantify precisely. Pending the completion of these studies, the irregular unit category was held constant, while the aggregate OB was slightly increased.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the CIA was encouraged by the earnestness of Harkins and the military analysts. “The fight’s over,” Adams thought. “They’re reading the same documents that I am, and everybody’s beginning to use real numbers.”<sup>37</sup>

## MACV Asserts Primacy: “Ballpoint Analysis”

In the aftermath of the OB conference, the military intelligence agencies endeavored to assess the nature, composition, and size of the communist irregular units. A team of four DIA analysts traveled to Saigon in early April to consult with MACV on the matter. Discord resulted. The DIA analysts recommended to General McChristian and General Carroll “that ‘irregular’ figure be scrapped and only ‘guerrillas’ carried as part of military force figure.”<sup>38</sup> Consequently, the self-defense, and secret-self

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<sup>34</sup> CINCPAC invariably supported the MACV position. One CINCPAC representative recalled: “CINCPAC didn’t have, to my knowledge, its own order of battle element. They just took MACV’s stuff wholesale, with occasional questions of course. But generally speaking, MACV and CINCPAC absolutely read off the same sheet of music.” *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Colonel George M. Hamscher, 7 November 1983, fiche no. 263, p. 50. The DIA delegation was led by Brigadier General Burton R. Brown.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Adams, “Vietnam Cover-Up,” p. 62.

<sup>36</sup> During the conference, MACV indicated that its analyses resulted in 250,000-300,000 Viet Cong irregular units. This was in contrast to the official MACV OB of May 1966 which posited 112,760 combatants; not broken down by component. After the conference, pending the completion of further studies, MACV held the irregular forces in the OB to 112,760. The putative aggregate OB was 339,000. See “Report of the Honolulu Intelligence Conference To Standardize Methods for Developing and Presenting Statistics on Order of Battle, Infiltration Trends and Estimates. 6-12 February 1983.” Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 4, no. 145.

<sup>37</sup> Adams, “Vietnam Cover-Up,” pp. 63-64.

<sup>38</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Classified Message, Saigon to Washington, Reference: Director 88258, 1 April 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 4, no. 392.

defense unit categories would be eliminated.<sup>39</sup> This proposal was opposed by MACV. The command had always dismissed the self-defense and secret self-defense forces as militarily inconsequential, characterizing them as “old women and children,” occasional insurgents that harassed American soldiers by laying traps. Although these forces were included in the OB, for operational purposes MACV largely ignored them and concentrated on the more conventional enemy units, the mainforce, local forces, and irregulars. Consequently, the command did not want to these “old women and children” to be upgraded into the guerrilla category and assessed as true combatants rather than civilians, as the DIA proposed. MACV resisted the DIA proposal, despite the fact that the agency wanted to lower the figures in both categories before reclassifying them as guerrilla. The explanation for this curious position is subtle but important. Recall that in 1962, when presented with Winterbottom’s order to reduce the OB, the joint intelligence team simply created a new category for the insurgents called *possible* and transferred many probable units into it. Subsequently, Winterbottom and Harkins disregarded these units as unverified. In 1967, the self-defense and secret self-defense force categories served the same purpose that the *possible* category had five years earlier. They were analytic disposal sites, wherein MACV could place enemy units that it wished to ignore, for political or organizational reasons. MACV did not want these sites abolished, and their contents transferred to the official MACV OB. The command opposed the DIA proposal and eventually, to no one’s surprise, prevailed. MACV preserved its predominance over the communist OB.

In March 1967 Westmoreland broke the agreed troop limit in Southeast Asia by requesting 210,000 additional American forces. McNamara instructed OSA to evaluate the request. On 19 May McNamara sent a twenty-two page single-spaced memorandum to the President opposing the buildup. Incorporating analysis from the OSA evaluation, the Secretary broke from official policy and argued that the ground war should not be expanded and the air war should be constrained.<sup>40</sup> When the JCS learned of the memorandum, they were incensed. They produced numerous rebuttals, asserting that significant escalations were essential to preserve progress in the region. Johnson, skeptical of both claims, subsequently approved modest increases in the air and ground campaigns. (In July, the administration agreed to a 55,000 force increase, bringing the total number of American troops

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<sup>39</sup> The American intelligence community posited four different types of enemy military units: North Vietnamese forces, Viet Cong main force units, Viet Cong local force units, and Viet Cong irregular units (including guerrilla, self-defense, and secret self-defense). NVA units were trained and commanded by North Vietnam and composed primarily of North Vietnamese soldiers; VC mainforce units were subordinate directly to the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), VC Headquarters, or a military region or subregion headquarters; VC local force units were directly subordinate to the communist party committee of a province or district and normally operated within its respective confines; irregulars were organized units subordinate to village and hamlet VC organizations that performed various and sundry missions in support of VC activities and provided a manpower base for NVA and VC combat units. Guerrillas were full-time forces organized into squads or platoons that did not necessarily operate within their village or hamlet of origin. They commonly engaged in tax collection, propaganda, terrorism, and sabotage. Self-defense forces were part-time paramilitary units that defended hamlets and villages controlled by the VC and did not stray from their home. Secret self-defense forces were a clandestine VC organization that conducted similar covert operations in areas under the control of the South Vietnamese government (as opposed to VC controlled areas, which were the domain of self-defense forces). See Wirtz, “Intelligence to Please?” p. 243 n. 12.

<sup>40</sup> *NYTPP*, pp. 577-85.

deployed in Southeast Asia to 525,000.) However, the disillusionment of the Secretary of Defense with the war in Vietnam was now manifest, and Washington watched the contest between McNamara and the military over the future of American intervention with fascination.

It is in this context that the dispute over the communist OB developed. Throughout the spring, McChristian and Harkins reappraised the Viet Cong irregular forces. By the middle of May, both were convinced that the irregular forces totaled approximately 300,000. McChristian drafted a cable to convey the new assessment to CINCPAC in Honolulu and the JCS in Washington, noting that the OB should be revised accordingly to approximately 500,000 (the current OB was slightly under 300,000). When shown the cable, Westmoreland would not grant approval, telling Harkins, "If I send this cable to Washington, it will create a political bombshell."<sup>41</sup> Westmoreland had recently informed the President that the long-sought "cross-over point" had been reached in the two northern provinces of South Vietnam, that American and allied forces were now killing communist insurgents at a rate greater than they could be replaced through recruitment and infiltration.<sup>42</sup> For the last year, the "cross-over point" had been the Holy Grail of the military command: the elusive key to victory over the immoral enemy. The concept was basic: manpower output now exceeded input, therefore it was only a matter of time before the reservoir of communist insurgents ran dry. Victory was on the horizon. The irregular assessments of Hawkins and McChristian challenged the validity of the "cross-over point" by positing a vast increase in the number of Viet Cong insurgents, the input. Consequently, communist force output no longer exceeded input: the enemy was not succumbing to attrition and the war would grind on. McChristian's analysis showed the "cross-over point" to be a false Grail. Westmoreland, who had staked his credibility on the attrition strategy and the promise of a "cross-over point," was not amenable to such an epiphany.

Therefore Westmoreland instructed McChristian to review the assessment to confirm its accuracy and validity. McChristian complied, found the results to be reliable and accurate, and subsequently briefed Westmoreland twice more on the findings. At the last briefing on 28 May, Westmoreland simply rejected McChristian's findings and suppressed the MACV assessments of communist irregulars. Westmoreland provided no empirical basis for the repudiation: MACV intelligence analysts assumed the political implications of a significant increase in the insurgency were too grave for the

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Brewin and Shaw, *Vietnam On Trial*, p. 124. Also see Adler, *Reckless Disregard*, p. 79.

<sup>42</sup> John McNaughton recorded the following statement by Westmoreland in a conversation with President Johnson and CJCS Wheeler on 19 May 1967: "The VC and DRV strength in SVN now totals 285,000 men. It appears that last month we reached the crossover point in areas excluding the two northern provinces. Attritions will be greater than additions to the force . . ." *NYTTP*, p. 568.

commander to endure.<sup>43</sup> In spite of the promises of the February OB conference, the MACV estimate of communist irregulars remained static.

On 1 June 1967 McChristian was replaced as chief of MACV intelligence (J-2) by General Philip Davidson. In contrast with McChristian, Davidson was skeptical that the Viet Cong irregulars were increasing and, more importantly, that they represented a tangible military threat. Davidson embraced the “cross-over point” with fervor. His appointment was auspicious, for it transpired just as the intelligence community prepared to draft a prominent strategic estimate on Southeast Asia, SNIE 14-3-67, “The Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam.” The estimate included an assessment of the Viet Cong OB, and the CIA wished to employ the “unofficial” figures of the February OB conference of approximately 500,000 communist forces. Yet Westmoreland and Davidson opposed the use of this figure. They desired to keep the OB constant (at the 15 May 1967 OB of 292,000), despite the fact that both CIA and MACV intelligence analysts were reporting that the communist irregular forces were much larger than presently estimated. Neither side was in a mood to compromise. The result was bureaucratic warfare over the 1967 order of battle.

As noted in the introduction, previous accounts of the so-called “order of battle controversy” have characterized the dispute as one between the maverick analyst Sam Adams and prudent officials at MACV and the CIA. This characterization is inaccurate. As the rest of this chapter will demonstrate, in fact the dispute arrayed MACV against Adams and the intelligence community. Adams was no renegade; rather he was in the majority. The preponderance of opinion in the espionage community was cynical of the MACV OB. Nevertheless, as had happened so often in the past, the DIA was enjoined to support the command position. When open conflict erupted between MACV and the CIA over the SNIE, the DIA promptly cast aside its reservations and staunchly supported MACV. A DIA analyst recalled:

Initially, before the SNIE got underway, process got underway, I believe George Fowler [the head of the DIA OB section] had some different figures, but there was accommodation there and we all went in, in effect, the military versus the civilian agency, to characterize it that way. I am not aware of any time [thereafter] when a DIA separate estimate was promoted.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Westmoreland claims that he does not recollect the 28 May briefing. He justifies his refusal to endorse the assessment on the grounds that further analysis was required. McChristian dismisses this assertion, claiming that Westmoreland rejected the report outright. Moreover, McChristian released the following letter from Westmoreland for the 1984 trial. Received by McChristian on 2 March 1982, the former COMUSMACV wrote: “Joe, here is the letter I mentioned on the telephone [regarding the CBS documentary “The Uncounted Enemy”]. CBS has, maliciously or through ignorance, confused *my demurring in increasing the OB, without further analysis* with your constant theme that the enemy had the capability to pursue a war of attrition to which I fully agreed.” [Italics added] Reproduced in Brewin and Shaw, *Vietnam On Trial*, p. 325. The evidence clearly supports McChristian.

<sup>44</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Colonel George M Hamscher, 7 November 1983, fiche no. 263, p. 158. Also see Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, pp. 20-23.

It was an all-too-familiar occurrence.

BNE first met on 23 June 1967 to consider the SNIE. As was standard procedure, the CIA (through ONE) submitted the first draft of the estimate to the board for review. In the initial draft, the communist OB was listed as approximately 500,000 forces. The increase, of approximately 200,000 from the MACV was largely the result of the quantification and addition of the communist irregular forces to the official OB. (In the past, these units were not listed numerically in the official OB, but noted in a section of the text.) MACV had previously protested the listing of irregulars in the OB, so the participants were prepared for military resistance. At the start of the meeting, the Chairman of BNE General Richard Collins announced that the "numbers game," the communist OB, was "the guts of the estimate."<sup>45</sup> Then George Fowler, the chief of estimates at the DIA, stated that he represented the views of all of military representatives -- the DIA, Army, Navy, and Air Force -- and asserted: "Gentlemen, we cannot agree to this estimate as currently written. What we object to are the numbers. We feel we should continue with the official order of battle."<sup>46</sup> The official MACV OB was then 295,000.<sup>47</sup> All the military agencies were arrayed behind MACV; all reservations over the OB were cast aside. For example, the minutes of the meeting reveal that, when pressed, "The Army representative, prefacing his remarks that he would just as soon not get involved, said that it would probably be best to use the MACV order of battle studded with caveats."<sup>48</sup> The great bureaucratic strength of the military lay in unanimity. The State Department supported the position of the CIA. Thus the battle lines were drawn, military versus civilian. As neither side was disposed to compromise, the BNE meeting ended in deadlock.

Though the DIA continued to support the MACV OB in meetings on the estimate, Carroll was privately dissatisfied with the command figures. The director let it be known to the CIA that he wished to revise the OB upwards, but was uncertain how large the increase should be. Carroll cabled Saigon and informed Westmoreland that the estimate would be delayed until August so that the DIA could re-evaluate its position. Lest MACV be alarmed, he commented that he was not anxious to get into a "knock-down, drag-out fight over the strength figures."<sup>49</sup>

McNamara was advised of the OB controversy by General Carroll. The Secretary was not overly concerned with matter; he later recalled:

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<sup>45</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum for the Record, "NIE 14-3-67 -- The USIB Representatives Meeting," 23 June 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 4, no. 829.

<sup>46</sup> Adams, "Vietnam Cover-Up," p. 64.

<sup>47</sup> Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, "Measurement of Progress Briefing, Commanders Conference," 11 June 1967, DDRS: 1990-679, p. 2. In spite of Westmoreland's claim to the President on 19 May 1967 that the "cross-over point" had been reached, the conference rejected the notion, yet noted it remained the objective for the year.

<sup>48</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum for the Record, "NIE 14-3-67 -- The USIB Representatives Meeting," 23 June 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 4, no. 829, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum for the Record, 5 July 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 4, no. 844.

By 1967 we had a lot of information on the number of men who had infiltrated, the number killed (from the body count) and current enemy strength. By then it was clear to me that the figures did not add up; if the body count was correct, then the figures were wrong. That's why I was losing confidence in the figures and in optimistic military reports.

My whole point was: Don't let's kid ourselves that we are winning the war.<sup>50</sup>

In Saigon, Davidson appointed Lt. Colonel Daniel Graham to head the MACV current intelligence and estimates shop. The appointment was important because Graham was the progenitor of the "cross-over point." In a controversial memorandum, Graham asserted that the "cross-over point" had been reached in South Vietnam in June 1967. Though numerous claims had been made in the past concerning the "cross-over point," including Westmoreland's 19 May briefing to the President, it was officially embraced by MACV in the June Measurement of Progress Report.<sup>51</sup> Graham flatly rejected a revision of the MACV enemy strength figures. He clearly had a vested interest in this perspective, as an increase in the OB would invalidate the "cross-over point." Like Percival, Graham found his Grail through faith and tenacity; and like the Arthurian knight, he was determined to defend it against heresy. Graham swiftly became MACV's point man on the OB dispute.

The intelligence community strove in vain to find a basis for compromise on the enemy OB throughout July and early August. The civilian agencies, led by the CIA, wanted an OB of about 500,000. The military organizations favored a modest increase, yet disagreed over magnitude. To resolve these differences, a meeting was called in August at the Pentagon. Held in a narrow room next to the offices of the JCS, the gathering was confined to the military intelligence agencies: CINCPAC, MACV, and DIA. However, for all intents and purposes, the actual debate was between MACV and the DIA, for CINCPAC was ordered to support MACV unconditionally on the OB. The CINCPAC representative Colonel George Hamscher recalled his instructions: "My charge was from General Peterson [CINCPAC], go back [to Washington] and support MACV; support them all the way; it's important."<sup>52</sup> Lt. Colonel Daniel Graham was sent from Saigon to assist the head of the MACV delegation General George Godding, who was then perceived by the command as being too tolerant of the DIA's indecisiveness on the Viet Cong OB. The Vietnam Desk officer at the DIA, Major John B. Williams -- a West Point graduate and thirty-year veteran of the Army airborne corps -- observed that Graham's role was to "put some starch into General Godding's backbone."<sup>53</sup> The positions of both organizations were clear. MACV wanted the OB to remain under 300,000 irrespective of circumstances; the DIA favored a slightly higher OB, with the analytic versatility to reach accommodation with the CIA. Major Williams characterized the agency's posture thus: "We just

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Robert McNamara in Shapley, *Promise and Power*, p. 431.

<sup>51</sup> See Wirtz, "Intelligence to please?" p. 245. Also see Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1977, pp. 69-70.

<sup>52</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Colonel George M. Hamscher, 7 November 1983, fiche no. 263, p. 109.

<sup>53</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 26.

found it [the MACV OB] difficult to support in the estimative arena and we asked for some flexibility."<sup>54</sup> Such flexibility was not forthcoming. Graham and the MACV representatives refused to consider the arguments of the DIA for a higher OB. Williams recalls:

We at DIA were a little queasy over the MACV position, believed that their numbers should be a little bit higher, but we were having difficulty actually persuading them. What we generally got is the old thing again and we got a lot of this from Danny Graham, "We are the soldier in the field. You are enjoined to support us. You are a military voice with CIA."<sup>55</sup>

As the meeting progressed it became apparent to the DIA analysts that MACV would simply not accept a communist OB of over 300,000; the command had established a *de facto* ceiling. The DIA representatives could not get Graham and his staff to increase the OB above the ceiling, even when they insisted that MACV be telephoned directly for consultation. Williams recalled: "And every call to MACV was an absolute stone wall, that, 'We are here in the field. These are the numbers. They go with us and you, DIA, are enjoined to go with us also.'"<sup>56</sup> When it became evident that the DIA could not prevail and the OB would remain under 300,000, the military men proceeded to arbitrarily manipulate the categories and numbers in the OB to arrive at an aggregate beneath the ceiling.<sup>57</sup> As in 1962, when George Allen and the joint OB team reduced the Viet Cong OB over bourbon, whim and caprice replaced analysis. When asked in 1983 if there were flaws in the methodology employed at the meeting, George Hamscher responded:

Oh, I will come on stronger than that. It wasn't the methodology; it was a way of reducing figures, and at one point I remember clearly saying look, Danny [Graham], we can't do this, this is wrong. And he looked at me and said, Hamscher, if you've got a better way of doing this, let's have it. And, of course, what he meant was if you've got a better way of bringing down these figures, let's have it. I had no better way, so I shut up.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 26.

<sup>55</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 25.

<sup>56</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 25.

<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, five officers present at the meeting testified under oath that MACV enforced the 300,000 man ceiling. They are George Godding, George Hamscher, Gains Hawkins, John Williams, and Kelly Robinson. See *Westmoreland*, Depositions, George Godding, pp. 98-99, 236-37; George Hamscher, pp. 108, 354; Gains Hawkins, pp. 261, 457; John Williams, p. 17; and Affidavit, Kelly Robinson, 10 October 1983, p. 24.

<sup>58</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Colonel George M. Hamscher, 7 November 1983, fiche no. 263, pp. 238-39.

Major Williams of the DIA called it "ballpoint analysis" -- "That means you cross out a number and add a new one."<sup>59</sup> Thus the military achieved unanimity on the Viet Cong OB, a product not of disinterested analysis, but of political and organizational inclinations.

Neither General Carroll nor George Fowler reportedly were happy with the OB that resulted, but the pair did not protest.<sup>60</sup> The estimate subsequently became the putative Defense Department OB. Years later, George Hamscher observed: "In other words, MACV had made the estimate, DIA and CINCPAC acceded to it in varying degrees of reluctance over time, but they acceded to it and supported it."<sup>61</sup> Once more the DIA proved to be exceptionally malleable to the preferences of the command, displaying a disturbing degree of analytic dexterity. It is worth pondering why the agency let itself be manipulated by MACV. As in the past, a tradition of deference to the command is a large part of the answer. Yet in August 1967 political considerations were also at work.

That month the Senate Armed Services Committee, led by Senator John Stennis of Mississippi, held public hearings on the air war. The hearings were politically motivated, called by conservative senators to balance previous hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee which had been markedly critical of the Johnson administration and the war in Vietnam. Both McNamara and the JCS testified before the committee, and the sharp disagreement between McNamara and the military over the war became public. The JCS testified first, and openly criticized their civilian superiors for restricting the scope of the air war in Southeast Asia, specifically referring to fifty-seven targets designated off-limits by the Johnson administration which the military judged to be strategically significant. McNamara followed the Chiefs. It was a defining moment for the Secretary of Defense: prior to his open testimony before the committee McNamara's cynicism toward the war effort was known only to Washington insiders. Thereafter it was common knowledge. The consummate corporate man chose to publicly oppose the corporation. Appearing before the committee on 25 August, McNamara bluntly asserted that the bombing was ineffective. To support this assertion, the Secretary referred to a massive CIA study of ROLLING THUNDER that he had commissioned. It is notable that the CIA compiled the study; by August 1967, McNamara no longer had faith in the DIA. His statements caused a great stir throughout the nation, for he was commonly seen as the strongest proponent of the war within the administration, which made his dissent all the more shocking. (The *Pentagon Papers* were not yet released, so few at the time knew of his private doubts, which were substantial.) The Chiefs were furious: there was talk of a joint resignation, but nothing ever came of it.<sup>62</sup> However sensational McNamara's testimony was, in the end it had little practical effect. The committee dismissed McNamara's argument and criticized the administration for current restrictions on the fifty-seven targets

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<sup>59</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> Major John Williams recalled: "I can tell you that General Carroll, who was the director in those days, had some queasiness over it. Mind you, Carroll sent me back 6 times on TDY out of DIA over these numbers problems. I know George Fowler, who was our chief of estimates at the time and our representative out at the place, was not easy with it, but it was subsequently printed." *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 28.

<sup>61</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Colonel George M. Hamscher, 7 November 1983, fiche no. 263, p. 157.

<sup>62</sup> See Shapley, *Promise and Power*, pp. 428-33; Perry, *Four Stars*, pp. 163-66; and personal interview, Lt. General William Quinn, 8 May 1992.

which the JCS wished to bomb. (By December 1967 Johnson removed these target restrictions, with no appreciable change in war.) Wheeler insisted that he be allowed to attend the important Tuesday lunch at which administration policy was debated. To quell the anger of the Chiefs, Johnson agreed. Thereafter, JCS members could hardly bring themselves to speak to McNamara. Official meetings between the Secretary and the military leaders degenerated into tense and silent affairs. For the remainder of McNamara's tenure, civilian-military relations were marked by an icy cordiality.<sup>63</sup>

Viewed in this light, the OB dispute assumes added prominence. From the military perspective, in August 1967 civilians were simultaneously challenging the effectiveness of the air war and the strength of the enemy on the ground. The officers were insulted; they believed their professionalism was being impugned. The former CIA official R. Jack Smith recalled:

Never before had a civilian intelligence organization challenged an army in the field about its order of battle. This is one principle which military men hold dearest to their hearts, and it is the security-of-forces principle. Any time you presume to tell them their forces are not in danger to the extent they say they are, they get outraged. Their job is to keep their forces secure. But here were a bunch of civilians telling not only the Pentagon but also the forces in the field that the number they were facing was higher. That created a very difficult position: it was their war. They were the ones getting killed. There was a lot of emotion involved in that.<sup>64</sup>

As a result of the Pentagon meeting the military was unified behind the MACV position while the civilian agencies were united in opposition. An effort to compromise failed on 18 August after the CIA's ONE released a revised draft of the SNIE that listed the size of the contentious communist self-defense and secret self-defense forces as 120,000.<sup>65</sup> The inclusion of these units in the OB resulted in protests from MACV and effectively ended direct dialogue between the military and civilian organizations. Soon thereafter the JCS asked Richard Helms to send a team of CIA analysts to Saigon to resolve the dispute once and for all. Helms, acting in his capacity as the chairman of the USIB, assembled a party of CIA analysts, led by George Carver, and sent them to Saigon on 8 September to resolve the order of battle for the SNIE. Again compromise was elusive. CIA analysts claimed that MACV would not allow the OB to exceed 300,000, despite the preponderance of evidence to the contrary.<sup>66</sup> Arguments over the size and composition of communist forces in each OB category, particularly the problematic irregulars, raged. The CIA analyst Richard Kovar recalled:

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<sup>63</sup> Perry, *Four Stars*, p. 169.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with R. Jack Smith. Quoted in Ranelagh, *The Agency*, p. 465.

<sup>65</sup> See Central Intelligence Agency, "Joint CIA-DIA-INR Representatives' Position of Viet Cong Strength Estimate," 12 September 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 5, no. 5.

<sup>66</sup> On 11 September 1967 Carver cabled Helms: [A] variety of circumstantial indicators -- [including] MACV's juggling of [the] figures . . . corridor admissions by MACV officers -- all point to [the] inescapable conclusion that General Westmoreland . . . has given instructions tantamount to [a] direct order that [the] VC strength total will not exceed [a] 300,000 ceiling. [The] rationale seems to be that any higher figure would not be sufficiently optimistic and would generate [an] unacceptable level of criticism from the press." *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibit No. 256.

representatives of the military services used every tactic from horse trading to browbeating in their efforts to induce the CIA to change its position. There was no suggestion that the military representatives had better estimates based on superior analysis or more extensive intelligence source material. Indeed, I am not at all sure that they pretended to have analyzed the data themselves. They simply insisted that MACV's figures be accepted.<sup>67</sup>

As the conference neared collapse, Richard Helms, appraised of the situation by Carver, instructed the CIA team to abandon their insistence that the two contentious irregular categories, the self-defense and the secret self-defense forces, be quantified and listed in the OB. Instead he proposed that the units be noted in a separate narrative section, independent of the "aggregate" (that is, not added to the formal OB). In effect, the self-defense and the secret self-defense forces -- the units which MACV deemed to be substantial and perilous in February 1967 -- were dropped from the OB. Consequently, the total enemy strength would not exceed 299,000-334,000. MACV agreed to the compromise on 14 September 1967.

CIA analysts were dismayed by the concession. They believed that Helms had forsaken accuracy for accord on the SNIE. They maintained that the communist irregular forces represented a measurable combat threat to American soldiers and therefore should be counted and included in the OB. Richard Kovar remarked:

These are the people, as I understood it, who harassed and sniped our forces . . . when they patrolled and swept through an area, laid booby traps and ambushes for them . . . As such, these people killed our troops. They inflicted casualties . . . We counted these people when we found them dead . . . This was an important, essential element of the Vietnamese communist capabilities for fighting in South Vietnam.

In his opinion, an assessment of communist military strength which excluded these forces "did not fulfill its purpose. It did not describe or estimate accurately or completely the capabilities of the Vietnamese communists for fighting in South Vietnam."<sup>68</sup> After all, as Sam Adams is fond of

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Brewin and Shaw, *Vietnam On Trial*, p. 309.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Brewin and Shaw, *Vietnam On Trial*, p. 311.

pointing out, in a guerrilla war how could you ignore the guerrillas?<sup>69</sup> The American military was in the paradoxical position of asserting for the purpose of the SNIE that the irregulars were an inconsequential military force at the same time that the command was attempting to destroy this force through the covert PHOENIX operation.<sup>70</sup> The command included these forces in previous estimates; MACV discarded its own methodology when it no longer suited the predilections of the command. Even the prudent George Carver, chief of the CIA delegation, was upset by Helm's terms of compromise and cabled the DCI:

MACV juggling the figures, all point to the inescapable conclusion that General Westmoreland . . . has given instructions tantamount to direct orders that the VC strength will not exceed 300,000 ceiling. A rationale seems to be that any higher figure would not be sufficiently optimistic and would generate an unacceptable level of criticism from the press.<sup>71</sup>

For its part, MACV argued that it was impossible to classify guerrilla units as self-defense or the secret self-defense forces, for the categories implied a level of analytical precision that was not practical in the ambiguous military conflict. Furthermore, the American military still did not view the irregular forces as legitimate military units. General Creighton Abrams, the deputy commander of MACV, remarked:

From the intelligence viewpoint, the inclusion of the SD [self-defense] and SSD [secret self-defense] strength figures in an estimate of military capabilities is highly questionable. These forces contain a sizable number of women and old people. They operate entirely in their own hamlets. They are rarely armed, have no real discipline,

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<sup>69</sup> Commenting on the importance of the irregulars Sam Adams stated: "I felt fairly strongly at the time for a number of reasons, which reasons incidentally Hawkins and General McChristian agreed with. I suppose the most important single one was that the prime job of the self-defense militia was to lay mines and booby traps, and here's why that's important. In World War II, for example, when we were fighting a conventional war, something on the order of 3 per cent of American casualties were caused by mines and booby traps. In the Vietnam War, 33 per cent were caused by mines and booby traps, ten, twelve times higher. It seemed to me that if you have a group of people that are planting a device which caused one-third of our casualties, this group of people ought to be counted as enemies. Now let me say here that they didn't plant every single mine and booby trap in Vietnam, but they planted probably the bulk of them." Transcript, Samuel Adams oral history interview, 20 September 1984, by Ted Gittinger, p. 6, LBJ Library.

<sup>70</sup> The PHOENIX program was initiated by the CIA in the 1966 to identify and "neutralize" Viet Cong leaders at the village level. The former head of the program and future DCI William Colby estimated that over 20,000 Viet Cong activists were killed by the operation. William Colby and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life With the CIA*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978, p. 270; and Powers, *Man Who Kept the Secrets*, pp. 205-207. According to American military records, combat (ambushes and firefights) was responsible for all of those captured and killed under the program, suggesting some military capability. See Gibson, *The Perfect War*, p. 301.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Ranelagh, *The Agency*, p. 458. See Central Intelligence Agency, Cable, George Carver to Richard Helms, 13 September 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 4, no. 824.

and almost no military capability. They are no more effective in the military sense than the dozens of other non-military organizations which serve the VC cause in various roles."<sup>72</sup>

Note the contradiction in the command position: MACV rejected pedantic analytical distinctions among the guerrillas while it simultaneously employed those very distinctions. Although the American military repeatedly acknowledged the unorthodox composition of the enemy in Vietnam, in practice it treated them in conventional terms. Accordingly, MACV desired that only conventional military units (that is, mainforce and local force) be included in the Viet Cong OB. The guerrillas were to be listed in a separate category; almost as an afterthought. It was an archaic and fatuous perspective: one rejected by most professional intelligence analysts in private. Even after the 14 September compromise CIA officers remained contemptuous of the methodology of MACV. Richard Kovar observed that, "There was no suggestion that MACV had persuaded anyone of the logic of its case; it was simply a matter of asserting its primacy in determining what the figure would be."<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, the CIA abided by the terms of the compromise and BNE revised the drafts of the SNIE in accordance with its provisions. Surprisingly, the DIA objected to the *de facto* exclusion of the self-defense forces from the SNIE. Carroll sent DIA analysts to Saigon in mid-October to debate the problem with MACV. The DIA agreed with the command that the self-defense forces should be omitted from the OB aggregate tables, but insisted that the Viet Cong political cadre, estimated to be 75,000-85,000 strong, be enumerated in the text of the SNIE. When MACV would not consent to this stipulation, the DIA registered formal dissents in the draft NIEs.<sup>74</sup> Finally, Richard Helms, anxious to avoid a "split" on the estimate, intervened. The DCI proposed that the strength of the political cadres be noted in the estimate, albeit with a disclaimer that the units were not primarily military to appease MACV. The compromise was accepted by both parties. John Williams of the DIA was frank about the nature of the deal: "So what happened . . . is we recategorized the enemy, if you will. It was suddenly decided that the political infrastructure was not to be part of the military threat."<sup>75</sup> "The whole session was painful," Williams told Sam Adams. "It was clear that we were double-dealing."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Cable, Creighton Abrams to Earle Wheeler *et al.*, 20 August 1967. *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibit No. 252B, pp. 1-2.

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in Brewin and Shaw, *Vietnam On Trial*, p. 309.

<sup>74</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Economic Research, "RE: SNIE 14.3-67: Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam," 23 October 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Supplement*, reel 5, no. 222.

<sup>75</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, John B. Williams, 27 September 1983, fiche no. 438, pp. 20-21.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Adams, *War of Numbers*, p. 215.

## The Dismissal of Robert McNamara

McNamara was advised of the enduring controversy over the OB by General Carroll and OSA. At the request of the Secretary, OSA examined the results of September Saigon conference, reinterpreting the OB in terms consistent with prior quantification. Its analysis concluded that the new OB estimate should have been 395,000-480,000 if computed on the same basis as prior estimates. The office commented: "The computations do not show that enemy strength has increased, but that the previous estimates of enemy strength were too low."<sup>77</sup> This analysis confirmed McNamara's intuitive belief that the MACV OB was spurious. He later recalled:

I tried to make it [the order of battle] add up, in a judgmental rather than arithmetic way. I wasn't trying to get these figures to reconcile within a few thousands, that wasn't what I was trying to do. What I was trying to find out was how the hell the war went on year after year after year when we stopped the infiltration or shrunk it and when we had a very high body count and so on. It didn't make sense. And the fact is that it didn't add up.<sup>78</sup>

He claimed that he did not pursue the matter, for he had a greater purpose: "I just stopped arguing about the figures and went on to say that I didn't think that we were winning the war; not to argue about the figures."<sup>79</sup> Yet this was his public position, coaxed from a recalcitrant witness for the 1984 trial *Westmoreland v. CBS*. In private he denounced MACV, telling the journalist George Crile, "You can't trust these people [the military] when they are talking about things with their self-interest at stake."<sup>80</sup> In 1967 McNamara knew that MACV was manipulating the OB to demonstrate that the American strategy of attrition was effective. Yet the Secretary of Defense, a man renowned for his penchant for challenging the military, failed to rectify the matter. The inconsistency is troubling, but an accurate reflection of the contradictions embodied in McNamara at the time. In the autumn of 1967 the Secretary was a divided and tormented man. He had completed the long journey to Damascus: he now clearly saw the futility of the war, and struggled to come to terms with the revelation. Joseph Califano, his former special assistant, observed McNamara's epiphany and recalled:

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<sup>77</sup> Cited in *CIA: The Pike Report*. Nottingham, England: Spokesman Books, 1977, p. 132.

<sup>78</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Robert S. McNamara, 26 March 1984, fiche no. 332, p.112.

<sup>79</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Robert S. McNamara, 26 March 1984, fiche no. 332, p.119.

<sup>80</sup> *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibit No. 33 A-D, McNamara interview with Crile, Off-the-record, 16 June 1981, p. 2.

The whole thing affected him personally. No doubt at a lot of levels. He had come in with a view that you could measure with some precision victory in a guerrilla war and there was some rational, calibrated way you could raise the level of escalation. And it affected everybody, the whole question of the multisided nature of communism. Personally, it took its toll.<sup>81</sup>

After seven years as the Secretary of Defense, McNamara was exhausted, physically and mentally. If the war strategy of attrition was ineffectual in Hanoi, it was effective in Washington. McNamara had spent an enormous amount of energy opposing the Chiefs, resisting their calls for further escalation, to little effect. Where he viewed military pressure as means of persuasion and communication, the JCS perceived it to be an end in itself. The distinction between means and end was now, in 1967, blurred beyond distinction. The air war was now an end in itself; not the bargaining tool that McNamara had initially envisaged. The requirements of the ground war constantly mounted, with no reasonable end in sight. Events had their own momentum, and this momentum carried them away from McNamara's rational designs. Despite his best efforts to the contrary, the war continued to grind on; slowly, methodically, inexorably. By October, McNamara despaired that it could be stopped. Frustrated, the Secretary commissioned the massive *Pentagon Papers* study, to explore the evolution of American military intervention in Southeast Asia. On 1 November McNamara sent Johnson the most radical proposal to resolve the Vietnam conflict to date, recommending that the United States halt the bombing campaign and stabilize its force deployment at 525,000. In a foreshadowing of the "Vietnamization" strategy of the Nixon administration, McNamara recommended that the United States gradually shift combat operations to the South Vietnamese military.<sup>82</sup> Johnson promptly rejected the proposal. If McNamara's testimony before the Stennis committee seriously damaged his credibility with Johnson, a President who valued loyalty above all else, the 1 November memorandum destroyed it. Thereafter Johnson warned his advisors to be wary of McNamara, that he was no longer on the team: "He's gone dovish on me." With a presidential election only one year away, Johnson could not tolerate a Secretary of Defense who publicly dissented on the most significant foreign policy issue of the day. McNamara's days were numbered.

Unbeknownst to the Secretary, on 13 November Johnson nominated McNamara to be the president of the World Bank. McNamara later learned of the nomination through the *Financial Times* of London. "To this day, I do not know whether I resigned or was fired," McNamara later remarked.<sup>83</sup>

Thus McNamara, the consummate company man, parted with his superior over the war in Southeast Asia and so earned his disdain. All the management mechanisms he introduced -- systems analysis, organizational studies, and PPBS -- and the alternative sources of evaluation -- OSA and DIA -- did not prevent him from blundering into Vietnam. In the end, his own biases and preconceptions

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with Joseph Califano, Shapley, *Promise and Power*, pp. 434-35.

<sup>82</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Memorandum for the President," 1 November 1967. National Security Files, Box 74, 75, LBJ Library.

<sup>83</sup> Telephone interview, Robert S. McNamara, 13 September 1992.

blinded him to the reality of the conflict; his vaunted statistical indicators belied the truth. David Halberstam later wrote:

Years later, when McNamara had turned against the war, he talked with John Vann, the lieutenant colonel who had left the Army in protest of the Harkins policies, and the one who had shown statistically how bad the war was going. McNamara had asked Vann why he had been misinformed, and Vann bluntly told him it was his own fault. He should have insisted on his own itinerary. He should have traveled without accompanying brass, and he should have taken some time to find out who the better-informed people were and learned how to talk to them.<sup>84</sup>

The Pentagon hierarchy and the DIA did not accurately advise the Secretary of the disparity of opinion within the military over the effectiveness of both air and ground operations in Southeast Asia. Instead, the Defense Department enforced its peculiar code of unanimity and optimism which, in turn, contributed greatly to the increased American intervention. Consequently, the McNamara revolution ended right where it began: with a dearth of disinterested analysis. Policy could not be effectively separated from intelligence. Despite the best intentions to the contrary, organizations and individuals continued to project biases into evaluation. Passion and interest were potent motives, difficult to mitigate. What McNamara referred to as "rose-colored glasses" proliferated within the American defense establishment. In the end McNamara discovered, much to his horror, that he had succumbed to their distortions. It was a painful and tragic discovery. Though the epiphany no doubt tormented the Secretary, it did not destroy his faith in modern management. As the *Washington Star* reporter Saul Pett observed on his last day in office: "He [McNamara] leaves with what he came, a continuing faith in reason and logic and the processes of objective analysis."<sup>85</sup> McNamara accepted the post at the World Bank, and agreed to remain as the Secretary of Defense until Johnson could select his replacement.

Ironically, on the day that Johnson fired McNamara, 13 November, the final draft of SNIE 14.3-67 "Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam," with the DIA dissent withdrawn, was signed by Richard Helms. The estimate utilized a OB total of 299,000-334,000 combatants. However, if the irregular forces, enumerated in sections of the estimate separate from the

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<sup>84</sup> Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 305.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Shapley, *Promise and Power*, p. 459. In a trenchant epilogue, the *Washington Post* columnist Joseph Kraft wrote: "Nobody should be under any illusions as to what his departure means. It expresses the failure in the managerial faith, a crisis of the whole postwar generation . . . He embodies perfectly the change in outlook which took place in this country with the transition from depression to prosperity. The mean pickings of the depression had bred an emphasis on harsh philosophical disputes . . . along fundamental lines of political and moral conflict. But prosperity meant enough to go around for everybody if only a way could be got round the embarrassing conflicts of yore. In the dawning atmosphere of success, accordingly there emerged a faith that transcended ideology. That faith -- the preminent faith of the postwar generation -- was a faith in manipulated settlements that went beyond old-fashioned conflicts, in arranged solutions that took all interests into account." McNamara at Pentagon was "its Daniel come to judgment." *The Washington Post*, 27 February 1968 (6:23).

OB tables with disclaimers ("Though in aggregate numbers these groups are still large and constitute a part of the overall Communist effort, they are not offensive military forces. Hence they are not included in the military order of battle total . . ."), were included, communist strength was assessed to be 500,000-600,000.<sup>86</sup> Of course, MACV, and more importantly, Johnson administration officials, generally ignored the irregulars and concentrated on the more conventional units, for combat purposes and to measure progress. This is precisely why the command fought so hard to relegate them to the text.

The CIA concurred with the DIA on the quantification of the political cadres, a reflection of the general conviction of both agencies that the OB understated the strength of communist forces, but did not press the issue as it acknowledged "the apparent obligation for the estimate to be consistent with the figures agreed at Saigon."<sup>87</sup> Accordingly, CIA officials were infuriated to discover that MACV violated the agreement soon after the publication of the SNIE. On 22 November General Westmoreland held a press conference to announce that enemy strength declined from 285,000 to 248,000. But in reality this decline was not the result of attrition in the field, but of administrative reclassification. Two categories contained in previous OB estimates amounting to 250,000-350,000 were simply removed from the aggregate OB and exiled to separate sections distinct from the total.<sup>88</sup> The analytical shell game continued.

In the autumn of 1967 MACV progressively reduced the OB, from 235,852 in late November, to 224,581 in late January.<sup>89</sup> The command asserted that communist strength was declining as a consequence of effective allied military operations in South Vietnam and reduced infiltration from the North. The latter was a contentious allegation: the CIA believed that there was a marked increase in communist infiltration into South Vietnam in late 1967. From September 1967 to January 1968, MACV estimated that approximately 8,000 communist forces infiltrated each month. The CIA assessed the infiltration figures to be much higher, approximately 25,000 per month. The DIA publications, particularly the Defense Intelligence Summary, supported the MACV estimates during this period. However, this support was not the result of parallel analysis. As Major John Williams of the DIA observed: "basically we [DIA] took what MACV gave us on infiltration and published it to the Washington community."<sup>90</sup> The DIA received infiltration statistics in the Weekly Intelligence Estimate Update (WIEU) from the Current Intelligence Indications and Estimates Division of MACV J-2. The WIEUs were finished intelligence products, derived from field intelligence reports, captured

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<sup>86</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, SNIE 14.3-67, "Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam," 13 November 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia*, reel 5, no. 303. Regarding the political cadres, the estimate stated: "Its functions are not primarily military and it is therefore not included in the military order of battle."

<sup>87</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Economic Research, "RE: SNIE 14.3-67: Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam," 23 October 1967. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 5, no. 222.

<sup>88</sup> See Ranelagh, *The Agency*, p. 458.

<sup>89</sup> *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibit No. 198RR, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, "Extract from MACV Order of Battle Summary October 1-31, 1967.;" Joint Exhibit No. 198S, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, "Extract from MACV Order of Battle Summary December 1-31, 1967."

<sup>90</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 46.

documents, prisoner interrogations, and SIGINT. The latter source is particularly noteworthy, for the NSA provided important SIGINT directly to MACV for corroboration and analysis. The NSA did not provide the DIA with corresponding intelligence; thus the agency was dependent upon MACV for vital "all-source" information.<sup>91</sup> It was an peculiar arrangement. Though the DIA was responsible for corroborating MACV intelligence, the agency did not possess the capability to independently substantiate and validate the infiltration estimates. It could do little more than rubber stamp the judgments of the command. When MACV asserted that infiltration was 8,000 per month, as it did in the autumn and winter of 1967, the DIA could do naught but agree.

Conversely, the CIA, which directly liaised with NSA and therefore had access to raw SIGINT, contested MACV's assessments of communist infiltration. CIA analyses in the fall and winter of 1967 concluded that approximately 25,000 communist forces infiltrated into South Vietnam each month.<sup>92</sup> Assessments by the Office of Systems Analyses confirmed these analyses. Beginning in late 1966, at the behest of McNamara, each month OSA formulated an assessment for the President, based primarily on NSA SIGINT, on the effects of the bombing campaign. Preparation of the assessments was supervised by the OSA Deputy Director for Vietnam Philip Odeen and Leslie Gelb, later the director of the *Pentagon Papers* project. When asked in 1984 to reflect on American intelligence activities in late 1967, Gelb stated:

Well, there's one other thing about data. This was the flow of North Vietnamese into the South, and there -- again, my memory is very clear on it -- there was a sharp contradiction between what MACV was reporting for infiltration and what we were getting from the same sources available to MACV, the COMINT, special intelligence. He [Westmoreland] was reporting seven thousand or whatever the hell it was, and this was what he was saying publicly. But we knew from all these other sources that they running over 20,000, between twenty and thirty thousand a month.<sup>93</sup>

Those agencies in a position to verify MACV infiltration rates -- that is, those agencies with direct access to raw signals intelligence -- contested the military estimates. The DIA, deprived of this privilege, naturally endorsed the command posture.

By December 1967, it was evident that the communists were mustering their military strength in the far northwestern corner of South Vietnam, near the United States Marine Corps base at Khe Sanh. MACV was convinced that the Viet Cong were preparing for a massive assault against the American military outpost, reminiscent of the 1954 communist siege of the French garrison at Dienbienphu, which resulted in the defeat of the French in Indochina. The DIA was skeptical of this prospect.

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<sup>91</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, pp. 45-52.

<sup>92</sup> Transcript, Samuel Adams oral history interview, pp. 28-30.

<sup>93</sup> Transcript, Leslie H. Gelb oral history interview, 30 April 1984, by Ted Gittinger, p. 16, LBJ Library. Ronald Smith, Chief of the CIA's South Vietnam branch concurred: "We found that the enemy infiltrated 20,000 to 30,000 men per month in the several months leading up to the Tet offensive." *Westmoreland*, Affidavit, Ronald L. Smith, 23 April 1984, p. B582.

Several analysts who specialized in North Vietnamese tactics and strategy produced an analysis that concluded that the Viet Cong were likely engaged in a feint at Khe Sanh, designed to draw American forces to the defense Marine base and leave the populous coastal plains vulnerable to attack. This analysis, which contradicted the command perspective, was presented to the deputy director of the DIA during a briefing in early January of 1968. The analysts suggested that the assessment be sent to MACV for comment. An analyst present at the briefing recalls the response the suggestion elicited:

This recommendation was the cause for much laughter in the room, first by the general and then in cadenced order by the six colonels present. "How could you possibly know more about this situation than General Westmoreland?" we were asked. We suggested that perhaps our perspective would add to his own and at least allow him to entertain a different point of view from what his staff was feeding him everyday. The paper never left the DIA. The general stated that he was not in the business of contradicting field commanders, but rather was there to support to commanders in the field.<sup>94</sup>

Though subsequent events proved the DIA analysis to be accurate, it was ignored. As January progressed, the Defense Department and the White House become obsessed with Khe Sanh. Johnson ordered that a sand table map and photographic murals of the base be set up in the basement of the White House so that he could personally follow developments.

## Interlude: The Capture of the *Pueblo*

As the attention of the administration focused on South Vietnam, the American espionage community was surprised by an event in the North Pacific. Shortly before midnight on 22 January, a series of distress calls from an American intelligence ship, the *USS Pueblo* reached the Pentagon. Soon thereafter, it was determined that the ship had been boarded by North Korean military forces and forced to proceed to the port of Wonsan. Word of the capture of the *Pueblo* reached the DIA Signal Office in Room 2D901A of the Pentagon swiftly, causing turmoil in the Far East Division of the DIA. The Joint Staff, the JCS, and OSD were immediately notified. Agency intelligence analysts strove to discover the answers to two critical questions: (1) where was the *Pueblo* seized? and (2) had she violated North Korean waters? The incident was comparable to the 12 May 1966 shootdown of the American aircraft over Chinese airspace in that available human intelligence contradicted the technical intelligence on both matters. Where American naval sources suggested that the *Pueblo* was in international waters at the time of the incident, COMINT sources monitoring the air and sea radars of North Korea indicated that the intelligence ship had violated North Korean waters on at least four occasions within three days of her seizure. As in 1966, the DIA dismissed the more accurate and

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<sup>94</sup> Incident recounted in McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, pp. 127-28.

reliable COMINT in favor of the subjective human source intelligence. When informed of the COMINT, the DIA Far East Division Chief was reported to have remarked: "Bullshit. I'm not believing the Communist radar. Those bastards were probably sending false radar tracks. Until we get something better than that, give the Navy the benefit of the doubt."<sup>95</sup> Early DIA intelligence assessments to the President and the Secretary of Defense on the capture were based on Navy operational reports and excluded the contradictory COMINT.

A surprised White House wondered why the *Pueblo* was in such close proximity to North Korean waters and asked the Defense Department to detail the mission of the vessel. The DIA was uncertain; the North Korean current intelligence desk and the collection requirements staff could not determine the mission. In confusion, the DIA contacted the Navy, who, in turn, consulted with the NSA. The NSA informed the White House that the *Pueblo* was assigned the following missions: "(1) determine the nature and extent of naval activity at North Korean ports, (2) sample electronic intelligence along the east coast of North Korea, and (3) keep surveillance on the Soviet fleet operating in the Sea of Japan."<sup>96</sup>

The ignorance of the DIA on the mission of the *Pueblo* is startling, for the agency was responsible for assessing the risk of the mission. The vessel was constructed and operated by the Navy to collect COMINT, and was tasked by both the Navy and the NSA. Proposed missions were compiled into a six month schedule of nine missions, and forwarded to the Joint Reconnaissance Center (JRC) of the JCS for review. The JRC sent the schedule of proposed missions to the DIA for risk assessment. In the specific case of the captured *Pueblo* mission, the schedule was sent to the DIA North Korea desk in Building B of Arlington Hall Station. The war in Southeast Asia placed great demands on North Korean Affairs staff, and at the time the schedule arrived the desk was extraordinarily busy. Twenty-eight year old Army Major Donald Alexander was instructed to review the mission schedule for risk assessment. Alexander was formally instructed to consider "five specific anticipated reaction criteria and five anticipated sensitivity criteria" in the assessment. In later testimony before Congress, Alexander declined to say whether or not he weighed these criteria, nor did he estimate how much time he spent reviewing the proposal. Nonetheless, Alexander evaluated the risk to be "minimal," and returned the schedule to the JRC for implementation.<sup>97</sup> Upon close examination it appears that the DIA did little more than rubber-stamp the proposed missions. One DIA official offers the following scenario:

The way it probably worked in this case is that he got the book on his desk one morning at nine o'clock with orders to return it by noon. That book is the size of Sears, Roebuck catalog. It would be a physical impossibility for him to study each mission in detail.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Quoted in McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 97.

<sup>96</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 98.

<sup>97</sup> Trevor Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability: The True Story of the Pueblo Affair*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1970, p. 191.

<sup>98</sup> Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability*, p. 192.

A subsequent Congressional investigation revealed that the military claims that the risks and benefits of proposed intelligence missions were carefully evaluated were disingenuous. A Special Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee reported:

General Carroll was queried at length concerning the specific and detailed criteria used in risk evaluation which include five specific anticipated reaction criteria and five anticipated sensitivity criteria. General Carroll stated categorically that each of these criteria were considered in the risk evaluation process by his agency. However, he conceded that he could produce no written evidence or supporting document indicating that these criteria had been reviewed in the case of the *Pueblo* mission . . . When asked "how do you know that your staff people have done this?" General Carroll replied, "because they are charged with doing it, because they are professionals."<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, General Carroll later stated that he did not recall any instance in which DIA had disagreed with a minimal risk assessment on a mission after the monthly reconnaissance schedule had been formally prepared and disseminated throughout the intelligence community. This prompted Senator Otis G. Pike of New York to remark: "If everybody characterizes them [the missions] all as minimal risk in order to get them approved in the field, it is sort of a meaningless characterization, isn't it?"<sup>100</sup>

After the mission was designated as minimal risk, it was entered into the "Monthly Reconnaissance Schedule for January 1968." This schedule was approved by the JCS, CIA, NSA, OSD and the 303 Committee (that is, the Senior Interdepartmental Group) in late December. Thereafter the Deputy to the Assistant Director of Production at the NSA reviewed the schedule as part of his routine responsibilities. He noted that the approved *Pueblo* mission was to sail in close proximity to the Wonsan region, territory which North Korea traditionally regarded as sacrosanct. Although the NSA was not formally charged with risk evaluation, on 29 December 1967 the official sent a "warning message" to the JCS expressing his concern that the mission might be more hazardous than presently designated. Copies of the message were sent to the DIA Signals Office and to the National Military Command Center (NMCC) in the Pentagon. The former copy was lost and the latter was ignored. (A DIA analyst explains the last was tagged "information" and filed, when it should have been tagged "action" and forwarded to the North Korea desk, prompting a reassessment.)<sup>101</sup> Not only did the DIA fail to properly assess the risks of the proposed mission, it neglected to respond to new intelligence which called earlier judgments into question. As if these mistakes were not damning enough, several DIA analysts assert that the mission was unnecessary, despite the fact that military officers repeatedly

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<sup>99</sup> USC (91/1) House Armed Services. *Report: Before the Special Subcommittee on the U.S.S. "Pueblo" and EC-121 Plane Incidents.* GPO, 1969 pp. 1653-54.

<sup>100</sup> USC (91/1) House Armed Services. *Hearings: Before the Special Subcommittee on the U.S.S. "Pueblo" and EC-121 Plane Incidents.* GPO, 1969, pp. 699-701. The Final Report of the subcommittee concluded: "The risk assessment criteria established by the JCS were not observed by responsible naval authorities and it is questionable whether the DIA observed these criteria when approving the minimal risk category for the *Pueblo* mission." USC (91/1) House Armed Services. *Report.* p. 1623.

<sup>101</sup> Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability.* pp. 197-98.

testified before Congress that the missions were a "vital element" of the American intelligence effort. The analysts point out there was one COMINT station in South Korea and two in Japan with capabilities to monitor North Korean ports. Furthermore, the United States Air Force conducted an average of sixty missions a month in the Wonson region collecting ELINT to accurately compile the North Korean order of battle. Finally, two COMINT stations in Japan provided detailed daily reports of the movements of the Soviet fleet.<sup>102</sup> Seen in this light, the analysts' claim that the *Pueblo* mission was at best ancillary, at worst redundant, is persuasive. The Congressional inquiry revealed that in assessing the necessity and risk of proposed intelligence missions, the DIA did little more than rubber stamp the recommendations of other organizations. The act was consistent with the past behavior of the agency.

## The Tet Offensive and the OB: Doubt and Indecision at the DIA

The intelligence community was still grappling with the implications of the capture of its espionage vessel when the communist Tet offensive erupted. Launched on 31 January 1968, on the Lunar New Year holiday, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces simultaneously attacked five major cities, dozens of military bases, and scores of towns and villages in South Vietnam while the American military was distracted by Khe Sanh. Despite numerous official claims to the contrary, the Tet offensive surprised the United States. Three days after the start of the offensive, the President told White House reporters that the attacks had been "anticipated, prepared for and met." This was not true. Although MACV anticipated some combat action during the Tet holiday, it did not expect the

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<sup>102</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, pp. 98-99. Staffers on the House Armed Services Committee suspected that the missions were not vital, but could find no evidence to support their intuition.

magnitude, ferocity, and timing of the general offensive.<sup>103</sup> After all, in the three months prior to the offensive, the Ambassador to South Vietnam Ellsworth Bunker and General Westmoreland were loudly proclaiming that enemy strength was on the decline and American victory lay on the horizon. The Tet offensive shattered both claims. Intelligence analysts at the NMCC in the Pentagon on the night of 30 January were stunned by initial reports of the scope and potency of the communist attacks.<sup>104</sup> When notified by the DIA of the dimensions of the offensive McNamara and his staff were surprised.<sup>105</sup> For Lyndon Johnson, the shock of the Tet attacks was severe because he previously dismissed the pessimistic analyses from the CIA, OSA, and more recently, his Secretary of Defense. He endorsed the sanguine assessments of Westmoreland and MACV, embraced the creed of progress, and now, in February 1968, Johnson realized that it was all a phantasm. The enemy was not on the run, weak and demoralized, as Westmoreland reported four days before the Tet offensive in MACV's annual assessment of the war.<sup>106</sup> Rather, the enemy was strong and confident, willing to contest American control over all of South Vietnam. It was a startling, and painful, discovery for Lyndon Johnson.

In the early days of the offensive, the DIA and the military services monitored developments through the NMCC. A former DIA analyst described the NMCC thus:

It is the heart, the brain center for the entire defense establishment with the computer checkup and control center. I am not trying to sound facetious, but did you see Doctor Strangelove with everybody sitting there and all the big glasses and stuff. That is what the NMCC is. And it had 24-hour desk officers. There were people there from CIA, State, DIA, all the Joint Staff elements that worked the desk 24-hours a day, 24-hour watch.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Daniel Graham, the chief of MACV current intelligence and estimates at the time, recalled: "There was one thing that surprised us, and I have to admit that this was an intelligence error. We were not surprised that Tet occurred when it did. We were not surprised that it was countrywide. What we were surprised at, and we have to accept it as an intelligence failure, is that they attacked the cities." Transcript, Daniel O. Graham oral history interview, 8 November 1982, interview I, by Ted Gittinger, p. 39, LBJ Library. The Pentagon Papers state that the offensive took the Johnson administration and the Pentagon "by surprise, and its strength, length, and intensity prolonged this shock." *NYTTP*, p. 592. A West Point textbook concludes: "Giap's Tet Offensive . . . gained complete surprise." Quoted in David R. Palmer, *Summons of the Trumpet: US-Vietnam in Perspective*. San Rafael, CA: Presidio, 1978, p. 180. Although some military men subsequently claimed that the offensive was predicted, such claims are false and misleading. There was some cable traffic which indicated that communist attacks were imminent, yet these were part of the normal flow of intelligence messages from Saigon to Washington. Nothing in these cables suggested that the attacks would be anything other than minor skirmishes. A general communist offensive was neither predicted nor insinuated. See Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 468; George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 321-23; and Transcript, Samuel Adams oral history interview, p. 26. The final word on this subject goes to Clark Clifford, who replaced McNamara as the Secretary of Defense: "In my view, the military reassessment of the Tet Offensive since it ended was incomplete and self-serving. At the time of the initial attacks, the reaction of our military leadership approached panic, and their intelligence failure was a critical factor in both the military setbacks suffered in the early phase of the offensive and the backlash in American public opinion." Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 474.

<sup>104</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 31.

<sup>105</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Robert S. McNamara, 27 February 1984, fiche no. 335, p. 408.

<sup>106</sup> See *NYTTP*, pp. 592-93.

<sup>107</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 84.

Although the NMCC possessed advanced communication capabilities which allowed the center to confer with American military forces throughout the world, it lacked modern map displays. Conversely, the CIA possessed state-of-the-art imagery equipment which it employed to systematically plot and track enemy deployments so that developing troop concentrations were made evident. As a result, the CIA situation room was the axis of attention in the early days of the Tet offensive, visited by defense officials, military officers, and Johnson advisors to view the progress of the campaign. One analyst observed: "If you wanted to understand the war in Vietnam, you had to go to the CIA, at least for a few days."<sup>108</sup> The DIA was effectively upstaged by the CIA. After some time, in exasperation, the DIA asked the CIA to assist it in duplicating the unique maps of enemy deployments. The CIA assented, and the maps were promptly installed in the NMCC. It was a humbling experience for the DIA. After all, intelligence on military operations was to be its forte.

Despite the scope and magnitude of the attacks, MACV estimated that only 84,000 communist forces participated in the offensive.<sup>109</sup> The CIA and the DIA were skeptical of this estimate. George Allen, the deputy chief of Vietnamese Affairs at the CIA at the time, remarked:

MACV's post-Tet analysis estimated that only a fraction on the enemy's available forces -- about 85,000 or so -- were committed to the offensive. This is sheer nonsense, and is based on an excessively narrow definition of the term "committed." The assault on the cities and principal towns, to which this figure relates (and even there it understates the forces involved), was only one facet of the onslaught that extended over a period of two weeks or so in January -- February 1968. Concurrently with this effort, there were attacks on every major allied base and supply installation in Vietnam, attacks on hundreds of hamlets in the countryside, and an active siege in Khe Sang. In addition, main force and local units were deployed to intercept and block allied troop movements reacting to the offensive. MACV's figure of 85,000 (or less) makes no allowance for any of the forces engaged in these other activities. The fact is, virtually the entirety of the Viet Cong and PAVN forces in South Vietnam participated in active combat operations during the "Tet Offensive"; probably as many as 400,000, including hamlet militia troops integrated into main force and local force units for the purpose.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 324.

<sup>109</sup> See William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*. New York: Doubleday, 1976, p. 328; and Transcript, Daniel O. Graham oral history interview, 8 November 1982, interview II, by Ted Gittinger, p. 11, LBJ Library. This estimate, oft-cited by the military command and its supporters, appears to have been a preliminary assessment, based on ambiguous evidence. George Allen believed the figure was spurious, as it was "based on the estimated number of troops in those enemy units already listed in the official Order of Battle and positively identified in contact with friendly forces during the battle." *Westmoreland*, Affidavit, George Allen, 25 August 1983, p. B38. Thus, those units not listed in the OB -- the preponderance of the enemy -- were not counted. There is no suggestion that the estimate was subsequently revised in light of further intelligence, corroboratory or otherwise, nor were the details of the analysis released.

<sup>110</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, p. 322.

The MACV estimate was, however, consistent with the January 1968 communist OB. This estimate assessed enemy strength to be 235,941. It represented a marked decline from the December 1967 OB of 286,438.<sup>111</sup> MACV's January OB angered the CIA because the decrease of insurgents was not attributable to attrition on the battlefield, but yet another clerical revision. Three guerrilla components -- the self-defense forces, the secret self-defense forces, and the political cadres -- were eliminated from the aggregate OB. Inexplicably, the sizable contingent of communist forces participating in the siege of Khe Sanh (estimated to total over 27,000) were also omitted from the estimate.<sup>112</sup> CIA analysts also noted that the communist OB excluded enemy units in Laos and Cambodia. They believed that the omission of the guerrilla units, the forces participating in the siege of Khe Sanh, and the so-called "third country" units from the January OB severely compromised the credibility of the estimate. It misled the Johnson administration into believing that the enemy strength was deteriorating. The Tet offensive shattered this belief.<sup>113</sup>

In the wake of the offensive, McNamara swiftly discovered that the MACV January OB was spurious. Briefed by George Carver of the CIA on 4 February, McNamara was surprised to find that approximately half of the enemy units that were engaged in attacks in South Vietnam were not listed in the January estimate.<sup>114</sup> Though the discovery shocked him, the Secretary was unable to pursue the matter for he was to retire at the end of the month. He did, however, convey this finding to his successor.

The January OB posed a grave problem for MACV. The command was aware that many of the enemy units engaged in the offensive were not listed in the estimate, but Westmoreland and his staff did not wish to acknowledge their presence and so admit past error. However, the command wanted recognition for the casualties United States forces inflicted on the communists during the attacks. The dilemma: How could the command acknowledge only those enemy units which it had defeated while excluding those it had not? MACV overcame this predicament through the development of an input-output formula, ingenious if illogical, that was designated the "attrition methodology." Under this

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<sup>111</sup> See Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive*, pp. 247-48.

<sup>112</sup> National Security Council, Memorandum from Walt Rostow to the President, "Re: Infiltration," 11 February 1968. *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibits No. 632, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> General Westmoreland later retreated from the MACV January OB estimate, telling T. L. Cabbage that "he never doubted the higher CIA numbers which counted all of the Viet Cong military and civilian infrastructure; however, the general did not believe that the J-2 MACV order of battle should count the Viet Cong non-combatants." T. L. Cabbage, "Westmoreland v. CBS: Was Intelligence Corrupted by Policy Demands?" in Handel, *Leaders and Intelligence*, p. 157. General Bruce Palmer, a deputy to Westmoreland, wrote in 1984 that "In May 1970 during the Cambodian invasion, the capture of numerous important documents roughly confirmed the validity of the generally higher enemy strength estimates held by the CIA in November 1967." Palmer, *The Twenty-Five Year War*, p. 213, n. 4. In contrast, the assertion of Renata Adler is commonly evoked by defenders of the MACV order of battle. In a 1986 book she wrote, "there is evidence even in the memoirs of Truong Nhu Tang, founder of the National Liberation Front and Minister of Justice of the Vietcong, that the President's and Joint Chiefs' and Westmoreland's estimate of the total enemy troop strength, including irregulars . . . were more accurate than those of Sam Adams." Renata, *Reckless Disregard*, pp. 36-37. In rebuttal, Sam Adams accurately notes: "[she] doesn't know what she is talking about. Truong's memoirs make no mention whatsoever about VC troop strength, even obliquely." Samuel Adams, "Vietnam Cover-Up," p. 96.

<sup>114</sup> Powers, *Man Who Kept the Secrets*, p. 181.

dubious procedure, communist guerrilla units that were defeated in the field were added to the official OB, then promptly subtracted. Yet enemy units sighted and confirmed but not destroyed were not added to the OB, but held in abeyance pending "further verification," an ambiguous and interminable event. The DIA disparagingly referred to this procedure as the "spring methodology," the implication being that MACV designed order to battle methodologies for every season, each tailored to the operational wishes of the command. The DIA Vietnam Desk officer John Williams was sent to Saigon in February 1968 to confer with MACV on the communist OB estimate. William pointedly recalled that if a MACV intelligence officer was pressed into a professionally unsupportable position.

that sonofabitch would call MACV. They would pump the numbers in the computer in the spring methodology and bounce it right back again to where his estimate worked. Probably the most frustrating thing you have ever been into. You were sent out there by General Carroll to do this [revise the OB] and you go back with your hat in hand and say "Sir, I can't get them to come off a dime." They were playing with the machine.<sup>115</sup>

For the CIA and the DIA, the "spring methodology" was the last straw. They had endured MACV's manipulation of the OB for too long; now they were determined to end the analytical shell game. Both agencies viewed the Tet offensive as a repudiation of the MACV OB and a confirmation of their higher estimates of enemy strength.<sup>116</sup> Accordingly, they sought to reopen the OB dispute. In a 18 February cable to the CIA's Saigon Station George Carver explained the rationale thus:

Recent events indicate that we should reopen the question of excluding numerical military order of battle holding all communist components other than Main and Local Force, Administrative Service and Guerrillas, strictly defined. We strongly suspect that much of the recent excitement was caused by personnel drawn from Secret Self-defense components, perhaps the Assault Youth, and other elements currently out of the record by J-2 MACV on the ground that they "have no military significance."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, pp. 35-36.

<sup>116</sup> Ronald Smith, head of the South Vietnamese Branch in the CIA's Office of Economic Research from 1967-72, observed: "If the MACV enemy Order of Battle had been correct, there would have been no one left to fight after Tet. It was a mathematical absurdity." *Westmoreland*, Affidavit, Ronald L. Smith, 23 April 1983, p. B583.

<sup>117</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum from George Carver to Saigon Station, 18 February 1968. *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibit No. 396A.

Two days later Carver elaborated:

Our belief that the MACV OB too low founded in part on following reasons: First, large numbers of small specialist units (sapper, special action) which undoubtedly participated in attacks were almost certainly absent from MF/LF [Main Force/Local Force] OB. Second, city units (which almost certainly involved in urban offensive) are by and large missing from OB. Third, some large units identified in attack apparently not in OB. Fourth, a review of recent evidence indicates enemy made large scale recruitment drive prior offensive. And finally, certain classes of enemy manpower (who probably in attack) not in OB at all -- for example, secret guerrillas, secret self-defense, and assault youths.<sup>118</sup>

The CIA estimated that an accurate communist OB would be in the range of 515,000 to 589,000. The DIA favored an OB that would lay somewhere between the CIA estimate and the current MACV assessment of 235,941. Needless to say, MACV opposed a revision of the OB, in spite of substantial evidence that the estimate was inaccurate. The battle over the communist OB was again joined.

For its part, the response of the JCS to the Tet offensive was dilatory and fatuous. On 3 February, the Chiefs requested a partial removal of bombing restrictions from Hanoi and the port of Haiphong to reduce "enemy capability for waging war in the South." A *Pentagon Papers* analyst dismissed the recommendation as a superb *non sequitur* due to "the evident ineffectiveness of the bombing in preventing the offensive."<sup>119</sup> President Johnson rejected the proposal. Thereafter the attention of the JCS centered on Westmoreland's possible troop requirements. The Chiefs had long-desired the full mobilization of the armed forces of the United States (including a call-up of the reserves), an event they perceived to be essential for a decisive American victory in South Vietnam. The the Tet offensive provided an opportune pretext for such mobilization. Accordingly, the Chairman of the JCS General Wheeler repeatedly prodded Westmoreland to request additional forces, for he knew that supplemental units could not be granted without a full mobilization.<sup>120</sup>

Westmoreland was understandably loathe to ask for additional forces. For the last four months the American commander had proclaimed victory to be imminent. To now request substantial reinforcements would destroy the credibility of the command, already eroded, by casting doubt on the MACV estimates of communist strength and enemy units committed to the Tet offensive. Such a request would place Westmoreland in the incongruous position of asserting that the enemy was moribund while simultaneously seeking more American forces to defeat the enemy. He suspected, correctly, that the paradox would be difficult to explain to the American polity. Westmoreland was

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<sup>118</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum from George Carver to Saigon Station, 20 February 1968. *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibit No. 39, p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> *NYTPP*, pp. 593-94.

<sup>120</sup> For example, on 9 February 1968 Wheeler cabled Westmoreland: "My sensing is that the critical phase of the war is upon us, and I do not believe that you should refrain from asking what you believe is required under the circumstances." Wheeler also directed that all subsequent communication between the Chairman of the JCS and COMUSMACV be "backchannel," to prevent leaks. Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCS 01589], Memorandum from Wheeler to Westmoreland, "Eyes Only," 9 February 1968. Message File, Papers of William C. Westmoreland, LBJ Library.

therefore reluctant to solicit reinforcements. Under pressure from Wheeler, Westmoreland consented, and on 12 February cabled the President to request an as yet indeterminable number of reinforcements.

In late February, President Johnson sent Wheeler to Saigon to confer with Westmoreland on the precise number of additional troops needed in the theater. During a briefing at MACV, Wheeler was confronted by the incongruity of Westmoreland's position:

The J-2 [intelligence officer] stood up and said, "We have just destroyed the enemy in Vietnam. He is going to die here. He has shot his wad."

And he sits down and the J-3 [operations officer] stands up and says, "We need 260,000 more troops."

And the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs almost fell out of his chair.<sup>121</sup>

The MACV intelligence shop, led by Davidson and Graham, refused to revise its estimates of communist strength and alter its assessment that the Tet offensive was a "last-gasp, go-for-broke" military effort by an enemy on the verge of expiration. To do so would be tantamount to an admission that past intelligence estimates, including the order of battle estimates that MACV had fought so hard for, were in error. As in the case of ROLLING THUNDER, the command stubbornly clung to its past position, irrespective of the preponderance of evidence to the contrary. Yet doubts were beginning to emerge among the JCS. While Wheeler toured South Vietnam, Army Chief of Staff General Harold Johnson asked the DIA to confirm MACV's estimates of enemy capabilities in South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for the following thirty, sixty, ninety, and one-hundred and eighty days.<sup>122</sup> The assignment was notable because it revealed that Johnson, who knew that the MACV communist OB was confined to enemy units in South Vietnam and was therefore not a true indicator of communist military strength in the region, was troubled by the dimensions of the Tet offensive and skeptical of Westmoreland's assertions that it would be easily contained. DIA analysts labored night and day to complete the assessments.

Westmoreland returned to Washington on 28 February and submitted a report which became perhaps the most disputed document of the war. Wheeler presented the President with a bleak assessment of the situation in Vietnam and recommended that 205,179 additional American troops be deployed to the region in three phases. Although Westmoreland and Maxwell Taylor later asserted that the request was a "contingency plan" and Wheeler maintained that the forces were not intended for Vietnam but the "strategic reserve" (as opposed to the theater reserve), both claims were simply wrong. The request, made jointly by Westmoreland and the JCS, was for 205,179 reinforcements, to be deployed to Vietnam or held in the theater reserve intended for Vietnam by the end of 1968.<sup>123</sup> The magnitude of

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<sup>121</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, p. 41. Confirmed in personal interview, Daniel O. Graham, 12 October 1992.

<sup>122</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, pp. 39-40.

<sup>123</sup> Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, pp. 357-58; Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, p. 388; Transcript, Earle Wheeler oral history interview, p. 18. The controversial memorandum was declassified in the nineteen-eighties and is reproduced in Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 483.

the request astonished Washington and triggered a fundamental debate over the course of American involvement in Southeast Asia.

The request first reached Washington by cable on 27 February, a day before Wheeler's arrival. It sparked a fierce exchange between Dean Rusk and McNamara at a meeting over a proposed presidential speech in the State Department. Dean Rusk argued that the deployment should be approved and voiced his belief that additional bombing of North Vietnam was necessary to defeat the enemy. In response, Robert McNamara lost his fabled composure. Clark Clifford recounts his emotional reply:

"The goddamned Air Force, they're dropping more on North Vietnam than we dropped on Germany in the last year of World War II, and it's not doing anything!" he said. His voice faltered, and for a moment he had difficulty speaking between suppressed sobs. He looked at me: "We simply have to end this thing. I just hope you can get hold of it. It is out of control."<sup>124</sup>

It was an extraordinary admission: McNamara, the consummate manager, had lost control.

After receiving the Westmoreland-Wheeler request for 205,179 additional troops, Johnson asked McNamara's successor Clark Clifford to gather a senior group of advisors for a comprehensive review of American policy in Vietnam in light of the proposed deployment. (Although Clifford was confirmed by the Senate on 30 January, he was not sworn in until 1 March, so that McNamara might complete the defense budget for 1969 before his departure.) Subsequently Clifford assembled an informal advisory council composed largely of civilian defense officials. The most influential of these was the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Paul Warnke. Under the direction of Warnke, a lawyer and Massachusetts native, the Office of International Security Affairs, often called "the Pentagon's little State Department," became a bastion of dissent on Vietnam policy. The influence of the dissenters in the Clifford Group was strengthened by Clifford's decision to solicit intelligence estimates on conditions in South Vietnam from the CIA instead of the DIA. The civilian intelligence agency was far more pessimistic, or "dovish" in the parlance of the day, than its military counterparts. Naturally its intelligence assessments prepared for the Clifford Group reflected this cynicism. Throughout early March 1968 the Clifford and his advisors strove to evaluate the state of American intervention in Southeast Asia.<sup>125</sup>

Prior to the Tet offensive, DIA analysts had substantial doubts concerning the situation in South Vietnam as portrayed in MACV intelligence estimates. However, for the most part these doubts were suppressed, either by the analysts themselves or superiors. It was important to stay on the team; to support the command position. Yet the Tet offensive changed this organizational imperative. The communist offensive greatly eroded the credibility of MACV intelligence and allowed the other

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<sup>124</sup> Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 485.

<sup>125</sup> See *NYTPP*, pp. 598-601. The principals in the Clifford Group were McNamara, Rostow, Helms, Warnke, Maxwell Taylor, the Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Fowler, Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs William Bundy, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Philip Habib.

military intelligence components to openly question the command position. After Tet, a former DIA analyst noted: "Everybody on the service staffs, with DIA leading the pack, started writing gloomy estimates with unaccustomed forthrightness and clarity."<sup>126</sup> In response to General Johnson's request for intelligence assessments on communist strength in Southeast Asia, the DIA provided the Army Chief of Staff with pessimistic appraisals: the enemy remained potent and resolute.

The President was troubled by the incongruity of the modest MACV order of battle and the magnitude of the communist attack. In early March he asked the former Secretary of State Dean Acheson to review the military situation in Vietnam and provide him with an independent assessment. Rusk was subsequently briefed by both the CIA and DIA. On 14 March Acheson met with Johnson and provided his personal assessment: the military situation in the country was far worse than MACV was admitting, the enemy was strong and skilled. Acheson simply did not believe the command's order of battle and enemy casualty figures. He told Johnson bluntly: "Mr. President, you are being led down the garden path."<sup>127</sup> At a White House meeting later that week, Johnson instructed Helms to resolve the conflicting order of battle estimates immediately. Helms consulted with Wheeler, and decided to hold an OB conference in early April. When questioned later by Clifford, Wheeler conceded that the conference was futile, that the OB quarrel was insoluble.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, the intelligence community prepared to reexamine the communist order of battle estimates.

In the meantime, the Johnson administration essayed, fitfully and painfully, to plot the future course of American involvement in Vietnam. As March wore on, it became evident to Clifford that the war could not be won, even with a significant military escalation. The new Secretary of Defense, in the past an ardent supporter of Lyndon Johnson's war policies, began to openly voice his skepticism in policy deliberations. Johnson watched Clifford's transformation from stalwart ally to reluctant dissenter with consternation. Shocked by the reversal, Johnson called a meeting of his informal group of elder statesmen and advisors, dubbed "the Wise Men" by White House staffers, to assess the state of the conflict. In the past, the President had shrewdly utilized the Wise Men to preserve political support for his war policies. On this occasion, however, Johnson would not find the statesmen amenable.

The Wise Men gathered at State Department in Washington on 25 March to review background papers on the war prepared by the State Department and the Defense Department.<sup>129</sup> The DIA did not submit an independent assessment of conflict, but contributed to the defense papers. The group was

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<sup>126</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 325.

<sup>127</sup> Quoted in W. Isaacson and E. Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*. London: Faber, 1986, p. 694.

<sup>128</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum from the director to the Chairman on the JCS, 24 April 1968. DDRS: 1991-192.

<sup>129</sup> Those present were Dean Acheson, Secretary of State under President Truman; George W. Ball, Undersecretary of State for Kennedy and Johnson; General Omar N. Bradley, the decorated World War II commander and former Chairman of the JCS; McGeorge Bundy, the special assistant to the President for national security affairs under Kennedy and Johnson; Arthur H. Dean, a respected lawyer and the negotiator of the armistice in Korea; Douglas Dillon, the Secretary of the Treasury under Kennedy and Johnson; Abe Fortas, the Associate Justice of the Supreme Court; Arthur Goldberg, the US Ambassador to the United Nations; Henry C. Lodge, the former Ambassador to South Vietnam; John J. McCloy, the High Commissioner in West Germany under Truman; Robert D. Murphy, a career diplomat; General Maxwell Taylor; and Cyrus Vance, the former Deputy Secretary of Defense.

briefed by General William DePuy, a former field commander in Vietnam now Special Assistant to the JCS for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA). It is notable that DePuy briefed the assemblage rather than a DIA officer. Apparently, the agency had become too "dovish" for the JCS to trust. Not surprisingly, DePuy offered a sanguine appraisal of the war. Clifford, present in dual capacity as Secretary of Defense and elder statesman, recalled:

General DePuy . . . portrayed the Tet offensive as an allied victory -- but his presentation was diminished in a telling exchange with Arthur Goldberg after the General had said that the communists had lost 80,000 men killed in action. What, Goldberg asked, was the normal ration of wounded to killed? *A three-to-one ratio among the Vietnamese would be a conservative estimate*, DePuy answered. How many "effectives" -- regular soldiers -- do you think they now have, Goldberg asked. *Perhaps 230,000, maybe 240,000*, said DePuy. Well, said Goldberg, with 80,000 killed and a wounded ratio of three to one, that makes about 320,000 men killed or wounded. "Who the hell is there left for us to be fighting," he asked.<sup>130</sup>

General DePuy's presentation was followed by that of George Carver, the CIA's chief analyst for Vietnam. He offered a bleak assessment of the conflict as a crude stalemate with no end in sight. Carver also asserted that the CIA believed the MACV order of battle -- presented as 230,000 by DePuy -- was too low, and that a more accurate assessment was approximately 600,000. The Wise Men received additional briefings that evening and the following day. Optimistic presentations by General Creighton Abrams and General Earle Wheeler were not persuasive; the elder statesmen, like McNamara, had lost confidence in the the officials assessments of military progress. In a striking reversal of their previous position, on 26 March the Wise Men recommended that there should be no substantial escalation, nor an extension of the conflict.<sup>131</sup> They suggested that the administration seek disengagement. The turnabout left the President deeply shaken.

In a major address on the war on 31 March, the President announced a unilateral move by the United States to deescalate the conflict, a temporary bombing halt, and -- surprising friends and foes alike -- stated that thereafter he was devoting himself entirely to the war effort and therefore would not seek re-election. The war had consumed Lyndon Johnson, just as it had devoured Robert McNamara.

In preparation for the OB conference called by Helms in April, representatives of the CIA and DIA met in private to try to find common ground. DIA officers repeatedly asserted that they were under considerable pressure to support the MACV OB, which they considered to be spurious. At a meeting on 18 March, the head of the DIA's order of battle effort Lt. Colonel Charles Thomann told George Allen that "we [the DIA] think MACV figures are phony," but "it looks like we'll have to go whole hog with it." After extensive debate, CIA officials persuaded their DIA peers to oppose the MACV

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<sup>130</sup> Recounted in Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, p. 513.

<sup>131</sup> See Clifford, *Counsel to the President*, pp. 511-519; Isaacson and Thomas, *Wise Men*, pp. 700-703.

OB, even if the dispute went all the way to White House for resolution.<sup>132</sup> By early April, both agencies agreed to subscribe to the position that the order of battle estimates should be revised upward substantially.<sup>133</sup>

The 1968 order of battle conference was held at the headquarters of the CIA in Langley, Virginia, from 10-16 April. Like the 1967 "Tower of Babel" conference, the symposium preceded the drafting of an influential SNIE and therefore was attended by representatives of MACV, CINCPAC, NSA, DIA, CIA, and the State Department. Soon after the conference opened it became apparent that MACV was opposed to the proposals of the CIA and DIA to quantify and carry the communist irregular units in the official OB estimate. The participants swiftly adopted their well-established positions. In light of the scope and intensity of the communist offensive the CIA, supported by INR, advocated a substantial increase in the official OB to 440,000-590,000; MACV, supported by CINCPAC, wished to keep the OB consistent with its pre-Tet assessments of communist military strength and offered an estimate of 278,000-328,000; DIA adopted the midpoint posture of 368,000-468,000.<sup>134</sup> During the heated debates over the size and composition of enemy forces, the CIA and MACV remained intransigent. The CIA was convinced that the present OB was spurious and was determined not to placate MACV as it had in the fall of 1967. MACV refused to deviate from the command position that the present estimate was accurate, irrespective of evidence and logic. In one telling exchange, George Allen of the CIA challenged the assertion of Daniel Graham of MACV that the communist hamlet militia should not be carried on the OB because it displayed "no significant military potential." George Allen remembered:

Citing statements from MACV's own reports that a large portion of friendly casualties resulted from the numerous incidents (patrol clashes and harassing attacks) attributable to local militia elements, I questioned whether the colonel [Graham] really believed that the militia posed no significant military threat. "Of course I don't believe it," he replied, "but it's the command position and I'm sticking with it."<sup>135</sup>

Amid this obstinacy the DIA sought to broker a compromise, to no avail. The chief of the DIA delegation Colonel John Lanterman, after observing discussions between CIA and MACV over contentious issues, repeatedly devised compromise positions which he thought might be acceptable to

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<sup>132</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Memo of Conversation with Lt. Col. Charles E. Thomann, DIA, and Mr. George Allen, SAVA," 18 March 1968. *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibit No. 300.

<sup>133</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum from the DCI Richard Helms to the Special Consultant to President Maxwell Taylor, "Status Report on Resolution on Estimates of VC/NVA Strength," 9 April 1968. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 5, no. 1064.

<sup>134</sup> The DIA asserted that the enemy administrative services component should be increased by 10,000-20,000 and that the self-defense forces should be quantified (at 80,000-120,000) and formally carried in the OB aggregate. Central Intelligence Agency, "Report on the Conference on DCI Assessment of Enemy Strengths, 10-16 April 1968," 16 April 1968. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 6, no. 2211.

<sup>135</sup> George Allen, *Indochina Wars*, pp. 317-18.

both sides. Since Lanterman could not formally propose the compromises without the approval of his superior, General Grover Brown (the chief of production at DIA), Lanterman was forced to drive over to the Pentagon to seek official sanction. On several occasions Lanterman received Brown's approval for a compromise position and returned to Langley to present it to the conference only to discover, much to his chagrin, that in his absence Daniel Graham of MACV had learned of the proposal and personally telephoned General Brown at the Pentagon and convinced him to abandon the compromise. It was a frustrating ordeal for Lanterman and the DIA analysts. Major John Williams, however, found some humor in the situation. He later recalled:

That is where we came with the story of used to giggle about it. Of the lady who died and went to heaven and saw St. Peter and she said, "I'd like to meet my husband because he predeceased me." She said, "Well, his name is John Smith." He said, "Well, Ma'am, we have got book after book after book of John Smiths here in heaven." He said, "Tell me something distinctive that I can remember about John Smith, your husband." She said, "Well, I remember on his deathbed that he said if I ever made love to another man, he would roll over in his grave." St. Peter said, "you mean old twirling John Smith."

And we referred to the DIA during these negotiations as old twirling DIA because Lanterman would go over and get one position and come back and Graham had already called and changed the damn thing.<sup>136</sup>

The DIA failed to achieve a compromise on the divisive irregular component of the OB, the CIA and MACV estimates were not reconciled. The CIA refused to submit to the military position as it had in the past, and deadlock resulted. In the end, the conference agreed to continue to disagree.

Aware that an influential SNIE on Vietnam was soon to be drafted incorporating a communist OB, immediately after the conference Graham, in a shrewd bureaucratic maneuver, sent an official MACV dissent on the CIA OB estimate to Helms. Dissents were normally submitted at the end of the estimate process: MACV issued the dissent prior to the preparation of the estimate because they saw the way the wind was blowing, that the CIA would not accept the MACV OB, not now and not in the future, and wished to get the first position paper on the desk of the DCI and so gain a slight bureaucratic advantage from framing the terms of the debate.<sup>137</sup> As was expected, BNE adopted the CIA order of battle estimate of half a million communist forces, and strove to incorporate it into the SNIE. A fierce bureaucratic battle erupted, again pitting the military command against the CIA over enemy military strength. The outcome of the struggle is unclear. It appears that the spring SNIE on Vietnam employed the higher CIA OB, but there is some disagreement as to whether Helms "signed off" (that

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<sup>136</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Major John B. Williams, 29 September 1983, fiche no. 438, pp. 37-38.

<sup>137</sup> *Westmoreland*, Deposition, Colonel George M. Hamshcer, 7 November 1983, fiche no. 263, pp. 178-79.

is, officially sanctioned) the estimate.<sup>138</sup> In any event, the dispute is moot, as after the conference the White House rejected military estimates and relied primarily on CIA order of battle assessments for policy formulation.<sup>139</sup>

The reason for the White House switch is simple: all the information, from public and private sources, that the President and his staff received concerning the military situation in Southeast Asia was at odds with the modest enemy strength estimates supplied by MACV. It was evident that American forces were being tested by a powerful, tenacious enemy. Sam Adams observed:

Westmoreland said there were eight-four thousand at max committed at Tet. Again, he is talking about the first two or three weeks of this offensive. Okay, you can do this mathematically -- this is a joke for me -- if it took eighty-four thousand men to kill fifteen hundred Americans in the first three weeks, how many did it take to kill the other six or seven thousand through June? In other words, this notion that Tet stopped on the third week in February is baloney. Tet continued for another four months, which you can see by American and South Vietnamese casualty statistics. So this business of eighty-four thousand committed -- okay, they committed eighty-four thousand to kill the fifteen hundred GIs, poor bastards, in the first three weeks of Tet. Who killed all the rest of them?"<sup>140</sup>

Indeed, the two months following President Johnson's historic speech of 31 March contained the fiercest fighting of the Vietnam War, wherein 3,700 American soldiers were killed and 18,000 more were wounded seriously enough to require hospitalization.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, from January to July 1968 the overall Vietnam casualty rate reached unprecedented historical proportions, surpassing the overall casualty rate for the Korean War and the Mediterranean and Pacific theaters during World War II.<sup>142</sup> The rising number of body bags arriving from Vietnam to America poignantly contradicted MACV's claims that the enemy was weak and frail.

The North Vietnamese had responded to Johnson's offer to negotiate by announcing on 3 April that they would send representatives to Paris for "official conversations." Diplomatic negotiations began in earnest on 7 May. The United States delegations was led by the venerable Averell Harriman and the diligent Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance. The JCS were against the negotiations, for they maintained that the communists had been badly bled by Tet and agreed to negotiations only to gain

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<sup>138</sup> CIA sources have maintained that Helms signed the SNIE, a claim that Daniel Graham disputes. Personal interview, Daniel O. Graham, 12 October 1992.

<sup>139</sup> Telephone interview, Walt W. Rostow, 29 September 1992.

<sup>140</sup> Transcript, Samuel Adams oral history interview, p. 24.

<sup>141</sup> White House, Situation Room, Memorandum from Duty Officer to the President, "Casualties: 9 June 1968." DSDUF Files, LBJ Library.

<sup>142</sup> Cited in Ronald Spector, *After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam*. New York: Free Press, 1993, pp. 317-18. From Office of the Secretary of Defense, Directorate for Statistical Services, DOD forms 1300, MACV Strength Reports, Army Build-up Progress Reports. Army Center of Military History. Spector, a former director of Naval History for United States Navy, adds: "Indeed, during the first half of 1968, the *overall* Vietnam casualty rate exceeded the overall rate for all theaters in World War II, while the casualty rates for Army and Marine maneuver battalions was more than four times as high." p. 55.

time to regroup and recover. Intelligence support for the American negotiators was provided by an ad hoc inter-agency group, which assessed daily battlefield and diplomatic developments. In light of the recent tendency of the DIA to endorse the bleak CIA appraisals of the war effort, the JCS were concerned that the military intelligence agency might deviate from the command position and go "dovish." Consequently, when the inter-agency intelligence group was established, the Chiefs took precautions to prevent the DIA from supporting the civilian desire for a diplomatic settlement. A former DIA analyst recalled:

Expectations were running high at that time, so the JCS picked men with the hardest noses possible for assignment to the committee. They faked DIA out by ensuring that their representatives outranked the DIA and service intelligence staffs by at least one grade. The natural result within the Pentagon was the predominance of the JCS view -- which at the time was, "We don't want to give those bastards an inch."<sup>143</sup>

General Carroll, aware that he had already angered the JCS by his refusal to endorse the MACV order of battle, was not prepared to challenge the Chiefs on this matter. In an effort to mollify tensions between his agency and the JCS, he chose intelligence analysts that were amenable to the Chiefs' view on negotiations (that is, hawkish) to represent the DIA in the group.<sup>144</sup> It was a revealing act: Carroll only challenged MACV on the OB when presented with overwhelming evidence that the estimate was erroneous. It had still been a difficult decision for the director of the DIA; he was uncomfortable to challenge his superiors and reluctant to question the judgment of the command. Yet he had parted with the military establishment on the order of battle, a courageous, albeit belated, decision. But in May 1968 he was unwilling to challenge the fundamental tenet of American involvement in Southeast Asia.

In May, MACV again lowered the OB, in spite of a large spring offensive launched by the communist forces. Analysts at the CIA and DIA were bewildered; the estimate clearly contradicted events in the field. Throughout the month, MACV insisted that the offensive was a last gasp effort, launched in desperation. The DIA was cynical: American casualties from 5 to 18 May were twice that of the first week of Tet, when, according to the MACV OB, the communist forces were twice as strong.<sup>145</sup> Once more the discrepancy between the enemy OB and American casualties suggested that the MACV estimate was erroneous.

Analysts at the CIA and DIA were angered by MACV's disregard of COMINT which indicated that communist infiltration had significantly increased after Tet. The command ignored this intelligence, refusing to increase the OB accordingly. On 12 June, the CIA and DIA informed the White House that they were skeptical of the infiltration figures employed by MACV (at the time 6,600 per month), and

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<sup>143</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 132.

<sup>144</sup> McGarvey, *CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, p. 133.

<sup>145</sup> White House, Situation Room, Memorandum from Duty Officer to the President, "Casualties: 9 June 1968." DSDUF Files, LBJ Library.

suggested that the actual numbers might be twice as high.<sup>146</sup> Subsequently, the DIA sent a team of intelligence analysts to Saigon to investigate why MACV disregarded the new infiltration figures. The DIA team arrived in Saigon to a cool reception. MACV intelligence officers were far from cooperative. In a revealing letter to his wife, dated 24 June 1968, the MACV chief of OB, James Meacham wrote:

The types from DIA were here and badgered me endlessly trying to pry the truth from my sealed lips. They smell a rat but don't really know where to look for it. They know we are falsifying the figures, but can't figure out which ones and how.<sup>147</sup>

The DIA was unable to sway MACV to accept higher infiltration and a corresponding increase in the OB. Agency analysts returned to Washington in frustration; the OB dispute remained unresolved. After further consultations with the CIA, the DIA was convinced the OB should rise, but uncertain by how much. The matter remained open throughout the summer.

It was an arduous summer for the DIA. The simmering OB dispute made the formulation of national estimates on Vietnam impractical and complicated relations with MACV. Moreover, the agency was harshly criticized by Congress and the press. As a result of the perceived failures of the DIA during the *Pueblo* capture and the Tet Offensive, the powerful Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Representative Jamie Whitten of Mississippi, commissioned an independent investigation of agency operations. Completed in March, the study censured the agency for belated and timid analysis and inept management.<sup>148</sup> Subsequently, the House Appropriations Committee became a vocal critic of military intelligence operations, demanding that the agency be reformed and its budget reduced.<sup>149</sup> Such criticism was contagious: during the 1968 campaign for the Presidency, candidate Richard Nixon repeatedly censured the agency for its failure to predict the threat to the *Pueblo* and vowed to abolish it if elected.<sup>150</sup>

In early September the CIA and DIA agreed to advocate a thirty percent increase in the estimated figures for communist infiltration in South Vietnam. The CIA hoped that this agreement would lead to a parallel agreement on the communist OB, yet the DIA was doubtful of the prospect. This doubt was the result of enduring differences between the intelligence agencies and MACV over the current size and composition of North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam. In brief, MACV wished to

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<sup>146</sup> White House, Memorandum from Robert Ginsburgh to Walt Rostow, "Infiltration," 12 June 1968. DDRS: 1986-1784. Also see Joint Chiefs of Staff, CM-3399-68, Memorandum from Earle Wheeler to Walt Rostow, "Evaluation of the Infiltration Memorandum," 13 June 1968. DDRS: 1986-673.

<sup>147</sup> *Westmoreland*, Joint Exhibit No. 241K, "Correspondence of James Meacham," 24 June 1968, p. 31047.

<sup>148</sup> The two hundred page report, "The Management and Conduct of Military Intelligence Activities in the Department of Defense," was prepared by the Survey and Investigation Staff of the House Appropriations Committee and released to the committee on 14 March 1968.

<sup>149</sup> *New York Times*, "House Unit Votes Big Defense Bill," 19 July 1968, (1:7).

<sup>150</sup> See Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability*, p. 395.

classify the majority of these formidable units as as “irregular” forces and thereby exclude them from a formal listing in the OB through the continued use of the now-notorious “spring methodology.” The DIA scorned this methodology and alternately proposed a significant increase in the guerrilla statistics; a substantial increase, but not as great as that desired by the CIA (totaling 120,000 and 140,000 to 155,000 respectively).<sup>151</sup> Neither agency could persuade MACV to accept the proposed revisions. Furthermore, a working group of CIA and DIA analysts was unable to resolve the differences between the two intelligence organizations.<sup>152</sup>

At the end of September, officers from the DIA and MACV met at CINCPAC in Hawaii in an attempt to establish a common military estimate of the problematic enemy “irregulars.” The DIA successfully lobbied MACV to accept a figure halfway between the September CIA and DIA proposals. MACV agreed to adopt this figure in return for the acquiescence of the agency to MACV’s “spring methodology.” The DIA consented. DIA officials viewed the compromise as a stunning success: the command had finally agreed to a substantial increase in the irregular forces: a revision from 99,000-102,000 to 130,000; an objective the agency had long pursued. The CIA, however, was not impressed. In an irate memorandum of 16 October, Paul Walsh, the director of the CIA’s Office of Economic Research, informed DCI Richard Helms that the agency would thereafter end negotiations with the military organizations over the OB, noting that:

The differences between the two ranges [of the military and the CIA] for the end of August 1968 are quite small (about seven percent). If this were the only factor, I would not be concerned. The differences in methodology, validity and consistency are, however, highly significant and are likely to result in more divergent numerical estimates in the future . . . DIA uses a starting base that is demonstrably in error, and gives, we believe, and inaccurate picture of NVA forces in Administrative Service units.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Economic Research, Memorandum for the Record, “CIA/DIA Session on the Estimate of North Vietnamese Forces in South Vietnam, 12 September 1968. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 6, no. 533.

<sup>152</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Economic Research, Memorandum for the directors of the CIA and DIA, “Results of CIA/DIA Working Group on Estimates of NVA Presence in South Vietnam.” 20 September 1968. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 6, no. 555.

<sup>153</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Economic Research, Memorandum for the Record, “CIA-DIA Meetings on Estimates of NVA Forces in South Vietnam,” 16 October 1968. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 6, no. 617.

According to Walsh, the irregular agreement was a hollow achievement for the DIA: in order to get MACV to accept higher figures in the short run the agency had agreed to a spurious methodology which would yield lower figures in the long run. It was, in many respects, a Pyrrhic victory.<sup>154</sup>

For the remainder of the Vietnam conflict, the CIA formulated its own enemy OB, independent of the Defense Department, although it continued to exchange information with the military agencies. The civilian intelligence analysts had finally concluded that the military command was incapable of separating its political and operational interests from dispassionate analysis. Ironically, three months later the DIA would conclude the same and advance an OB significantly lower than that of MACV for strategic estimates.<sup>155</sup> In fact, by February 1969, the Nixon administration, the JCS, and the Washington intelligence community were so cynical of the MACV OB that they essentially removed the command from the OB estimative process. At the request of the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, an Inter-Agency Intelligence Committee was established, composed of the DIA, INR, NSA, and the CIA (the latter chaired the committee), to produce a detailed OB on communist forces (both Viet Cong and North Vietnamese) in Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam for future NIEs. From the start, the committee was in agreement that the MACV OB was spurious and proposed a substantial increase in the estimate, approaching 500,000. Subsequently, the committee produced a putative OB, which formed the basis for SNIE 14-3-69 in March 1969.<sup>156</sup> Thus MACV lost its hegemony over the communist OB in Southeast Asia and the DIA fell into further disrepute.

## Final Thoughts

Absent from this tale are the actions of the USIB, ostensibly the management forum of the American intelligence community. Its absence should not be surprising. As recounted in previous chapters, the military departments persistently obstructed the bids of McNamara to reorganize the Board in line with the recommendations of the Joint Study Group to enable it to take a dynamic role in directing national espionage operations. Deprived of the structure and authority needed to arbitrate disputes within the intelligence community, the influence of the USIB was marginal at best. Though the contentious NIEs and SNIEs on Southeast Asia -- wherein the OB was the "gut" of the estimate -- were prepared under its auspices, in reality the Board was largely idle. It allowed the individual

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<sup>154</sup> Walsh noted that in the recent past the DIA had spurned the "spring methodology" -- a gains/loss technique applied to base figure -- as of questionable accuracy and reliability for it relied disproportionately on "soft" intelligence, but now cast aside its reservations without explanation. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Economic Research, Working Papers, "The NVA Presence in South Vietnam." 21 October 1968. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 6, no. 224-232.

<sup>155</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum from Richard Helms to Walt Rostow, "Reassessment of the Number of North Vietnamese Troops in South Vietnam," 10 November 1968. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 6, no. 653.

<sup>156</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Economic Research, "Chronology of the VC/NVA OB Problem," 22 October 1969. Kesaris, *Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Supplement*, reel 6, no. 720.

intelligence agencies to contest the specifics of estimates and benignly bestowed its imprimatur on the finished product. Its actions (or, more precisely, inaction) were a far cry from that proposed by the Joint Study Group and desired by the Secretary of Defense. In 1968, the USIB did not direct the community; rather it supervised through proxy and diffidence.

In late 1966, Sam Adams stirred the embers of the smoldering OB controversy, re-kindling the doubts of many Washington intelligence analysts. By early 1967, there was a preponderance of evidence to justify these doubts. Even officers within the military were openly skeptical of the accuracy of the OB promoted by MACV. The time was ripe for the DIA to dissent. The agency had long harbored private cynicism regarding the estimates, but lacked the capabilities and will to challenge them. In 1967 it was opportune for the agency to act: its analytical capabilities were now fully developed, its analysts were proficient and sure, and -- most importantly -- it had powerful institutional allies in the CIA, INR, and OSA to contest MACV. Then, if ever, the DIA was poised to successfully assert its contrasting evaluations. Yet once more the agency failed to act. Although many DIA officials -- including Director Carroll himself -- doubted the accuracy of the MACV OB, nonetheless the agency staunchly defended it in SNIE meetings in the spring of 1967. When enjoined to support the command, the agency faithfully complied. Colonel Daniel Graham persuaded DIA officers to accept an arbitrary ceiling of 300,000 insurgents not through reasoned analysis, but the assertion of prerogative. Thereafter, the agency, wracked by doubt and indecision, idly watched the 1968 Tet Offensive unfold. Yet -- and this is especially revealing -- even after the offensive, when confronted with irrefutable evidence that the MACV OB was in error, the agency delayed nearly eight months in revising the estimate. Though the agency possessed the insight to recognize that the OB was false, it lacked the resolution to act.

The irony is that by all accounts the agency's superiors would have been receptive to dissent. McNamara, tormented by doubt, would likely have been amenable to an increase in the communist OB, for it would have provided him with further justification to pursue the negotiations for which he longed. In fact, in 1968 he turned to OSA for dissenting estimates on the state of the conflict. Similarly, the JCS, intent on forcing Lyndon Johnson to fully mobilize the American armed forces, would have viewed an increase in the OB favorably as a means to attain this end. Recall that in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive they persuaded Westmoreland to request over 200,000 additional troops to force the President's hand. Of course the request came too late: the United States had already been dealt a devastating setback. Yet had the DIA pressed for an increase in the OB earlier, perhaps the additional troops might have been in South Vietnam by January 1968 or perhaps the American defense establishment would have been advised of the true magnitude of the communist military threat, and taken precautions accordingly. Such thoughts are speculative: the reality is that the DIA failed to serve the interests of the JCS, the Secretary of Defense, and the nation as a whole. This failing was the result of an organizational inclination toward pusillanimity and timid leadership. Flawed from birth, the agency showed itself incapable of surmounting its heritage.

## Epilogue

On 20 January 1969 Richard M. Nixon was inaugurated as the thirty-seventh president of the United States. Nixon chose Melvin Laird, the former congressman from Wisconsin, to be his Secretary of Defense. As the ranking Republican on the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, Laird was extremely knowledgeable about the American military intelligence effort, particularly the problems associated with the DIA. After assuming office, Laird promptly ordered his Assistant Secretary of Defense for Administration Robert F. Froehlke to study present military intelligence operations and offer recommendations. On 29 July 1969 Froehlke submitted a report to the Secretary that was extremely critical of military intelligence, concluding that the management of Defense Department intelligence activities was fragmented and chaotic. As a result, Laird commissioned a more expansive study, the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel (chaired by Gilbert H. Fitzhugh), to examine and make recommendations on the organization, management, and operations of the Department of Defense. While awaiting the completion of this inquiry, Laird transferred the authority and responsibility for several intelligence functions, notably budgetary oversight and collection requirements determination, to the office the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Administration in August.<sup>1</sup> Due to the failures of the DIA in both areas, Laird made it known that he expected the resignation of General Joseph Carroll. Carroll reluctantly complied, and resigned in September 1969.<sup>2</sup> Carroll's departure marked the end of an era for the DIA: its founder, first director and two Democratic administrations lay in its wake. An era of uncertainty and retrenchment beckoned.

After assuming office, the new director of the DIA Lt. General Donald V. Bennett immediately announced yet another internal reorganization of the agency, intended to improve its strategic intelligence capabilities in support of national policy planning.<sup>3</sup> The reorganization was a belated response to persistent complaints from policymakers that the agency failed to provide intelligence relevant to their concerns. Laird was unimpressed. Frustrated by the deliberate pace of reform, in the fall of 1970 the Secretary of Defense attempted to modify the DIA charter so that the director of the DIA would report directly to him, rather than the JCS.<sup>4</sup> Mirroring the bureaucratic struggle of 1961, the military leadership fiercely resisted this revision and insisted that the agency respond first and

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<sup>1</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 164-65. In 1970 the budget for strategic military intelligence was disclosed to be \$2.9 billion. Over 130,000 people were employed in this effort. *New York Times*, "Intelligence Costs for Military in '70 Put at \$2.9 Billion," 19 May 1970 (4:3). The figures excluded the tactical intelligence costs of the military departments and the CIA and INR.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Times*, "Laird Names Aide to Improve Intelligence Setup at Pentagon," 14 August 1969 (6:1); and confidential interview, former DIA official.

<sup>3</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 168-69, 193.

<sup>4</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 200; and *New York Times*, "Laird to Tighten Rule Over Military Intelligence," 24 December 1970 (1:3).

foremost to the JCS. In the end, they prevailed. In matters other than domestic intelligence and counterintelligence activities, the chain of command continued to run from the Secretary of Defense through the JCS to the DIA. After examining the dispute and its resolution, the historian of the DIA Deane Allen concluded: "The situation remained business as usual."<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, the national intelligence requirements of OSD continued to be neglected by the agency. In desperation, on 5 November 1971 Laird established an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence as the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense for the management of intelligence resources, programs, and activities.<sup>6</sup> The creation of the post was an explicit rebuke of the DIA. The Secretary, for all intents and purposes, resurrected the position of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations: an office (that is, OSO) that the DIA had replaced on 31 October 1961. It was the final irony of this tale: the impotence of the agency was so great that the very organization the DIA was created to supplant was restored. The fears of the critics of the agency had become reality: the agency had evolved not into an effective manager, but simply another layer of duplication. Indeed, the agency perpetuated the very faults it had been created to rectify -- redundancy and inefficiency.<sup>7</sup> Far from being the adjudicator of the military intelligence community, the DIA was in fact its clerk.

In creating the DIA eight years earlier, Robert McNamara had two objectives: to improve the quality of strategic intelligence estimates and provide central management for military intelligence operations. As the foregoing chapters have demonstrated, the Secretary of Defense was thwarted in both objectives. The military departments repeatedly resisted substantive reform of the USIB: the centerpiece of the Joint Study Group recommendations.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the NIE process remained contentious: marked by redundancy and vulnerability to political and bureaucratic influences, as demonstrated during the Vietnam conflict.<sup>9</sup> In its 1970 report, the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel concluded:

It is paradoxical that DIA cannot develop a capability to perform its assigned functions while the Military Departments, which provide a large proportion of DIA personnel, maintain the required capabilities to produce intelligence estimates -- or more properly, threat assessments -- which are crucial to decisions on weapons

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<sup>5</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> Deane Allen, *DIA*, pp. 203-205.

<sup>7</sup> Church Committee (I), p. 349.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the continued presence of the military departments on the USIB, in 1968 General Carroll testified before the House Appropriations Committee: "In addition, the Intelligence Chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force also sit in on all the [USIB] meetings. They are officially designated as observers, but I feel for all practical intents and purposes they are full-fledged members of the family and function in the same manner as the rest of us." USC (90/2) House Appropriations Committee, *Hearings, Department of Defense Appropriations, FY1969*. GPO, 1968, p. 501.

<sup>9</sup> For example, several Defense Department studies in 1967-68 identified 187 separate and duplicative efforts in long-range threat projection conducted by the military departments. Defense Intelligence Agency [DJSM-1594-68], Memorandum from Director of the DIA to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, "Long-Range Threat Projections," 27 December 1968. (Declassified at request of author) p. 1.

systems research and development. DIA is charged with the responsibility, but has never been organized to discharge it. The Military Departments produce such estimates and the Air Force, at least, intends to enlarge its capability.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, the DIA proved to be incapable of effectively managing military intelligence operations. It simply lacked the authority, resources, and will to challenge the entrenched military institutions. In 1968 the House Appropriations Committee concluded:

The committee is convinced that certain intelligence operations are overstaffed, duplicative activities are being carried out, and there is general inadequacy of management. There appeared to be far too many separate operation units or intelligence organizations, too many layers of authority, and too much time, personnel, and money is being spent on accumulating a wide variety of information of no immediate concern and of doubtful value.<sup>11</sup>

The compromise that created the DIA -- that it report to the Secretary of Defense through the JCS -- weakened the authority of the agency to such an extent that it was unable to contest the established military organizations. The demands of the military leadership were more immediate and therefore more compelling: consequently, the agency tended to be more amenable to the requirements of the JCS than the Secretary of Defense. Assigned miscellaneous and sundry tasks, the agency lacked a defined mission and a clear sense of purpose. Staffed largely with military officers who were acutely aware of their reliance upon the armed services for future assignment and promotion, DIA intelligence analysts displayed a propensity to acquiesce to the operational preferences of the military departments and the U&S Commands. Diffident leadership, unwilling to assert agency prerogatives and contest organizational jurisdictions, contributed to the enduring impotence of the DIA.

For the failures of the DIA, many share the blame: the chieftains of the military departments, contemptuous and intransigent; the JCS, myopic and politic; and the leadership of the DIA, diffident and equivocal. Yet Robert McNamara is particularly culpable. As the Secretary of Defense it was his responsibility to ensure that the national interest prevailed over organizational self-interest; that defense intelligence prevailed over military intelligence. As the Secretary himself once observed:

Every hour of every day the Secretary is confronted by a conflict between the national interest and the parochial interests of particular industries, individual services, or local areas. He cannot avoid controversy in the whole range of issues which dominate the headlines if he is to place the interest of the many above the interest of the few. And yet it is the national interest, above all, which he has sworn to serve.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Blue Ribbon Defense Panel (Fitzhugh Panel), *Report to the President and the Secretary of Defense on the Department of Defense*. 1 July 1970. GPO, 1970, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> USC (90/2) House Appropriations Committee. *Hearings*, p. 143.

<sup>12</sup> McNamara, *Essence of Decision*, pp. 103-104.

By his own standards, McNamara failed to fulfill his responsibility.

The consequences were grave. Erroneous intelligence during the Cuban missile crisis took the nation to the brink of war. Armed conflict -- perhaps a nuclear exchange -- was averted largely by intuition and chance. In Vietnam, this luck was absent. Inaccurate military intelligence, prejudiced by political and operational influences, contributed to American intervention and escalation in Southeast Asia. The DIA could not "ride herd" (in the memorable words of Admiral Samuel Frankel) over the military agencies; could not consolidate, integrate, and coordinate the military intelligence community. Consequently, strategic intelligence operations were fragmented, duplicative, and frequently contradictory. They played no small role in pushing the United States into the quagmire of Vietnam, destroying the lives and careers of countless people and poisoning the American polity. In the end, McNamara was consumed by the war, his dream of controlling the Pentagon shattered.

It was, McNamara said much later, the system which had created the war. Left unspoken, however, was the knowledge that he had helped create the system and ultimately failed to control it.

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