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9 of 4/10/73

Putting the Military in Charge of 'Intelligence'

An article by the Pentagon general newly appointed to curb the Central Intelligence Agency throws a strong light at the murky fog which envelops the CIA.

The article by Maj. Gen. Daniel Graham, which appears in the current issues of the Army magazine, strongly urges the transfer of some of the CIA's most important functions to the DIA, the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency. The fact that Graham has been appointed chairman of the inter-agency committee which will ride herd on both the CIA and DIA suggests that the case he presented in his article has been accepted by the White House.

What is at issue is not simply a bureaucratic conflict between intelligence agencies or men ambitious for promotion, nor even a squabble about who is to control the \$6 billion spent annually by the "intelligence community," although all these elements are present in the dispute. The real issue behind the struggle over the reorganization of the CIA concerns the whole direction of U.S. defense policy and, therefore, foreign policy.

On the face of it, Graham provides what looks like the first insider's account of the perversion of the intelligence process by the military in pursuit of bigger defense appropriations. He admits that military intelligence has often supplied the exaggerated estimates of the Soviet threat demanded by the defense chiefs—"the bigger the better. "And when military intelligence failed to "maximize enemy threats" as instructed, it was denounced by the brasshats for "wishful thinking."

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heel under such criticism and stumped hard for the worst-case view." Although he believes that this attitude is waning now, "there are still some old hands" in military intelligence who are so used to yielding to their Pentagon superiors "that they automatically produce threat estimates designed to please, or at least certain not to offend." Military planners who profess

to "coordinate" an estimate produced by military intelligence are quite capable, he says, of reducing it "to the lowest common denominator mush," and to "inoffensive pap."

The purpose of this remarkable confession which Graham makes on behalf of his colleagues, if not on his own—for he implies that his own estimates were always right—is not far to seek. He says that by "abusing the intelligence process" the military professionals have "produced the best arguments for taking the responsibility for threat description out of military hands," and have caused the decision-makers to turn elsewhere for "objective" assessments.

It is this distrust of the DIA, which has caused successive Presidents to turn to the CIA, that Graham has set out to cure. The burden of his argument is that the military can and will now make the right decisions—although he does not make it clear why it should be trusted to mend its ways.

The decisions about the defense budget, and about the nature of U.S. forces and weapons development, were always supposed to be made in response to intelligence estimates of the Soviet "threat." But more often than not they resulted from a mix of budget-

ary restraints, intelligence estimates, pressures by the military-industrial complex pork-barrel interests and many others.

Now a basic change, which is as yet barely perceptible, is taking place under the surface. The U.S.-Soviet agreements on the limitation of strategic arms, and Mr. Nixon's grand design for a "generation of peace," have brought entirely new factors into military policy. The major weapons programs such as the B-1 bomber and the Trident submarine missile systems which are now pending are far more costly than any in the past. U.S. decisions on them will depend to a considerable extent on Mr. Nixon's estimate of the effect they have on the strategic balance, and on arms reduction bargaining.

Therefore, if the Pentagon is to have a real influence on the making of defense policy, it must wrest control of the intelligence estimates back from the CIA. Even if Graham's appointment means that his argument about the control of intelligence has been accepted by the White House, the struggle is by no means over.

The issues involved in this conflict, which will have a major bearing on strategic arms limitation and disarmament, are so momentous that the next battle will be joined almost before the last is over.