

Foreign Policy: Disquiet Over Intelligence Setup

Following is the fifth in a series of articles exploring the Nixon Administration's style in foreign policy:

By BENJAMIN WELLES **JAN 22 1971**

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 21 — President Nixon has become dissatisfied with the size, cost and loose coordination of the Government's worldwide intelligence operations.

According to members of his staff, he believes that the intelligence provided to help him formulate foreign policy, while occasionally excellent, is not good enough, day after day, to justify its share of the budget.

Mr. Nixon, it is said, has begun to decide for himself what the intelligence priorities must

be and where the money should be spent, instead of leaving it largely to the intelligence community. He has instructed his staff to survey the situation and report back within a year, it is hoped—with recommendations for budget cuts of as much as several hundred million dollars.

Not many years ago the Central Intelligence Agency and the other intelligence bureaus were portrayed as an "invisible empire" controlling

Continued on Page 8, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

foreign policy behind a veil of secrecy. Now the pendulum has swung.

The President and his aides are said to suspect widespread overlapping, duplication and considerable "boondoggling" in the secrecy-shrouded intelligence "community."

In addition to the C.I.A., they include the intelligence arms of the Defense, State and Justice Departments and the Atomic Energy Commission. Together they spend \$3.5-billion a year on strategic intelligence about the Soviet Union, Communist China and other countries that might harm the nation's security.

When tactical intelligence in Vietnam and Germany and reconnaissance by overseas commands is included, the annual figure exceeds \$5-billion, experts say. The Defense Department spends more than 80 per cent of the total, or about \$4-billion, about \$2.5-billion of it on the strategic intelligence and the rest on tactical. It contributes at least 150,000 members of the intelligence staffs, which are estimated at 200,000 people.

Overseeing all the activities is the United States Intelligence Board, set up by secret order by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 to coordinate intelligence exchanges, decide collection priorities, assign collection tasks and help prepare what are known as national intelligence estimates.

The chairman of the board, who is the President's representative, is the Director of Central Intelligence, at present Richard Helms. The other members are Lieut. Gen. Donald V. Bennett, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency; Ray S. Cline, director of intelligence and research at the State Department; Vice Adm. Noe Gayler, head of the National Security Agency; Howard C. Brown Jr., an assistant general manager at the Atomic Energy Commission, and William C. Sullivan, a deputy director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Intelligence men are aware of the President's disquiet, but they say that until now—half-way through his term—he has never seriously sought to comprehend the vast, sprawling conglomeration of agencies. Nor, they say, has he decided how best to use their technical resources and personnel—much of it talented—in formulating policy.

Two Cases in Point

Administration use—albeit, tardy use—of vast resources in spy satellites and reconnaissance planes to help police the Arab-Israeli cease-fire of last August is considered a case in point. Another was poor intelligence coordination before the abortive Sontay prisoner-of-war raid of No. 21, at which time the C.I.A. was virtually shut out of Pentagon planning.

By contrast, the specialists point out, timely intelligence helps in decision-making.

It was Mr. Cline who spotted in U-2 photographs a sign of a Soviet nuclear submarine buildup at Cienfuegos, Cuba, last September. His suspicions, based on the arrival of a mother ship, plus two inconspicuous barges of a type used only for storing a nuclear submarine's radioactive effluent, alerted the White House. That led to intense behind-the-scenes negotiation and the President's recent warning to Moscow not to service nuclear armed ships "in or from" Cuban bases.

Career officials in the intelligence community resist talking with reporters, but interviews over several months with Federal officials who deal daily with intelligence matters, with men retired from intelligence careers and with some on active duty indicate that President Nixon and his chief advisers appreciate the need for high-grade intelligence and "consume" it eagerly.

The community, for instance, has been providing the President with exact statistics on numbers, deployment and characteristics of Soviet missiles, nuclear submarines and airpower for the talks with the Russians on the limitation of strategic arms.

"We couldn't get off the ground at the talks without this extremely sophisticated in-

formation base," an official commented. "We don't give our negotiators round figures—about 300 of this weapon. We get it down to the '284 here, here and here.' When our people sit down to negotiate with the Russians they know all about the Russian strategic threat to the U.S.—that's the way to negotiate."

Too much intelligence has its drawbacks, some sources say, for it whets the Administration's appetite. Speaking of Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national-security affairs, a Cabinet official observed: "Henry's impatient for facts."

Estimates in New Form

In the last year Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kissinger have ordered a revision in the national intelligence estimates, which are prepared by the C.I.A. after consultation with the other intelligence agencies. Some on future Soviet strategy have been ordered radically revised by Mr. Kissinger.

"Our knowledge of present Soviet capabilities allows Henry and others to criticize us for some sponginess about predicting future Soviet policy," an informed source conceded. "It's pretty hard to look down the road with the same certainty."

Part of the Administration's dissatisfaction with the output and organization of the intelligence community stems from the President's tidy mental habits and pressing budget problems; part comes from the intellectual acuity of Mr. Kissinger, a counterintelligence sergeant in World War II and a specialist on Soviet strategy and on disarmament.

On the other hand, the Administration recognizes that it must share the blame for not having come to grips with intelligence problems until now.

The President is said to have had difficulty ascertaining precisely what all the Federal intelligence agencies do — and with how much money and manpower.

"Trying to draw up an organization chart is a nightmare," a senior aide remarked. "No one person seems to be in charge. That's part of the problem. Whoever winds up running this thing is clearly going to have to be someone with the President's confidence."

The intelligence units have their own problems in figuring out the White House's mode of operation. Recently an intelligence unit in the Pentagon spent a good deal of time and effort investigating, then charting, what functions each member of Mr. Kissinger's 110-man staff was supposed to perform.

Helms Said to Rate High

Sources close to the White House say that Mr. Nixon and his foreign-policy advisers — Mr. Kissinger and Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird — respect the professional competence of Mr. Helms, who is 57 and is the first career head of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in June, 1966, Mr. Helms has been essentially apolitical. He is said to have brought professional ability to bear in "lowering the profile" of the agency, tightening discipline and divesting it of many fringe activities that have aroused criticism in Congress and among the public. His standing with Congress and among the professionals is high.

According to White House sources, President Nixon, backed by the Congressional leadership, recently offered Mr. Helms added authority to coordinate the activities of the other board members. He is reported to have declined.

A major problem, according to those who know the situation, is that while Mr. Helms is the President's representative on the Intelligence Board, his agency spends only about 10 per cent — \$500-million to \$600-million — of the annual intelligence budget. It employs about 150,000* Americans, plus a few thousand foreigners.

"When you have the authority but you don't control the resources," a senior Pentagon official explained, "you tend to walk very softly."

As for the State Department, which has constitutional responsibility for conducting foreign policy, it has seen its intelligence arm gradually whittled away; in 1945 it had

* Correction

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Because of a typographical error, a Washington dispatch printed in The New York Times on Jan. 22 gave the number of employes of the Central Intelligence Agency incorrectly. The figure should have read 15,000. The erroneous figure also appears on page 16 of "United States Foreign Policy in the Nixon Administration," a reprint booklet just republished by The Times.

about 1,200 intelligence officers and now it has 300. Its annual intelligence budget is \$6-million, or 0.25 per cent of spending on intelligence. Recently Mr. Rogers has directed Mr. Cline to take a more vigorous part at Intelligence Board meetings, asserting the department's "primacy" in foreign policy, and specifically in intelligence collection and evaluation.

Mr. Nixon is said to feel the need to settle the question of ultimate leadership but to be willing to wait until the study he ordered is completed.

Mr. Helms's control over intelligence activities is indirect and his powers are circumscribed. He is an adviser on intelligence, not on policy. He points out the likely conclusions from policy acts but he does not recommend policies unless specifically asked to by the President.

Moreover, the director, like other intelligence chiefs in the Federal bureaucracy, must "sell" his product to Cabinet-level consumers and get decisions.

"Helms has been trying awfully hard to stay out of trouble," remarked a former agency official with White House contacts. "He's had the feeling that the C.I.A. was a place that might become a focal point of trouble in this Administration and his policy has been very cautious."

His associates also fear that his usefulness as an impartial intelligence adviser may be jeopardized if the wrangling between Secretary Laird and Senator J. W. Fulbright continues. Each has taken to citing Mr. Helms's secret testimony to buttress his case.

Bearer of Bad Tidings

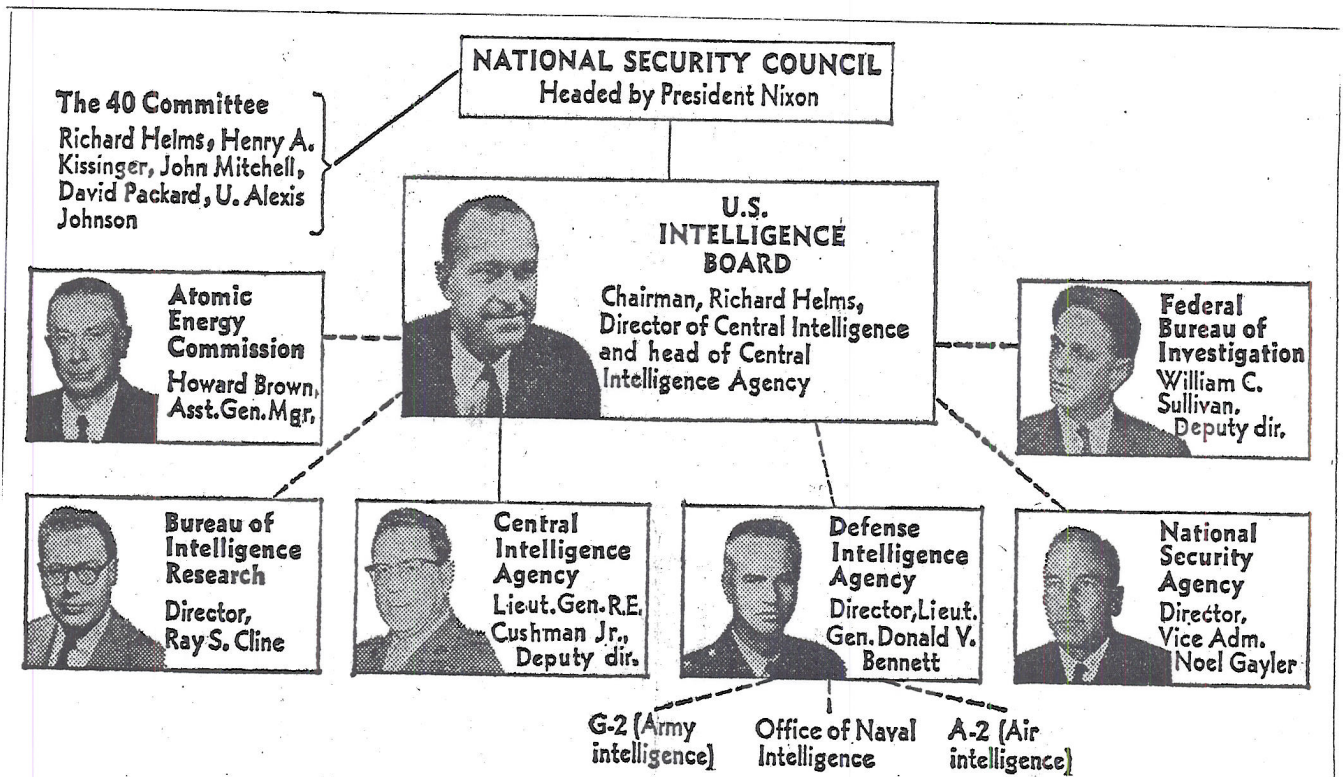
In addition the C.I.A. must sometimes report facts that the Administration is loath to hear — as happened last May when it told the White House, State Department and Pentagon that Vietnamese Communists had infiltrated more than 30,000 agents into the South Vietnamese Government, endangering its ability to last after an American troop withdrawal.

The slack use of the intelligence community's resources during the Middle East crisis last year illustrates a problem bothering the White House.

On June 19 Mr. Rogers urged a cease-fire; it was accepted by the Egyptians on July 22 and by the Israelis on Aug. 1. All parties agreed that it would take effect at midnight Israeli time on the seventh.

According to sources in and out of the intelligence community, Mr. Rogers and his principal deputy on the matter, Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, were unwilling to consider the possibility of violations. It was not until Aug. 10 or 11 that the first U-2's began flying from British bases on Cyprus. Even then there were problems. Weather delayed the first photographic runs; Israel resisted air activity — even by the United States — over her territory.

The delays permitted the



U.S. INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY: Six groups comprising Intelligence Board are represented at its meetings by the directors or deputies shown on chart. The forty committee screens covert-action proposals for the President.

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Egyptians to continue introducing missile batteries into the standstill area after the deadline, infuriating Israel, threatening the cease-fire and embarrassing the White House.

Administration Embarrassed

Faulty coordination prior to the abortive Sontay raid also embarrassed the Administration. There is evidence that the C.I.A., at Mr. Helms's direction, furnished the Pentagon with what information it had on North Vietnam during the early planning stages last summer. However, the Pentagon took over the planning. What went wrong is still a mystery.

Rapid intelligence, specialists insist, can afford protection to policy interests.

Before dawn on Jan. 23, 1968, President Johnson was awakened to learn that the U.S.S. Pueblo, an electronic-intelligence ship carrying vital code-breaking devices, had been seized by North Korean gunboats. His immediate reaction was to order an attack on North Korea to free the ship.

C.I.A. analysts in the White House situation room warned him that the North Koreans had 450 jets and 15 surface-to-air missile batteries. They also reported that a North Korean broadcast just intercepted indicated that the Pueblo had been seized 23 miles off the coast.

With that information Mr. Johnson decided against the risk of a second war on the Asian mainland and took the issue of "piracy on the high seas" to the United Nations.

"In the missile age, the most dangerous enemy of the United

States is an uninformed President," Bromley Smith, a former White House aide, wrote not long ago.

A President, of course, may choose to use the intelligence resources at his command, or not. Whatever the choice, they are substantial.

The C.I.A. is the "central" arm, created under the National Security Act of 1947 to coordinate all overseas intelligence activities and to winnow for the President intelligence, from whatever source, affecting national security. As its head Mr. Helms is the senior intelligence adviser to the President and Congress.

The agency can conduct espionage anywhere outside the United States. It has no powers of arrest and interrogation but cooperates with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Congress has empowered the agency to perform services of "common concern" to other branches of government as ordered by the National Security Council. That is its charter for "covert actions": flying U-2's over the Soviet Union from 1956 to 1960; ferrying agents in and out of enemy-held areas of Southeast Asia; organizing, training and supplying 35,000 anti-Communist Meo tribesmen in Laos, where President John F. Kennedy ordered it in 1962.

Dean Rusk, former Secretary of State, once told friends: "Dirty tricks form about 5 per

cent of the C.I.A.'s work—and we have full control over dirty tricks."

Proposals for covert actions come from the White House, the State, Defense or Justice Department and from ambassadors and military commanders overseas. All must eventually be approved by a little-known White House panel whose designation is periodically switched for cover purposes.

Known at present as the Forty Committee, for the number of the memo constituting it, it consists of Mr. Helms, Attorney General John N. Mitchell, Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard, Mr. Kissinger and U. Alexis Johnson,

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. If all agree on a proposal it goes forward; if not the President decides.

On the overt side the C.I.A. employs several thousand social and physical scientists to study the flood of information pouring in daily—half from open sources, a third from satellites and telemetry and 10 to 15 per cent from spies.

The other agencies, notably those at the Pentagon, have less developed evaluation facilities but far greater collection tools. The Pentagon is authorized to run its own agents abroad after clearance from the C.I.A. Mr. Helms is said to have little control over its activities.

The Administration has also been embarrassed by recent disclosures that Army intelligence, assigned by the Johnson Administration to spy on civilians during civil disturbances starting in the summer of 1967, virtually ran wild and by late 1969 had fed 18,000 names into its computers, dossiers and files.

Neither Mr. Helms nor the Intelligence Board had any connection with this domestic counterespionage. It was an example of overlarge staffs using excessive facilities under too little civilian control.

The Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency has a staff of 3,000 and spends \$500-million yearly—as much as the C.I.A.—to collect and evaluate strategic intelligence.

It uses Air Force planes to monitor foreign nuclear tests and collect air samples. Its National Security Agency at Fort Meade, near Baltimore, spends \$1-billion yearly and employs nearly 100,000 cryptanalysts and supporting staff to crack codes and eavesdrop on world communications. Its National Reconnaissance Office spends another \$1-billion yearly flying reconnaissance airplanes and lofting or exploiting the

satellites that constantly circle the earth and photograph enemy terrain with incredible accuracy from 130 miles up.

The results of the President's coming management survey remain to be seen of course, but Secretary Laird has already ordered General Bennett to report to him instead of to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Moreover, an Assistant Secretary of Defense, Robert F. Froehlke, is expected in time to take all the Pentagon's massive intelligence machinery under his control and to sit in as the Pentagon's main representative at Mr. Helms's weekly meeting of the Intelligence Board.

Many intelligence men concede the need for "trimming the fat," tightening up co-ordination, making intelligence more responsive to the formulation of foreign policy. Some, citing successive studies since World War II, see little change beyond "tinkering and tampering."

Others feel that an "in house" reorganization, as distinct from an outside panel studded with politically prominent but substantively ineffective people, may do good and may strengthen Mr. Helms's guidance of the intelligence community.

Whatever the outcome, many career experts regard the United States system as still markedly superior to its principal rivals in the Soviet Union.

One official, asked his reaction to the coming study, quoted Cardinal Maury, an 18th-century French prelate who was elected to the Academy but then refused certain dignities he considered his due.

"When I look at myself I am nothing," the Cardinal remarked, "but when I look at the others I am great."

Tomorrow: Congress and the Administration.