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U.S. Experts 'Starkly Wrong' About '73 Mideast War Data

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U.S. intelligence experts were "starkly wrong" about the imminence of the 1973 war in the Middle East that led to the Arab oil boycott, the House intelligence committee disclosed yesterday.

According to portions of a top-secret postmortem subpoenaed from the Central Intelligence Agency, there were plenty of danger signals before hostilities broke out on Oct. 6, 1973, but not a single agency in the government's intelligence community took them seriously enough to produce an official warning.

The former director of one of those agencies the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, told the committee he felt that the war, and the oil boycott it produced, could have been avoided by diplomatic efforts if the dangers had been recognized.

Instead, even after the war had started, the so-called Watch Committee, which was setup to advise the National Security Council in times of crisis, said it could "find no hard evidence of a major, coordinated Egyptian-Syrian offensive."

The mistaken findings and predictions of the Watch Committee and other agencies were made public only after a closed-door committee debate prompted by CIA protests. Other, more generalized portions of the secret postmortem were released at a morning meeting.

The hearing also brought a sharp attack on Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, whose penchant for secrecy was blamed for repeatedly depriving intelligence experts of vital information during the Nixon administration.

Ray S. Cline, former director of intelligence at the State Department, said the "passion for secrecy" at the Nixon White House was so intense that "senior intelligence officers could not find out how to assist our policymaking process."

He said he grew so discouraged and dismayed that by the time of the Middle East crisis, on the night of Oct. 5, 1973, he decided against bothering Kissinger, who was in New York, with the newfound conclusion

that fighting seemed about to break out.

By then, Cline testified, "My staff and I had concluded that hostilities probably were imminent" and drew up a draft memo to that effect. He said he asked that Kissinger be notified "that we had reached this conclusion" but learned later that night that the State Department secretariat and Kissinger's personal staff "did not want to trouble him in New York at that late hour—8 or 9 o'clock in the evening."

A phone call to Kissinger might not have made much difference at that point, Cline said, but at least it would not have been true, as has been written, that when the secretary went to bed that night he "was sure . . . that there wouldn't be a war."

Censored segments of the "Preliminary Postmortem Report" on the U.S. intelligence community's performance prior to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War were read into the public record at the hearing by William Parmenter, chief of the CIA's Office of Current Intelligence.

The war broke out on Oct. 6, 1973, when Egyptian forces crossed into Israeli-occupied territory on the East Bank of the Suez Canal. Syrian infantry and armor attacked the Golan Heights the same day.

According to the study on the results of American spywork, however, a thorough search of the reports issued before Oct. 6 "failed to turn up any official statement from any office or committee responsible for producing finished, analytical intelligence which contributed anything resembling a warning" as such.

The study that "instead of warnings, the Community's analytical effort in effect produced reassurances . . . that the Arabs would not resort to war, at least not deliberately."

Despite the benefits of hindsight, the report said there was no escaping the fact that "the principal conclusions concerning the imminence of hostilities reached and reiterated by those responsible for intelligence analysis were—quite simply, obviously, and starkly—wrong."

The study emphasized that finding by noting that U.S. experts had been provided with "a plenitude of information which should have sug-

gested, at a minimum, that they take very seriously the threat of war in the near term."

These signs, Cline testified under questioning by Rep. James P. (Jim) Johnson (R-Colo.), included Egyptian troop movements, cancellation of military leaves, imposition of tight security by the Egyptians, and on Oct. 4, 1973, the evacuation of dependents of Soviet advisers from Egypt and Syria.

Emphasizing the Soviet withdrawal, Cline said the Russians were given advance warning of the attack into the Sinai by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. In addition, Cline said, under the so-called "detente" treaties, the Soviet Union was obligated to consult with the United States on threats to peace.

Cline then raised the possibility that the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly F. Dobrynin, might have recognized even if the secretary did not. The point, Cline complained, was that he did not know. Intelligence experts, he protested, were usually kept in the dark about what foreign leaders and diplomats were saying in conversations with top U.S. officials, "even in sensitive policy areas."

Rep. Morgan F. Murphy (D-Ill.) said he thought this "a pretty dangerous situation."

"The bottom line is we've really got a one-man show" in foreign policy, Murphy protested. He said he thought

some "meddling in Dr. Kissinger's activities" was "long overdue."

Testifying about the Defense Intelligence Agency's mistakes, Air Force Maj. Gen. Howard P. Smith said DIA analysts had been aware of the troop movements and other military developments but they had been seeing similar episodes for seven years and apparently stopped reading much significance into them.

By a vote of 650-3, the committee decided at an executive session yesterday afternoon to release samples of the erroneous intelligence assessments after Chairman Otis G. Pike (D-N.Y.), CIA and other agencies wanted to keep on them.

The CIA's Parmenter claimed that disclosure of these mistaken predictions could compromise "intelligence sources and methods," but Pike said he found that incredible.

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UPI Telephoto

RAY S. CLINE

He testified on the war

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12 SEP 75

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Among the findings made public were excerpts from a DIA intelligence summary dated Oct. 6, 1973, which said, "There are still no military or political indicators of Egyptian intentions or preparations to resume hostilities with Israel." and a CIA intelligence bulletin, also dated Oct. 6, 1973, which said:

"By Egypt a military initiative makes little sense at this critical juncture . . . Another round of hostilities would almost certainly destroy Sadat's painstaking efforts to invigorate the economy and would run counter to his current efforts to build a united Arab political front, particularly among the less militant, oil-rich states. For the (deleted) Syrian president, a military adventure now would be suicidal."

The last sampling was from a special report of the National Security Council's Watch Committee, which met in special session at 9 a.m. on Oct. 6, 1973.

By then, Pike noted, "the war had actually broken out." The Watch Committee, however, saw nothing so ominous. "It is possible," the committee said instead, "that the Egyptians or the Syrians, particularly the latter, may have been preparing a raid or other small-scale action."

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