

The Disconnect Between Policy-makers and Intelligence Officers: Some Observations

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Having served as both an intelligence officer and a policy official, I am always amazed at how little my intelligence colleagues understand the policy world, matched in my mind only by the ignorance of many policy-makers' on how the Intelligence Community (IC) works. Indeed, it is as if we come from different worlds, speaking mutually unintelligible languages. As one policy-maker has noted:

DI analysts [at CIA] did not have the foggiest notion of what I did; and I did not have a clue as to what they could or should do.¹

Different perspectives of course have always existed -- policy-makers seeing things one-way and intelligence officers another -- but in my experience it never has been quite this bad. It has become the rule, not the exception, for policy-makers to accept intelligence judgments only when they are congenial to their existing views, rejecting everything else. Some may see

¹ Jack Davis, A Policymaker's Perspective on Intelligence Analysis, Central Intelligence Agency, Center for the Study of Intelligence, p. 3.

² Ibid, p.7c.

³ Jack Davis, Paul Wolfowitz on Intelligence Policy-Relations, Central Intelligence

this as simply “cherry picking,” a long-standing concern, but I believe today’s problem runs much deeper. Policy-makers, regardless of their party affiliation or political ideology, increasingly question the credibility and value of intelligence. In the process, enormous amounts of resources are wasted, and decision-making has suffered, a true lose-lose situation. Clearly the disconnect is an issue deserving more of our attention. But where do you start analyzing a problem this complex? For me it is by examining more closely the misconceptions and misunderstandings that exist between intelligence officers and policy-makers.

On the intelligence side of the disconnect the first hurdle is persuading intelligence managers a problem exists, in itself no easy proposition. While analysts fuss and fume, and academics highlight the problem in their writings, only intelligence managers are in a position to find a remedy. There in is the rub. Many managers appear not to realize a problem exists, and those who do, believe the problem is beyond fixing, or simply do not know where to start.

The managers do have some legitimate excuses. Cultural change, even in the best of circumstances, is a painful exercise, involving substantial bureaucratic inertia, and overcoming it is always a struggle. Although policy-makers and intelligence officers share responsibility for creating the problem, and the cooperation of both is essential in producing better intelligence judgments, I nevertheless believe the impetus for change must come from within the IC. Policy officials can, and should, demand better intelligence, but only intelligence officers can fix the problem. They are the ones who must change the culture. Outsiders simply do not possess the

necessary experience and expertise necessary for such a task. Every time they have tried they end up making things worse.

On the policy side of the disconnect, policy-makers are not even clear on what the IC is supposed to do. Most policy-makers consider warning the number one function of intelligence. They want no Pearl Harbors, 9/11's, or WMD fiascos on their watch. That is fine when you are talking about strategic warning. CIA, for example, alerting the Embassy in Cairo of the likelihood of anti-U.S. demonstrations around eleven September is strategic warning. Undoubtedly useful information, but what most policy-makers really want is tactical warning. That is predicting something very specific such as the date and time when a major terrorist attack on a diplomatic post in Libya will occur. On the few occasions tactical warning of this sort proves possible, it is invariably far more luck than science. Predicting the future is what fortunetellers do, not intelligence officers. This, however, has not stopped policy-makers from insisting on more and better warning.

The IC response has been to increase the quantity of its current reporting, thinking I suppose such an emphasis will satisfy the policy-makers demands. Instead it has compounded the problem. Policy-makers increasingly discard much of what they receive from the IC, but not because they have all the answers. Most often I find they are starving for detailed responses to their questions, but what we give them is news -- current reporting.

Q: What about the NID [National Intelligence Daily]? I've heard a number of NSC Staff members praise its utility over the years.

A: Of course, I was interested in the PDB [President's Daily Brief] because President Bush read it. As for the NID, I would spend, literally, 60 seconds a day on it. This was a defensive move. I wanted to know in advance what would likely be leaked to the press by readers in Congress. Other than that, there was, again, no cost to me, no penalty, from not having read the NID.²

For this policy-maker keeping up with world events had its place, but his first priority was his own area of responsibility. Like other policy-makers, his superiors' were demanding in-depth answers, answers current reporting alone cannot supply. Frustrated, policy-makers press the IC for more details. With little or no research effort on going, even on top priority targets, managers turn to their analysts, asking them to churn out ever more current reports. Even though the IC's analysts have a wealth of information to offer, opinions alone are not enough to satisfy policy-makers' demands; just the opposite – they create more dissatisfaction:

The notion that the opinions of analysts should be the main product--when often they are not a useful product at all--is a recipe for having analysis ignored.³

Policy-makers rejecting what we have to offer, of course, does not sit well with us. We tend to believe what intelligence officers have to say is important, and expect wise policy-makers to act on our findings. When they fail to recognize our brilliance, some officers, unwilling to consider any other explanation than politicization, think the policy-makers must be manipulating the data for their own political purpose. Obviously, some of this goes on from time to time, but more often than not it turns out we leave

² Ibid, p.7c.

³ Jack Davis, Paul Wolfowitz on Intelligence Policy-Relations, Central Intelligence Agency, Center for the Study of Intelligence, p 5.

policy-makers with little choice; the IC's product lacks details, or is irrelevant to the policy-makers' needs. In short, what we are giving them is not very good.

Similarly, a steady diet of current reporting enables policy-makers to choose only those opinions they trust, or worse come to believe they understand a problem as well or better than the IC. This arises because policy-makers rarely know where the information they are receiving came from, or whose judgments they are reading. Both important factors given the important role trust plays in policy-makers' calculations. Plus in many cases policy-makers have pieces of the puzzle unavailable to analysts, especially their contact with foreign officials. Add to this that everyone is looking at the same intelligence reports, and it should come as no surprise that policy-makers' views are shaped as much by their experience and instinct as intelligence. The only way to influence policy-makers' strongly held views is by bringing additional in-depth evidence to the table. Even if the policy-makers still have doubts, a well-reasoned argument based on new knowledge may force them to at least rethink their position.

That is not to say policymakers appreciate intelligence officers contradicting their policy choices. For policy-makers reversing their previous public positions, the dreaded flip-flop, is an unpleasant experience to say the least, while for intelligence officers it is standard practice. Moreover, the chances are the policy-makers did not come to their conclusions easily, and based them on a lifetime of policy experience. If you expect them to see things your way you better come armed with more than opinions. Building a persuasive case is required:

The more factual the better. Explain what is known and how it is known and let the judgment flow from the evidence.⁴

Excellent advice from a policy-maker, but of course easier said than done.

Policy-makers rarely tell intelligence officers what they want in advance, or explain why they have rejected the IC's view. Wishing we received more guidance, however, is a waste of time. No matter how often or how loudly intelligence officers complain it rarely makes a difference. Policy-makers as a rule do not play well with others, especially when it comes to sharing policy details. Many believe keeping their plans secret is essential for success. The fewer the number of people knowing what they are up to, the better they like it. Under such circumstances, whether we ought to or not, learning to read policy-makers' minds becomes a necessary part of analytical tradecraft. There is no way around it. Fortunately, specific policy details are not required to advise a policy-maker. An intelligence officer's knowledge and experience in most cases is enough. Indeed, if intelligence officers have to be told what the key policy issues are in their area of expertise, they should avoid all contact with policy-makers, and find a safe place to hide until they do.

A particularly big no-no is seeming to advocate a policy solution. This can be a great temptation for some intelligence officers, particularly if they become to believe a policy is failing.

⁴ Ibid, pp.7-8.

Analysts must always remember that their job is to inform the policymaker's decision, not to try to supplant it, regardless of how strongly they feel about the issue.⁵

When I was at the Department of State, for example, I advised my analysts to keep in mind there were likely several thousand Foreign Service officers in the building at any one time, who thought they were better at formulating policies than the Secretary. More policy advice was not what he needed from us. In addition, it was important for them to understand policy-makers already fear intelligence judgments are influenced by the IC's policy preferences. Any hint of advocacy on their part, and a policy-maker's trust would be lost forever.

What do we need to do to fix the problem?

The obvious solution for many of these problems associated with the policy-intelligence disconnect is investing in research to supplement and support the current reporting effort. This has been the recommendation of every intelligence reform study since the Kennedy Administration. The most recent being the report by "The Commission on the Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction" that pointed out:

Analysts are consistently pressed to produce more pieces faster, particularly those for current intelligence publications such as the President's Daily Brief (PDB)... But constant pressure to write makes it hard for analysts to find time to do the research—and thinking—necessary to build the real expertise that underlies effective analysis.⁶

⁵ Ibid, p.7.

⁶ The Commission of the Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, Report to the President of the United States, (March 31, 2005), p. 403.

Obviously, pointing out a problem exists is one thing, doing something about it has been much more difficult. Despite the consensus view that the IC does too much current reporting and not nearly enough research, the problem has grown worse. What research effort once existed has virtually disappeared, the personnel and resources shifted into current reporting. Neither expanded intelligence budgets, nor increased consumer dissatisfaction have helped the cause of research. Intelligence managers remain convinced current reporting is the best way to satisfying policy-makers' demands.

I do not have a solution for the disconnect of my own. In fact, my hopes of ever changing minds have evaporated to almost nothing. In my more cynical moments I think any effort to make a difference is a waste of time. We continue to support duplicative current-reporting efforts when the same quality and quantity daily production could be accomplished by far fewer all-source analysts. I often joke, two-thirds of the current analysts could disappear to the dark side of the moon, and only their families would notice they were gone. We simply do not need so many people doing current reporting. Pretending that we do verges on waste, fraud, and abuse.

In my more positive moments I think the least we can do is make current reporting more responsive and relevant to the long-standing complaints from policymakers. Keeping the IC on the same track over and over makes no sense to me. Unlike the mountain you need to climb to restore the research arm of the IC, just adding a few simple steps can make current reporting better. Such steps do not require a major culture change. Only a several common sense tweaks to the system are needed to make the IC's products

better, and more relevant. But it does require adjusting today's current reporting process from one centered on intelligence collection to a system built more around the policy-makers priorities and schedule.

Collection Based Production System

The flow of intelligence collection has its own style, its own rhythm, with policy-maker priorities not necessarily at the top of the list. A tsunami of collected data hits analysts' desks day after day in such volume that even the best and brightest cannot hope to process it all. One is left with scanning the wave for the most obvious pieces of information, looking for something new, or any pieces that stand out based on an analyst's interests of the moment. Potentially important, but less obvious pieces are routinely missed. So too is the substantial amount of pieces hidden until uncovered by research methodologies.

In the intelligence collection system analysts are taught that the President is their number one consumer, and writing for the President's Daily Brief (PDB) their most important achievement. As analysts from CIA, DIA, and State INR sort through the collection flow each day, they are looking for potential PDB items. On the typical day only 6 to 10 of these reach the President. Along the way hundreds of items are rejected, some never to be heard from again, others repackaged for possible inclusion in the future. The next day the process starts all over again. Although the President's schedule and important on-going events, such as Syria and North Korea, are taken into consideration, most days the President's immediate priorities are not

covered, and those that are often appear with too few details, casualties of a daily production schedule that emphasizes speed and brevity.

A System Focused on the Policy-maker's Schedule

A reporting system built around a policy-maker's schedule takes a different approach. It emphasizes in-depth coverage, with the policy-maker's top priorities and schedule first, news second. Gone is the collection-based system's assumption that the President and other senior officials have little time to read, dictating short pieces with snappy titles. Policy-makers are quick to pass over items outside their area of interest, but when it comes to their most urgent priorities they cannot get enough details. These they prize much more than coverage of the latest news.

To implement a priority-based system, of course, requires knowing a good deal about the policy-maker's priorities and schedule, information, admittedly not always easy to obtain. This is not an insurmountable obstacle, and certainly does not excuse clinging slavishly to the old familiar news cycle. Knowing the details of the policy being formulated is not essential. Defining the key questions policy-makers might ask, or need to know, is. Let me say that again. For an intelligence officer knowing the key questions is far more important than knowing policy details. Policy officials expect the IC to do the things they do not have the time or knowledge to do themselves. They decide on the policy direction to take and the IC's analytical expertise helps them understand the problems and challenges they will face. Analytical expertise is our strength, not news or policy preferences. When

the IC strays off course its relevance and credibility to the policy community suffer.

Policy-makers do not make the job easy. Satisfying their needs puts a premium on planning ahead. In-depth answers are much harder to produce than reporting the news, and do not lend themselves to the short timelines of the PDB and other daily reporting. Producing quality answers takes time. Unless you can anticipate important questions sufficiently in advance, analysts do not have time to prepare a proper and useful answer. A system emphasizing the news cycle over quality usually creates more questions than it can ever answer.

The Makeover of State INR's Daily Brief: A Case Study

INR has been, and always will be, a current reporting agency, if only because of its small size -- 150 or so analysts. Basic and directed research is way beyond its means. Only CIA and DIA have the resources necessary for this sort of heavy lifting. What INR was designed for, however, it does very well. Historically, its analysts stayed focused on a region or issue much longer than those in other analytical offices, and the intelligence they produce is widely admired for its style and substance. The people in INR are a national treasure, their level of expertise something for other organizations to match. As good as they were when I found them, I challenged them to do more, to reach a little deeper, to make the Daily Brief better.

My past assignments had convinced me policy-makers wanted more than just the news. During my time at the Pentagon on loan from CIA, I soon

began to realize people no longer saw me as an intelligence officer. I was one of them. I noticed this especially after intelligence briefings. During the presentation pleasantries were exchanged, questions asked, and routinely ended with compliments all around. Then the door would hardly close before complaints were flying fast and furious. The compliments disappeared replaced by anger and frustration. The gist of most of these encounters was complete and utter dissatisfaction with what they were, and were not, receiving from the IC. Yet after policy meetings I often came away startled by the lack of knowledge underpinning decisions. I knew there was so much more the IC could do to help, but soured on what they routinely received, and not knowing what they were missing, few of my colleagues pressed the IC for more.

My own encounter with the IC did not go much better. After a meeting with the Secretary of Defense I reached out to DIA for help. The subject was one of the Secretary's long-standing top priorities, an issue he knew well, but was always looking for more details. Speed was not an issue. He specifically specified the more details the IC could provide the better, even if this took longer. I thought DIA would relish the opportunity to work on a project directly requested by the Secretary, especially one supporting on-going policy decisions. I was mistaken. DIA did not see it the same way. They wanted to write a narrative penned by one of its top analysts based substantially on his expert opinion. When I pushed back asking for a more detailed answer with special emphasis on trends over time, they balked. At first they argued the kind of answer the Secretary wanted would require considerable time and effort. I agreed, saying it was the very reason the Secretary had turned to DIA for an answer, he did not have time to study the

issue as closely as he would like himself. No matter. DIA insisted trend analysis was not needed. Its expert had all the answers. Take it or leave it. To this day, I am shocked DIA took this position. I also remember the Secretary's reaction when he read the narrative DIA provided. He read a paragraph or so, looked up, scowled, and then wadded the paper up and threw it at me.

Arriving at INR I was determined to give the Secretary of State more of what he needed, certainly providing better support than I experienced at the Pentagon with DIA. I studied the Bureau at work for several months looking for ways we might improve an already good product. I consulted with my deputy assistants seeking their input. They were closer to the process than I was and knew the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system far better than I ever could. Fortunately for me they were not closed minded, and willing to take a few risks. Although in the beginning they were perhaps not as enthusiastic about making changes as I was, their insights were crucial in shaping the new look Daily Brief -- keeping the best practices from the old format, but with more focus on the Secretary's priorities and schedule in delivering the product. Introducing the changes turned out to not sit well with others in the Department, and they were not shy about speaking their mind. Fortunately I had briefed the Secretary on our ideas and received his blessing on what I described as an experiment in advance, promising him we could go back to the old system if he was not satisfied with the result.

The new look was premised on several basic propositions. First, the Secretary made it clear to me he looked to INR for more than the news. High on his list was an expectation INR would provide in-depth answers in the

areas he was most involved in, usually a mirror image of the President's priorities. He also wanted to know when INR's view differed from those of other agencies, and expressed a preference for us including a bit more from the military side of things. Second, it was clear to me the Secretary already received more intelligence every day than he or any other top official could plow through in six weeks. It came in the form of the PDB, regular contact with senior U.S. and foreign officials, INR's Daily Brief, and a fair amount of sensitive "eyes only" material from NSA. If that was not enough, he regularly read news directly from the Internet, got an oral briefing from INR at each morning's staff meeting, and received updates throughout the day from his senior policy officers. In short, he did not lack for news. Third, it was clear to me much of the intelligence material he received was duplicative and a waste of the little time he had to think.

Our approach in Stage 1 was quite simple. Instead of always trying to match the PDB's coverage, we concentrated on topics especially relevant to the Secretary. If another agency's product was as good or better than we could provide, it was added to our own material sent to the Secretary. In cases where INR held a different opinion we explained why and how in a note. We continued to supply the Daily Brief, and added a copy of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs morning briefing courtesy of DIA's representative to INR. To outsiders little had changed. They continued to receive the Daily Brief as always.

Stage 2 was all about improving our capability for answering in-depth questions. This was a matter of determining which questions to ask and making time for the answers needing the most attention. In both cases better

planning was key. The deputy assistants took responsibility for mapping out the Secretary's schedule as best they could, and whenever possible sought advance notice of the President's upcoming events. At the same time, each office in the Bureau was tasked to provide a list of priority questions they anticipated in their area of expertise. They were also to look for opportunities to deliver their products at times that would maximize their relevance. This was especially important for accounts not regularly making the headlines.

Sometimes this was as simple as preparing in advance the size and frequency of anti-America demonstrations in the Middle East, an effort to put events as they happened in perspective. During the run up to the Iraq war senior officials were particularly interested in public reactions to their policy. So instead of just reporting an anti-American demonstration somewhere in the region, we wanted to report if the event was a regular occurrence or not, was it about average, larger, or smaller in size, and what had prompted the event -- Iraq, the Israel-Palestinian issue, or other complaints. In this case our preparation made a difference. On one occasion the lead article in most current reporting highlighted increased opposition in the region to the U.S. Iraq policy. The reports were based on evidence of two separate demonstrations. It turned out in both instances the size of each demonstration was well below average levels for those cities, one focused on U.S. support for Israel, the other on a local issue unrelated to anti-American activities. Judging strong opposition to U.S. Iraq policy was likely on target at the time, but using the demonstrations cited, as evidence was sloppy, unprofessional analysis.

A more complicated case involved a Presidential trip to Russia, accompanied by the Secretary of State. A senior INR Russia analyst, learning of the trip, took the initiative to call on the services of a colleague outside INR for help. His friend, a Foreign Service Officer (FSO) had worked almost daily with the then more junior Vladimir Putin while stationed in St. Petersburg. Thinking the FSO's recollections and impressions would help him in preparing for the upcoming trip, he asked his friend to jot down his experiences on paper. He agreed. A few weeks later a lengthy report arrived, all 50 or 60 pages of it. It was so well written we decided to send the entire manuscript to the Secretary adding only a note from INR summarizing the paper's findings. Although some suggested it was too long and detailed to be of much use to the Secretary, we sent it to him anyway. I am glad we did.

It turned out the Secretary read the entire paper, not just the summary, and decided to take the report with him on the trip. At some point, I do not know all the details; he shared the report with the President. The President's notes in the margin suggest he read most, if not all of the paper on the airplane. Moreover, the President asking the Secretary to pass on his thanks to the author suggests he liked what he read. "Atta boys" are rare in the intelligence business, making this one all the more special. For the report writer, my Russian analyst, and the entire Bureau it was an unexpected, but gratefully accepted compliment.

The incident also provided me with a teaching moment. It is the conventional wisdom in the IC; senior officials do not have time to read long, detailed pieces, better to provide them just the highlights. True we send

mostly summaries to our consumers, but not necessarily because that is what they want from us. I have found when policy-makers are preoccupied with an issue, they are eager to receive anything we can give them. They read more, get quickly up to speed on what current reporting has to offer, and cast about for more details. Continuing to offer up short, summary articles at that point leaves them frustrated, not satisfied. What they are looking for most is “good” intelligence, meaning intelligence that is timely and relevant to their top priority of the moment. Short and sweet may suffice in the early stages of a policy challenge, but as the problem wears on the policy-maker’s needs change. Details become more important. They start asking questions, wanting in-depth answers. But opinions, even those of the IC’s experts, are not what they want to hear. Once they become engaged fully in an issue only new evidence and the rationale for the conclusion will do. Even then your analysis may only force them to question their views, not buy your ideas hook, line, and sinker. Going beyond this and influencing a policy-maker’s views, the intelligence officer’s holy grail, depends almost entirely on the strength of the evidence.

With that success under our belt we implemented Stage 3 of INR’s improvement plan. As I suggested earlier, we shared the daily reporting of others in the IC with the Secretary each morning as appropriate, putting our twist on things, but concentrated our report writing on the topics INR’s analysts deemed most helpful to the Secretary’s schedule, and interests. To highlight the new look we replaced the traditional Daily Brief with a series of separately written articles delivered to the Secretary and other senior officials individually throughout the day. In the mornings we concentrated on oral briefings, analysts fanning out throughout the Department with news

each morning tailored for the various deputy assistants, assistant, and under secretaries, leaving behind any of INR's new, more detailed reports they might find useful.

Immediately there was push back from many, some of it very vocal and angry, much of it directed at me personally. The common theme was that I had "destroyed" the Daily Brief. They liked it the way it was, saw no need for change, and were determined to reverse my decision. At times the complaints were so sharp, I thought maybe I should consider hiring a bodyguard. Since the changes were not new to him, the Secretary took it all in stride. His only reaction to the complaints was an occasional gentle jibe that I had become the most hated man in the building. Comforted little by his good humor it gave me scant protection from my accusers. What gave me heart was the Bureau's support. Most analysts favored the change as it gave them the time they needed to do their best work. Those who were not happy with the decision had the good sense not to bring their complaints to me directly, concentrating instead on turning out an excellent product, not complaining about the new format. It was not long, however, before even the skeptics began to get feedback from their consumers complimenting them on their work. Not long afterwards even some of the people who had earlier written me angry e-mails, or stopped me in the hallway to express their disapproval, changed their tune, a few approaching me directly to say they had been wrong. They admitted they had even grown to like the new format, especially its somewhat more in depth approach.

I had not planned on a stage 4, it just happened. Two activities emerged as a consequence of the earlier changes, becoming over time important

complements to our commitment to improve INR's current reporting. Conducting Bureau wide planning sessions evolved naturally from this new emphasis on thinking ahead, and our greater attention to details. Although I was sometime in attendance, earlier planning sessions were largely the work of individuals and offices concentrating on particular countries or separate issue areas. On several occasions I employed the format for problems that did not fit neatly into our bureaucratic structure, ones requiring gathering together analysts from widely different specialties who normally would not be working as a team. The exercise was particularly important during the run up to the Iraq War.

INR like everyone else at State was not privy to the operational planning going on in the Pentagon or had advance warning of war. I was aware that Mike Hayden, then Director of NSA, was working on a program for increasing his agency's ability to provide fast paced intelligence to small combat units, a glaring lesson learned from the Gulf War. Nobody told him a war was definitely coming, but just in case he wanted his people prepared. I wanted INR to do the same. I called a meeting inviting representatives from virtually every office in the Bureau to begin thinking about what we might be called on to do, if war started. As the likelihood of hostilities became clearer the group met more frequently. Interaction between analysts working on different aspects of the same problem, or areas related to the main issue, is not done nearly enough, losing potentially valuable synergies. I wanted the lines of communication open and analysts working together just in case. I think it helped. Once the war started, the preplanning and preparations allowed us to better support the Secretary.

Stage 4 also saw the beginning of regular seminars devoted to improving the Bureau's analytical techniques. It is my contention learning how to be a better analyst is just as important in building expertise as keeping up one's area or functional specialty. China analysts, for example, talk about China all the time, but the techniques for learning more about China tend to get much less attention. I wanted it to be different in INR. Everyone was invited, but the sessions were not billed as mandatory. Maybe in the beginning many came just because I was chairing the meeting -- a little command emphasis from time to time comes in handy -- but most of them stayed because they found value in the sessions. Our main focus was on examining examples of good, and not so good analysis. I particularly liked the latter. Lessons learned from faulty techniques are especially valuable. The seminars were also an opportunity to explore related topics. One afternoon a software company had us looking closely at newly available applications to assist analysts in their work. On another occasion a polygraph operator from NSA talked about his role in the IC, and the importance of security. Another of my favorites sessions was a FBI investigator who had been assigned to the Aldrich Ames case.

I also used stage 4 to emphasize with my State Department seniors INR's new look by arranging opportunities for them to meet and interact directly with INR analysts. Some policy-makers like this face-to-face format others prefer everything on paper. An ability to ask follow-up questions wins over many to the notion of interaction with analysts. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage is a good example. Knowing he had been tasked by the President to deliver an important message to a foreign leader, I suggested he meet with INR analysts before his departure. Even though his trip was only

days away he agreed to a short meeting, working the session into an already jam-packed schedule. As I recall 15 minutes was originally set-aside for us. I chose five or six analysts from various offices in the Bureau; all of them true experts in one field or another. The lead briefer was a political analyst who had met with the foreign leader in question on several occasions, and was considered a world-class expert by his peers. Rounding out the team were experienced analysts specializing in military affairs, economic issues, nuclear weapons, and terrorism. Each was given a brief opportunity to introduce themselves and their expertise. Secretary Armitage then began the back and forth with a question, followed by INR's responses, and then a number of follow up questions, lasting almost an hour, despite repeated attempts by his assistant to end the session. Not long after he returned from his trip he asked me to bring the team back for a debrief, including a summary of his mission, what information from the analysts had been most useful, and his personal assessment of the foreign leader. Although this sort of debrief is not always possible, the experience was especially rewarding for the analysts. Ideally, this should be the norm not the exception.

Concluding Thoughts

INR's new look and more attention to policy-makers' requirements paid dividends. We were more relevant to the work of the Department, without sacrificing the news cycle, or becoming its slave. Our guide was what the Secretary and those supporting him needed each day, not the serendipity inherent in the intelligence collection cycle. Better current reporting is not an answer for the IC's more fundamental analytical problem, those being inattention to basic research and failure to recognize the importance of

micro-studies in the process of creating new knowledge. There is nothing wrong with seeing the President as the IC's primary customer as long as we remember maintaining a balance between current reporting, basic, and directed research (micro-studies) is an essential requirement for producing good intelligence. Current reporting alone cannot meet the needs of senior policy-makers. We are not fooling anyone. Senior policy-makers may not complain, but neither are they satisfied with what they receive from the IC. Doing what we have been doing is not enough. Unless we rebuild the IC's research capability and improve the quality of our current reporting, the disconnect between policy officials and intelligence officers will only grow wider.