



Chapter Title: Introduction

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Introduction

U.S. intelligence analysts today are pushing the limits of their craft and finding a welcome reception from some of their most senior consumers. At the same time, they are also stretched and frustrated with the uncertainty of their mission and buffeted in the wake of the national investigations of intelligence failure before September 11th and before the Iraq war. The contrast partly reflects differences across analytic agencies, but it also reflects differences within them. And it also reflects tensions within individual analysts over what they do and how they add value. In analysis, as in other areas, the Intelligence Community remains something between a loose federation and an aspiration. Analysts from one agency are not hostile to those in other agencies; they are mostly ignorant of one another. The need for a focal point in analysis and analytic tradecraft is striking, and this need will only grow as the Community strives to be more “joint” in the wake of the December 2004 intelligence reform law and the creation of a director of national intelligence.¹

The overarching generality about the U.S. intelligence analytic community today is that most of it is engaged in work that is tactical, operational, or current. By most accounts, the relative lack of longer-term analysis has long been bemoaned. In other words, most analytic resources and activities are dedicated to intelligence reporting instead of attempting to attain the “deep understanding” of our adversaries that constitutes analysis. Why is this the case? As we will discuss below, it is a function of the complex security environment, the nature of decisionmaker’s needs, personnel practices, and the success of our technical collection activities.

Ironically, recent government actions have exacerbated this situation, perhaps unintentionally. The National Intelligence Priorities Framework (NIPF) ratified in National Security Decision Directive 26, for example, identifies 150 priority intelligence targets, countries, or issues, emphasizing a dozen or so. This framework represents an official sanction for not paying attention to issues associated with more balanced global coverage. If the emphasis on immediate reporting is sharper now, that is so because it is what many national intelligence consumers want (or, at least, it is what they get because they do not ask for longer-term analyses) and because, for the warfighters in particular, an abundance of military intelligence, essential to such day-to-day operations as force protection, is available from national means.

¹ Formally, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, available at www.fas.org/irp/congress/2004_rpt/h108-796.html (accessed January 4, 2005).

In this RAND project, we sought to review, assess, and make recommendations about the Intelligence Community's priorities for research and development and training and education that might lead to better analytic capabilities in the future. In essence, this report documents the current status of the analytic community. It identifies, in turn, issues and shortfalls in the analytic community's use of methods and tools and its ways of organizing and using its most important resource, human skills. It then portrays the issues that will shape the analytic community of the future, concluding with suggestions keyed to the issues identified above. For some issues, we make specific, actionable suggestions. Others, however, go to the heart of what intelligence will be, and we try to focus sharply on those issues in our discussion.

The report reviews available data. While the data are improving, the limitations of existing data—limitations recognized at senior levels—is the subject of a strong recommendation. We have reviewed data on the demographic profile of the Community in the analytic resources catalogue (ARC), which is updated quarterly and correlated with the National Intelligence Priorities Framework.

In addition, we have relied on detailed interviews conducted in 2003–2004, with three dozen leaders and analysts in the analytic community and also on information we gained during meetings with line analysts. In the interviews, we coded views about major themes, and we divided those interviewed roughly into the “national” analytic agencies (the Central Intelligence Agency's [CIA's] Directorate of Intelligence ([DI]), the Department of State's Intelligence and Research Bureau [INR], the Federal Bureau of Investigation's [FBI's] Office of Intelligence, the Department of Energy's Office of Intelligence, and the Department of Homeland Security's Directorate for Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection), the “big collectors” (the National Security Agency [NSA], the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency [NGA], and the National Reconnaissance Office [NRO], and the military Intelligence Community (the Defense Intelligence Agency [DIA] and the service intelligence organizations).

Given the ongoing reorganization of intelligence, names have been a moving target, but we also conducted interviews at components then under the Director of Central Intelligence and now under the Director of National Intelligence (DNI)—the National Intelligence Council; the then–Community Management Staff, now office of the DNI; and the then–Terrorist Threat Integration Center, now National Counterterrorism Center. At the major analytic agencies, such as the CIA's DI, we interviewed analysts from a number of components. In addition, we also conducted interviews at technology units that support analysis, such as the CIA's Directorate of Science and Technology (DS&T), the CIA's In-Q-Tel, and the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

The next chapter portrays the Intelligence Community's analytic cadres as they are today, drawing on our interviews and observations. Chapter Three turns to the contribution that technology, concepts of operation, time management, and other research can make to tradecraft through an effective research and development (R&D) program, and Chapter Four discusses approaches to improve human capital throughout the Intelligence Community. We conclude with a vision of intelligence analysis in the future.