

INTELLIGENCE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

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**THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE
FOR NEAR EAST POLICY**

PREFACE

In the post-Cold War era and with the emergence of new security challenges to U.S. interests around the globe, the U.S. intelligence community has come under intense scrutiny. Indeed, the principal mission of the newly-established Presidential Commission on Roles and Capabilities of the U.S. Intelligence Community—whose ranks include two members of The Washington Institute's Board of Advisors, Chairman Les Aspin and Ambassador Paul Wolfowitz—is to define exactly what the intelligence community should be charged to do in the twenty-first century and how it can best do it.

Nowhere is the urgency for re-thinking intelligence requirements and methods greater than in the Middle East. With its longstanding U.S. allies, critical natural resources, and strategic waterways, the security of the Middle East is vital to U.S. national interests. However, the combustible combination of the virulent anti-Western ideology that has taken hold in much of the region, huge stocks of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction, and rogue leaderships in a number of regional states makes the Middle East one of the most volatile regions of the world. Analyzing and understanding the impact of such complex phenomena as the Arab-Israeli peace process and the spread of radical fundamentalism needs to be at the top of the agenda for the U.S. intelligence community.

To provide a framework for reviewing the intelligence community's work on the Middle East, The Washington Institute convened a special Policy Forum panel discussion on February 16, 1995. Participants included regional experts and intelligence officials from the National Security Council, the Department of State and the Defense Intelligence Agency. Their presentations, edited for publication, are published herein.

Together, the panelists underscored the need for a renewed emphasis on regional expertise as a prerequisite for understanding the complex changes—political, economic, social, religious, military, and environmental—now underway in the region. In so doing, they highlighted the opportunity that the end of the Cold War now provides for the intelligence community to benefit from non-governmental institutions—“think tanks” and universities—whose contributions on many topics are needed to supplement the government’s own efforts.

Providing research and analysis to the policy-making community is the main mission of The Washington Institute. This special Policy Forum report is presented as part of our continuing effort to promote informed debate and scholarly research on U.S. interests in the Middle East.

Mike Stein
President

Barbi Weinberg
Chairman

PARTICIPANTS

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John L. Moore, defense intelligence officer for the Middle East, South Asia, and terrorism, has served in the Defense Intelligence Agency since 1968. He led the agency's research and production effort in support of U.S. forces during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Ellen Laipson
National Security Council

Today's discussion on "Intelligence and the Middle East" needs to be framed by two larger issues. First, whither U.S. foreign policy after the Cold War? Have our interests fundamentally changed? What are our new priorities? Second, whither the intelligence community? Is the architecture for intelligence obsolete because it was designed for the Cold War? Does it need a major restructuring?

And, related to the second, what is the impact on intelligence of the information revolution? With such rapid access to an infinite amount of data and such immediate exposure to media all day long, is this yet another reason to be rethinking how we do intelligence and on what we should be spending our resources?

In this presentation I will try to give you the perspective from the National Security Council (NSC) staff of how we are asked to serve senior policymakers and where I see intelligence fitting into that process.

At the risk of disappointing you, I would say that the daily needs for intelligence on the Middle East by senior decisionmakers at the White House have probably remained constant, as compared to five or ten years ago. First and foremost, they want to be warned about impending disasters. That is their highest expectation of what intelligence can do for them. Will there be violence in a part of the world where there are American interests and an American presence? What are the prospects for instability in areas where we have vital interests? What are the prospects for regime change in countries where we have particularly good relations with an incumbent regime? And, especially in the Middle East, policymakers have a constant and ongoing focus on terrorism/extremism and weapons acquisition.

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In general, most senior policymakers are fairly high up on the learning curve and what they want are periodic updates on issues that we've been monitoring for a long time, but nowhere do those two issues of weapons acquisition, particularly weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism/extremism come into play more than in the Middle East.

On this point, I would like to make a pitch for the uniqueness of intelligence's contribution on both of those issues. I believe intelligence has a unique contribution of assets and capabilities to inform decisionmakers in fairly rapid time of any new developments on terrorism.

This does not mean we can pre-empt and prevent every single incident, but I think our ability to watch the movement of people that are identified as members of particular groups and our network of information on weapons procurement and research and development in identified countries is unique.

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The combination of using technical means, clandestine collection, and what is available from open sources cannot be duplicated by any of the other sources of expertise on this subject, whether by research institutes, think tanks, distinct parts of the

government bureaucracy, or the open media and journalist world. So I do make a pitch that intelligence has a unique contribution to make, particularly in those two areas: terrorism and weapons proliferation.

As for the geographic scope of our focus, this has remained fairly constant. We focus on the countries where our interests lie. In the Middle East, these would tend to be the large countries where there is an American presence, countries that are major players in regional politics, countries that have key resources that we are concerned about, and countries that are enemies of our friends.

In the post-Cold War era, though, the way we look at small countries is changing. We can no longer assume that small countries will never come on our radar screen. Certainly Somalia, Sudan, and Bosnia have proven that we can become entangled, for better or worse, in countries where there were not intrinsically strong or important U.S. interests. But, for regional, ideological, or other reasons, small countries can suddenly emerge as very important to us.

The two that I would put on the list for the Middle East today are Algeria and, to a lesser degree, Yemen. Although Algeria is not small, it is a country where American interests have been characterized as of secondary importance: a "second order of priority" country. All of us realize that Algeria in crisis is now more important and our intelligence coverage on it has therefore increased.

Similarly, when we experienced the short-lived conflicts between Yemen and Saudi Arabia and within Yemen itself, there was a surge in demand by policymakers for an understanding of a country where we had only a modest presence and a modest level of interest, neighboring a country in which we have a significant level of interest.

Our coverage of Yemen commensurately rose to provide policymakers with an understanding of what

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was going on, not because there was any expectation that the United States would become directly involved in the conflict, but because the potential political ramifications of that conflict were such that we did have to become more engaged than normal.

For the most part, I think that the issues that I have outlined for you can still rely on reasonably traditional intelligence methods. More specifically, these include:

- A focus on politics at the national level, not transnational or cross-border, but within specific countries;
- A focus on leaders—the process of their decision-making, the source of their power, and their ability to influence events in particular countries;
- A focus on systemic change in a particular governmental system rather than specific episodes of violence or specific disturbances. For want of a better term, this would mean a “top-down” approach that still looks primarily at elite politics and how decisions are made, all the while keeping an eye on possible areas for change or new actors that could enter the political game of a particular country.

I think we have all become sensitized to spend more time and more attention on “underlying factors:” very complex and diffused issues of social, cultural, economic change that affect politics. They are important, require more analytic attention, and play into our political assessments of the stability of countries and the prospects for change perhaps more than they did in the past.

In this category, political Islam has to be one of the largest issues in the Middle East, but the list here also includes the consequences and ramifications of economic reform on the countries that are engaged in it, the impact of trends like the migration to the cities by previously rural populations with very traditional values, and overall “clash of culture” issues that we see within many of the large Middle Eastern societies.

This doesn't mean that the policymakers normally ask: "Gee, how's economic reform proceeding in Tunisia?" That's not the way they would pose the question. But they would expect the analytic resources of the government to have been invested in these kinds of issues so that, if the economy becomes an issue impacting on the potential actions of a particular leader or the stability of a particular country, then we would have the analytic capability to make judgments on it.

These kinds of issues raise the whole question of comparative advantage and efficiency. Specifically, where are the resources of the U.S. government best spent and where can we rely more on the private sector or the non-government world to contribute its expertise?

I have no hesitation in saying that the non-government expert world is better placed than the government intelligence community to do field research on sociological issues, on economic issues, and for the most part on the whole large question of political Islam.

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The data that can be collected by academic researchers, scholars, and analysts from think tanks or foundations—as well as the insights they gain—are in many cases better than what an embassy officer or a visiting government analyst would be able to obtain on a visit to a key country.

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Of course, everybody has his biases, everybody has his perspective, and everybody is writing for his own constituency and his own clientele. What I think we need to do is benefit from the research that is being done in the non-government world and integrate it and synthesize it into an analysis that is being done for senior policymakers.

This does not in any way absolve the intelligence community of the responsibility to monitor those issues, but it should not always assume they have the comparative advantage over very good journalists or visiting scholars and researchers from the non-government world. We need to be able to intertwine the knowledge that is gained from those kinds of outside sources with our own comparative advantage on regime behavior and emerge with a "net assessment" of what is likely to happen in key countries.

It seems to me that one benefit of the post-Cold War world should be an improved and more relaxed exchange between non-government and government experts. I would hope that today there is less ideological baggage to inhibit the exchange of expertise and knowledge.

I think we have been able to witness this ourselves. When I was national intelligence officer, we convened a conference on democratization in the Arab world to which we were able to invite scholars from the Middle East who in the past would certainly not have participated in something that was labeled "the intelligence community." It was hosted at the National Academy of Sciences but clearly identified as supported by the National Intelligence Council.

Today that kind of encounter is happening all the time and in many ways, and I think it very much enhances the effectiveness of our overall intelligence effort. Hopefully it is of mutual benefit. So I do think that the opportunity now exists to draw the lines less

rigidly than they have been drawn in the past to permit the flow of information from non-classified sources into the intelligence product.

A separate issue concerns the media. From where I sit, policymakers respond frequently to press coverage of issues, and get input from non-government sources who, as I said, write for a different audience and have a different constituency, sometimes writing extremely dramatic stories foretelling radical change in a particular country or a particular region. It seems to me that the intelligence community does play a useful and appropriate role in helping verify, confirm, explain, or comment on this kind of coverage of the stories in our region.

I think it is valid for policymakers to hand us an article from the *New York Times* and say, "Is this true?" or "What do you think of this?" Sometimes intelligence analysts think that this is a digression from their principal work but, from my perspective at the NSC, it is a perfectly appropriate and valid use of intelligence expertise.

An example is today's story in the *New York Times* about the amount of Iraqi oil that is being diverted illegally under the post-Gulf War sanctions regime. Our own judgment is that the numbers cited in the newspaper were off by about 50 percent—that at most Iraq is managing to get out 100,000 barrels a day, not 200,000. Also, our view is that it is principally funneled through Jordan, with the leakage through Turkey and Iran only a minor portion of the total. So when tasked to check the accuracy of a newspaper story, intelligence provided the answer.

Finally, a word on the global agenda. There is some expectation that our foreign policy will move in a direction focused less on individual countries and more on the transnational issues—e.g., environment, population, refugees, narcotics. I would say for now—and maybe we lack a bit of imagination—that this kind

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of analysis is less critical to the work we do on the Middle East than are the immediate questions of the peace process, the rogue states, the problems of terrorism, etc.

I think that so far the analysis that the intelligence community can bring to bear on global issues is of greatest use to the people whose responsibilities are global—the people who are looking at functional issues and “macro” approaches to these global issues. So far the Middle East has not been a major target of this emerging analytic effort.

We have to work harder to integrate concerns about environmental degradation, for example, into our analysis of regime stability. So far, we don’t do it very much, and perhaps we have to try harder on that score. But it is striking to me that regional leaders are also getting a little bit more into the global agenda, and when they come to town and they want to have an analytic exchange with us, they ask us what we are doing in these particular areas—“we” as the U.S. government, not “we” as intelligence analysts. This helps us understand what is on their minds and therefore slowly becomes part of our own agenda for research.

In conclusion, the gist of my remarks is, *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*. On balance, we are still relying on fairly traditional approaches, and that’s what the policymakers want. But I hope I have identified a few areas in which we can expand, where we can adapt methodologies to new information that has become available, and most importantly, where we can lower the boundaries between government and non-government research to come up with the best product possible.

Daniel Kurtzer
Department of State

When I moved to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research about ten weeks ago, I hope I brought with me a healthy appreciation of the degree to which good policy rests on good analysis, which in turn rests on good intelligence. At the same time, I have learned in these ten weeks that there is a major distinction between what we in the policy community think we need to know and what the intelligence community often thinks it needs to provide. So one of the major issues that I intend to discuss today as I approach this issue, mostly in terms of intelligence in the Middle East as it relates to the peace process, is what it is that policymakers are asking of the intelligence community and what it is that the intelligence community might do to respond.

There is a distinction in this respect between what intelligence specialists decide for themselves they can do. Indeed, intelligence might be called the study of the probable—what's likely to happen and what are the odds of events X, Y, and Z leading to a certain consequence. In contrast, policy people will often look at the same issue and want to see what's possible—in other words, how they can act on a situation and change it in order to meet policy priorities. The distinction between these two—what is probable and what is possible—is a distinction that both policymakers and intelligence analysts need to bear in mind.

What are the tasks of intelligence generally? First, providing fast facts—not what CNN broadcasts, but what the policymaker needs to know accurately in real time. When the secretary of state asked us this morning to tell him what President Yeltsin said in his State of the Federation address, he could have read the tickers.

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What he really wanted to know is what President Yeltsin said that had relevance for U.S. policy.

The intelligence community has to provide not only the facts that are asked for, but quality facts. What does it mean in terms of what policymakers are seeking? At the same time, the intelligence community has to provide a sense of the trends—what is all of this a part of?

Assessing trends can be very tricky—like the hypochondriac who dies and leaves on his or her tombstone the saying, “I told you all along that I was sick.”

It is easy enough for the intelligence analyst to keep arguing a certain view, to keep arguing that something is wrong. But it is more important for that analyst to be able to tell the policymaker where things fit into a long-term trend.

For example, if the peso was going to collapse in December and the intelligence community, over the course of the year, simply said, “The peso is in difficult trouble,” was the intelligence community doing the policymaker any favor? When did the bells start ringing that the peso was in serious trouble?

So the intelligence community not only has to provide those facts, but also has to provide a sense of where those facts fit into longer-term trends and when those trends are likely to impact on policymakers’ agendas.

A survey of my colleagues in the intelligence community would probably reveal that most of them, if asked what their primary purposes really are, would answer in one of two ways: number one, to provide the president and the national command authority with strategic warning about threats to the United States; and, number two, to provide tactical commanders in the field with intelligence in order to carry out the tasks that may be assigned to them.

We in the State Department argue that—and I think if you then polled policymakers, most of them would answer in the same way—intelligence is the service of diplomacy. Presidents articulate foreign policy objectives, which they often see as opportunities. Intelligence not only serves the purpose of providing strategic warning and tactical information to our commanders in the field, it also must serve the diplomatic purposes and provide opportunities for presidents and secretaries of state to carry out their functions in achieving our national purposes.

In doing so, intelligence involves a number of very difficult choices: choices about priorities—what we collect, how we collect, and where we invest our money; choices about production—analytical products as opposed to operational products; and choices about dissemination—to whom is intelligence to be provided, how fast, and how much is invested in the dissemination of the product.

In the Middle East, all of these choices and all of these tasks carry a number of consequences for the job of the intelligence community. There is nothing, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere, that will ever substitute for regional expertise on the part of both policymakers and the intelligence community. In fact, as part of a strategic management initiative in the State Department, we did a survey of State Department customers, people who use our services. The answer that came back loud and clear is that the quality that people most respect about the State Department is area and regional expertise, which applies as much to the intelligence side of the State Department as it does to the operational and policy side.

So what do we need to know about the Middle East as we approach an issue like the peace process? First, we have to understand the local and the regional dynamics. What's happening today and how does it relate to what happened yesterday? What happens

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today is not necessarily a new phenomenon all the time, and it's the regional experts in the intelligence community who can provide a sense of continuity in understanding where today's events fit longer-term trends.

Second, we need to understand the social and political environments in which the peace process and other activities in the Middle East take place.

Third, we need to understand deeply rooted beliefs on the part of all the parties—for example, the role of Islam, the role of Zionism, the role of a post-Zionist or a new Zionist Israel. We need to understand the way people think about themselves and about their belief systems.

Fourth, we need to understand leadership attitudes. The question to which we are most often asked to provide an answer is, "What is President Mubarak, what is President Assad, or what is Prime Minister Rabin thinking? What are his intentions? What's motivating him to act in a certain way and how is he likely to act under certain circumstances?" A study of leadership—understanding leaders and the environments in which they live—is an absolutely critical task for us.

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Fifth, I would argue that we have to understand the hopes, fears, and concerns of the people in the region. It is not just leaders who matter, it's also the people. What do they really believe? What do they really want? What do they really fear? Most countries in the Middle East do not provide an environment for very

useful polling techniques, and therefore assessments of attitudes are very difficult to make, but it is imperative that they be made in order to serve the policymakers.

And finally, we need to understand national negotiating styles. Without claiming that there is a national negotiating style that is very easy to discern, the fact of the matter is that a close study of the way people interact with other people across the negotiating table could be done and could provide valuable insights into how they will interact in the future. It won't necessarily provide a "how-to/fix-it" guide, but it certainly is an important function in which the intelligence community, as well as the academic community, can engage.

As we approach these issues, we face a number of endemic problems in this region, as well as a number of opportunities.

The first problem includes terrorism and violence, the threats that groups and individuals make against their own societies, as well as against other societies, in an effort to thwart diplomatic gains as well as to achieve their own purposes.

Second, there is an endemic problem of poverty—the haves versus the have-nots—and the attempt by some countries in the region to translate other kinds of problems into a dispute between the haves and have-nots. We saw this at the time of the Gulf War when Iraq claimed that it was fighting on behalf of the have-nots.

A third problem is the absence of accountable government: the fact that there is a weakness in openness, political participation, and economic decision-making among peoples of the region.

A fourth endemic problem in the region is the heavy investment that has been made in military spending, to the detriment of investment in the economic infrastructure of various societies.

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A fifth endemic problem is with regional aggressors who do not seem to change over time—like Iraq, Iran, and Libya—and who seem intent upon disrupting the *status quo* in the region rather than participating in diplomatic and political ways to change the *status quo* peacefully.

A sixth problem is the persistence of border disputes which erupt periodically, as between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and the fact that the borders of the Middle East remain only a fragile representation of a reality which is not yet deeply rooted in the region.

And lastly, there is an endemic problem of internal instability in places like Algeria and Bahrain, as we have seen in the past couple of months.

At the same time, as the intelligence community is asked to understand and to report on these endemic regional problems, presidents and secretaries of state also demand to know how they can achieve diplomatic successes in the Middle East. In this regard, there are at least two opportunities in the Middle East that need to be exploited.

First is the peace process—the effort that the United States and others have undertaken over the past decades to try to bring about a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. This remains an opportunity that president after president, administration after administration, has defined as a high priority for the United States. The intelligence community therefore must respond, not just by providing warning about the problems, but also by providing information and analysis about how to make something good emerge in the peace process.

A second opportunity exists in the multilateral arena. As I think you all know, having heard me speak a couple of years ago on this subject, there are multilateral negotiations underway among many Middle Eastern states. This represents something brand new, something the Middle East has never done

before. These discussions take place on the five issues of arms control and regional security, regional economic development, refugees, water, and the environment.

In other words, here are two diplomatic opportunities that the president and the secretary of state have defined as items they would like to pursue, to which the intelligence community must respond. What kinds of information and analysis can we provide to the policymakers that will facilitate the achievement of their goals in the peace process and in this multilateral arena?

As we synthesize information relevant to advancing the peace process, we see six particular problems that beset the peace process about which we owe the policymakers an honest judgment. What they do with these judgments—in other words, how they use the study of the probable to turn it into the art of the possible—becomes their task. Our task is to define the problems as we best see them.

Problem number one is the structural fault lines that exist in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Are these negotiations truly on track? Has the Oslo process taken root enough that it can overcome the immediate issues that beset the two parties—namely the perception on the part of the Israeli public that they have not gained a greater degree of security from this peace process, and the perception on the part of Palestinians that this peace process has reached its outer limit with the takeover of Gaza-Jericho? Is this a structural fault line or is this a temporary problem? We, as the intelligence community, need to tell the policymakers our views about this and suggest reasons why the impasse has come about.

A second area to watch for in the peace process involves the consolidation of the existing agreements. Why haven't the existing agreements between Israel and the Palestinians taken greater root? Why haven't

they borne greater fruit? Are there problems in Palestinian decision-making and Palestinian governance which need to be taken into account? Are there problems in Israeli policies and Israeli practices which continue to beset the process? Are there problems in the activities of the outside world, including, perhaps especially, the donor community in the delivery of assistance, which are exacerbating the problems on the ground?

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A third area to watch for in the peace process is of course, the Israeli-Syrian negotiations. Does the political will exist on the part of the Syrian and Israeli leadership to reach an agreement? If the political will continues to exist, why haven't they broken through on issues that are well known to both sides?

It is remarkable, and perhaps not surprising, how little is secret about the Israeli-Syrian engagement. What does remain secret are the desires and expectations on the part of the leaderships about what they will concede and when they will do so in order to reach an agreement. But the issues are well known. They've been on the table for a long time. And the question is, does the political will exist to move those issues from being on the table onto a piece of paper and, if it doesn't exist now, why not?

A fourth issue is the role of Egypt, both in the Middle East generally and in the peace process specifically. Do we see a long-term trend developing in which Egypt is seeking a leadership role in the peace

process? Does it perceive itself outside the process? What levers is Egypt using in order to retain a role which it has carved out for itself for many years?

A fifth issue relates to Arab hesitation with regard to this process. As many positive things as can be said about the Arab world's acceptance of the peace process, including its participation in the multilateral negotiations, the fact of the matter is that there has been too little consolidation of Arab-Israeli relations since the Madrid process began. There have been contacts, there have been meetings, and there have been putative breakthroughs. But there has been little consolidation. So we in the intelligence community owe an analysis to our policymakers of the causes of Arab hesitation and the factors that may impel the Arabs to take a more forward-leaning role in moving toward a comprehensive settlement.

Finally, as we look at the peace process, we owe our policymakers a clearer understanding of the way the American role is perceived in the region. Of course, the last thing any of us ever wants to do is to take our own look at our own policy; it's just not done. But we do owe our policymakers a sense of how others perceive us.

Therefore, we watch carefully for indications of whether or not the role we play in the peace process is seen by others as effective and efficient and whether or not there are either cries in the region for more assistance or more stand-offishness on the part of that assistance. That is as important an analysis to provide to our policymakers on the peace process as any other factor.

The line between intelligence and policy often gets blurred. But to the extent that our intelligence community can continue to respond effectively to the diplomatic priorities of the secretary of state, we will be performing our role effectively in the pursuit of our national objectives.

John L. Moore
Defense Intelligence Agency

Since 1967, the focus of U.S. defense priorities in the Middle East has shifted from the Arab-Israeli issue to the threats to U.S. interests/forces in the region. The withdrawal of the British from east of the Suez canal, the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, the creation of Central Command, U.S. tanker escort operations during the bitter Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, and Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield and their aftermath have all moved the Persian Gulf region to the highest priority in defense intelligence needs and requirements. You have probably all read about the two nearly simultaneous "major regional conflicts" (MRC) which have formed the basis for defense planning in the Clinton administration. One of those two MRCs is in the Gulf.

Countering the spread and development of weapons of mass destruction (biological, chemical, and nuclear) and their delivery systems is also a major worldwide requirement for Department of Defense (DOD) intelligence. The Middle East and South Asia region has most of the countries that are actively pursuing these types of capabilities. As a result, the subject occupies a lot of our time and attention.

In terms of the Arab-Israeli issue, there are two essential foci of defense intelligence: first, supporting peacekeeping and monitoring operations which help promote regional stability and uphold peace arrangements; and second, ensuring that policymakers understand the regional balance of forces in order that they may carry out a policy of protecting Israel's security through maintenance of its qualitative military edge.

Since the Egypt-Israel peace treaty went fully into effect in 1982, the U.S. Army has deployed an infantry

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battalion in the Sinai (on a six-month rotation) as part of the Multinational Force and Observers mission to monitor activity in the Sinai Peninsula to ensure compliance with treaty commitments. Additionally, U.S. reconnaissance aircraft routinely over fly the Sinai and U.S. intelligence reports the results to both parties involved (Egypt and Israel).

This has also been done over the Golan Heights since 1974, after Secretary of State Henry Kissinger negotiated the Israel-Syria disengagement agreement. If, as we all hope, Israel and Syria do come to a peace agreement, the U.S. intelligence community might be tasked for additional support, particularly regarding peace monitoring and early warning.

Before the breakup of the Soviet Union, there was a very large Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean as well as Soviet military support (in terms of deliveries of equipment with advisers and technicians) to regimes such as those in Libya and Syria.

These activities, coupled with the delivery of weapons systems, were the principal interest of defense intelligence before 1989. Since then, the loss of their superpower patron has been especially burdensome for the Syrians, who still owe Moscow an estimated \$8-10 billion for past arms deliveries. The failure to work out acceptable repayment terms has stopped any new major weapons systems deliveries to Damascus—since Desert Storm, Syria has purchased mainly older systems, like T-72 tanks or self-propelled artillery, from the Russians and East Europeans.

Monitoring the military balance between Israel and its Arab neighbors has been an ongoing process for the past five decades in the U.S. intelligence community. This is a function of three factors: how and from whom one defines the threat (whether it is just Israel's immediate neighbors, or includes the wider ring of Arab and Islamic states that are in a state of war with Israel); what distant countries might become part of an

anti-Israel coalition; and finally, what is the scenario for how a war might break out and what the length and intensity of the fighting might be.

Israel's regional military superiority is an established fact. Its equipment is first rate—much of it is made in Israel or is modified U.S. materiel. Its personnel are very well trained by any standard and its intelligence and support systems are among the best in the world. Israel combines all of these factors, plus others, to ensure that its armed forces are well prepared to meet any and all regional military threats. But determining a qualitative edge becomes very complex and difficult, particularly when, for example, the United States decides to sell long-range F-15s to both Israel and Saudi Arabia. (Personally, I'm glad those judgments are made in the policy arena and not in intelligence circles.)

The Aftermath of Desert Storm

The strategy the United States crafted for the Gulf region after Desert Storm has made increased demands on the U.S. intelligence community for both strategic and tactical information.

With two joint task forces charged with enforcing "no-fly zones" in northern and southern Iraq—one based in Turkey and the other in Saudi Arabia—the intelligence system has to be able to respond almost instantaneously with usable information for commanders and pilots based both on land and at sea.

Additionally, the Provide Comfort task force has personnel on the ground in northern Iraq facilitating the flow of humanitarian goods to the Kurds, who continue to endure an economic boycott by Baghdad. While U.S. and allied military personnel have not been directly touched by Iraqi terrorism, we have noted numerous incidents of Iraqi-sponsored terrorism against the Kurds, UN personnel and international aid workers in northern Iraq.

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Terrorism emanating from the Middle East has been a major problem for several decades. Five of the seven countries the State Department lists as “state sponsors of terrorism” are in the region. So we pay close attention to all forms of terrorist operations, whether by the state sponsors, by secular groups, or by Iranian-controlled organizations like Hezbollah.

“The intelligence community has to provide detailed information for the operational forces to be able to meet and defeat any threat, whether a missile site along the Strait of Hormuz or an Iraqi or Iranian SAM site that fires on U.S. or coalition aircraft.”

The U.S. Navy’s increased operational tempo in the Gulf since 1990—most Americans probably do not realize that the most heavily used port by the U.S. Navy outside the United States is in the Gulf—has required additional concentration of intelligence resources. The Navy has to be ready to respond to threats from both Iraq and Iran. The current buildup of Iranian forces on Abu Musa and the two Tunb islands—territories in dispute with the United Arab Emirates—poses a threat to shipping in the Gulf.

The intelligence community has to provide detailed information for the operational forces to be able to meet and defeat any threat, whether a missile site along the Strait of Hormuz or an Iraqi or Iranian surface-to-air missile (SAM) site that fires on U.S. or coalition aircraft. Intelligence must also provide commanders with the necessary data to put a Tomahawk missile exactly where the president and the national command authority direct them. To come up

with this level of detail and precision takes a lot of people, time, and effort.

On the strategic level, the intelligence community's performance in warning of Saddam Hussein's intentions, whether in July 1990 or October 1994, has been excellent. The difference in U.S. military reactions in the summer of 1990 and last fall was not a function of better intelligence warning, but of a successful policy which was able to deploy forces to deter Saddam. Since February 1991, the successful negotiation of bilateral defense cooperation and pre-positioning agreements throughout the Gulf, coupled with continual U.S. Navy and Air Force deployments to the region, resulted in U.S. forces moving before Saddam attacked.

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

Also on the strategic level, the drive by Iran and Syria for WMDs and long-range missile delivery systems has occupied much of the intelligence community's time and attention. Libya has been somewhat deterred by UN sanctions from acquiring long-range missiles to go with its chemical capabilities; nevertheless, the Libyans continue their efforts to provide effective defenses for their chemical warfare production capability.

Ensuring that Iraq's WMD programs have been completely crippled and will not rise again is the responsibility of the UN Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Neither organization can function effectively without sources of information and, as Ambassador Rolf Ekeus has indicated several times speaking at The Washington Institute, there is an effective, professional dialogue between his organization and the U.S. intelligence community. I should point out that the community still strongly believes that Iraq has not fully complied with the Security Council resolutions and that Baghdad is

hiding some SCUD missiles and residual biological and chemical warfare capabilities.

To slow or stop an effort like Iran's to acquire nuclear weapons or long-range missiles requires a major worldwide campaign by the intelligence community. With the spread of nuclear technology and the dual-use nature of many items—especially in chemical and biological production and weapons development—a struggle goes on in the shadows involving intelligence's reporting the possibility of transfers of missiles, launchers, chemical precursors and dual-use production equipment.

"To slow or stop an effort like Iran's to acquire nuclear weapons or long-range missiles requires a major worldwide campaign by the intelligence community. . . . [A] struggle goes on in the shadows involving intelligence's reporting the possibility of transfers of missiles, launchers, chemical precursors, and dual-use production equipment."

Policymakers react to this current intelligence and try to ensure the equipment is not transferred from one country to another, possibly by a third country's private firm. It becomes extremely complex to supply enough information to convince various governments to react swiftly before a delivery occurs, while at the same time protecting the sources of information.

If that fails, it is the job of the intelligence community to know where the equipment has gone and estimate the proliferator's progress toward procuring weapons of mass destruction so that, if called upon, accurate information can be provided so precision-guided weapons can destroy the capability.

This entails a very demanding research and collection effort. We have had to learn a lot more about the relationships between organizations and militaries in the Middle East and Far East than we ever expected, as North Korea and in some cases China have become suppliers of technology and capabilities.

The intelligence community—including the Defense Intelligence Agency—does not always get it right. We are human and we do make mistakes. We may overestimate capabilities or miss how far a country is in its nuclear weapons program, as we did with Iraq before Desert Storm. But overall, I firmly believe that the U.S. intelligence community watching the Middle East region has proven itself in the last decade of this century. The region has one of the highest priorities in the overall intelligence effort and while we cannot talk about our successes too often, we have served the country, the region, and the international community well.

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Excerpts from

**INTELLIGENCE AND THE MIDDLE EAST:
WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?**

“...[O]ne benefit of the post-Cold War world should be an improved and more relaxed exchange between non-government and government experts. I would hope that today there is less ideological baggage to inhibit the exchange of expertise and the exchange of knowledge.”

—Ellen Laipson, National Security Council

“There is nothing, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere, that will ever substitute for regional expertise on the part of both policymakers and the intelligence community.”

—Daniel Kurtzer, Department of State

“To slow or stop an effort like Iran’s to acquire nuclear weapons or long-range missiles requires a major worldwide campaign by the intelligence community...”

—John L. Moore, Defense Intelligence Agency

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