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**DCI TASK FORCE REPORT:  
IMPROVING INTELLIGENCE WARNING**

29 May 1992

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~~SECRET~~ [REDACTED]**DCI TASK FORCE REPORT:  
IMPROVING INTELLIGENCE WARNING****INTRODUCTION****Purpose of the Task Force**

The Task Force on Intelligence Warning was formed in response to a request by the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). His concern, as he explained it to the Task Force at our first meeting, was: "Does the intelligence warning structure that the Community now has in place make sense, and is it adequate in light of the changes taking place in the world." The DCI further explained that he felt fundamental changes were probably called for since the traditional, first priority "Warsaw Pact threat" warning problem, "big W," was transitioning to threats stemming from world-wide instabilities, "little w," and to warning needs deriving from new dimensions to the national security interests of the United States. All members of the Task Force agree that the DCI's concerns are timely and that intelligence warning is of such national importance that a thorough review of the Community's posture is necessary. Further, in view of planned US military force draw downs and the adoption of a new National Military Strategy--which emphasizes short-notice responses to regional crises and reconstitution of forces in response to the emergence of major threats--the intelligence warning mission remains a critical one. We believe we have completed our assignment, as reflected by this report's "ground truth" judgements and assessments. Further, we are confident that our recommendations are appropriate and responsive to the DCI's need for support in his capacity as the nation's principal intelligence warning officer.

**Definition of Intelligence Warning**

The Director of Central Intelligence Directive (DCID) 6/1 on National Intelligence Warning [REDACTED] defines the mission of intelligence warning as "...to avoid surprise, to the President, the National Security Council and to the Armed Forces of the United States by foreign events of major importance to the security of the U.S." The Task Force believes this definition remains essentially valid, provided the intelligence programs implemented to fulfill the warning mission take cognizance of the new realities and intelligence demands of the 1990s. The kinds of foreign events, and the individual foreign nations, that are of major importance to the security and the interests of the U.S. have changed in recent years, and will continue to change. The result is a broader set of national consumers than the ones now identified in the DCID will need national intelligence warning support--for issues going well beyond foreign military attacks and government instabilities.

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### Fundamental Observations

Drawing on the assistance and the reflective remarks of forty-seven expert witnesses who collectively have been engaged in the production or the application of warning intelligence for over four decades, the Task Force developed four fundamental observations that heavily influenced our approach to evaluating the Community's intelligence warning activities, and the formulation of our recommendations. These observations are:

- o Providing policymakers with persuasive intelligence warning--in time for them to act in ways that influence a potential foreign development likely to be adverse to the interest of the United States--is the most important intelligence service the Community can perform for the security of the U.S.
- o Sustained, effective intelligence warning has been an elusive goal of the Intelligence Community for the entire duration of the modern Community's existence; all bureaucratic solutions previously attempted have not worked for the long haul.
- o Many credible senior intelligence managers believe, as does the Task Force, that all major intelligence warning failures of the past five decades have been the result of the Community's inability to consolidate and analyze diffuse raw intelligence successfully, and to extract a meaningful warning judgement; no such failure has been rooted in a simple dearth of information.
- o Except for the priority requirement of warning of a military attack on the U.S. or its allies by the former Soviet Union, the National Intelligence Community has never seriously attempted to establish dedicated analytical programs for intelligence warning on a global scale.

### Scope of the Intelligence Warning Issue

The above set of observations were a sobering and challenging point of departure for the Task Force. The storyline of these observations is very stark. First, intelligence warning should be the first priority of the Intelligence Community because of its high payoff value, but it isn't. Second, although the magnitude and scope of US intelligence activities provide ample data to make effective intelligence warning possible, the "warning problem" has yet to be solved. Third, except for the Warsaw Pact "big W" threat, a major effort to provide intelligence warning on the full range of US national security interests has never been attempted.

The Task Force realized that these issues constitute the fundamental challenge to be solved by our effort, while the detailed structure of the National Warning System is of secondary importance. This scope change, in part, was the result of the insightful testimonies of several experienced intelligence officers, whose remarks vividly pointed out that there are many dimensions to the causes of the historical poor-to-marginal performance of the National Intelligence Community for

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intelligence warning. In view of this historical perspective, the Task Force realizes that the recommendations proposed here are likely to fall short of constituting any total solution to the problem of providing effective intelligence warning; we believe, however, that they point in the right direction.

#### **DIMENSIONS OF THE CHALLENGE**

##### **Odds Favor the Adversary**

The Task Force believes that the objective of effective intelligence warning has remained an elusive goal for the Community, not because of any lack of serious efforts to work the problem in the past on the part of many highly qualified and motivated people, but because the mission itself--even assuming the acceptance of warning on the part of consumers, which is often not the case--is extremely difficult for at least four sets of reasons.

First, intelligence warning is difficult because it often hinges on assessments of intentions, on the specific moves contemplated by a foreign principal during complex situations. Often the foreign principal's intentions are not fixed during the formulative stages of a crisis situation. Hence intelligence cannot easily anticipate decisions that the subject actors themselves have not yet made. Also, technical means and security procedures are becoming increasingly available that help these foreign subjects conceal their intentions, plus their directives for implementation actions, and are extremely challenging to US intelligence capabilities. Intelligence warning has been, is, and will likely remain so analytically challenging that a high rate of success cannot be guaranteed. Not trying, however, will result in unacceptable risks to the nation.

##### **Stacked-Deck Against the Analyst**

A second dimension of the challenge of providing effective intelligence warning was brought to the attention of the Task Force by numerous witnesses. It was explained repeatedly that practically all the environmental factors that analysts in the major intelligence organizations are subject to make it difficult for them to produce break-through warning assessments. These difficulties begin with inherited and developed cultural views that often skew analysts' interpretations of data on non-western culture nations. Though it is almost a cliché, post-mortems on intelligence warning failures continue to note that such failures are often due to a lack of understanding of the radically different values and motives of a foreign adversary relative to the social-economic-cultural yardsticks that most US intelligence analysts make judgments by. Furthermore, many bureaucratic and professional "environmental" factors within the intelligence community put a premium on consensus and inhibit general consideration of the "unthinkable" interpretation of ambiguous intelligence.

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~~SECRET~~ [REDACTED]**Structural Deficiencies**

A third dimension of the intelligence warning challenge has to do with the Community's posture and practices established specifically for intelligence warning, i.e., the National Warning Intelligence System. Though the Task Force recognizes that organizational structure changes by themselves can make only marginal improvements in the performance of the warning mission, we nevertheless believe that there are serious deficiencies in the current National Intelligence Warning System structure. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] if the National Intelligence Warning System is meant to be an integrated inter-agency process with procedures for compiling and prioritizing requirements, with standards for assessing warning conditions on a global basis, and with systematic reporting and dissemination procedures, then no such "system" currently exists and the National Warning System is more of an illusion than a reality. The Defense Intelligence Warning component of the National System does have considerable structure and standards, but the scope of this operation does not make it a substitute for a national system.

**New Intelligence Warning Challenges**

The fourth dimension of the "warning problem" lies in the fact that the current structure and in-place programs and systems for intelligence warning were largely designed for the traditional "big W" problem. The Task Force believes that the scope of US intelligence warning activities needs to be expanded, if not now then eventually, to encompass the full range of US national security concerns, such as economic competitiveness, global energy management and global environment management. The identity of new consumers, the dynamic state of policy development, and even the role of national intelligence itself are all issues that are in a state of flux regarding these and other new national security concerns. Structuring a relevant intelligence warning analytical program for these new dimensions to foreign affairs will remain a formidable challenge.

**CURRENT STATE-OF-AFFAIRS****DCID 6/1 Players**

The Task Force reviewed DCID 6/1 for two purposes: (1) To determine if the guidance provided in this directive still makes sense in the context of an era where "little w" is becoming the priority need of the nation, not "big w"; and (2) To use the principal provisions in the directive as a reference for understanding the current community structure and its assignment of responsibilities for national intelligence warning. On the whole, the intent and directions provided in DCID 6/1 remain pertinent today. It is clear that the Directive was meant to be the basis for an aggressive, coordinated Community effort on warning intelligence, collectively referred to as the National Intelligence Warning System. [REDACTED]

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National Intelligence Officer for Warning (NIO/W), who is to be the focal point for Community-wide warning matters; the Community components with a responsibility for warning intelligence, for

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A major weakness with the DCID is that below the DCI, responsibilities are distributed and, therefore, overall accountability is open-ended.

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No one is really responsible for the viability of the whole System however; the Task Force believes that this flaw in the DCID is a major reason why the full intent of the DCID has never been realized, as explained below.

**Community Posture**

The Task Force found that the overall level of analytical effort explicitly devoted to warning throughout the Community is sparse and unfocused.

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As one senior manager expressed the current state-of-affairs, "...the business of warning, while important, is essentially underdeveloped, underfunded, unprofessionalized and surprisingly under-defined, especially analysis." The findings of the Task Force do not dispute this statement. It needs to be highlighted, however, that this state-of-affairs is not a recent condition. The situation is not simply a current-players problem.

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### National Intelligence Officer for Warning

The Task Force recognizes that the establishment of the NIO/W position has proved to be a very meaningful step for fostering intelligence warning. But in a sense it has been a token approach toward National Intelligence Warning. A full commitment to give the NIO/W definitive operational responsibilities, to provide sufficient infrastructure support, to institutionalize his or her responsibilities with the NFIB, and with the mission of each of the NFIC Program Managers, has never been made.

[REDACTED]

As a result, however, the NIO/W and his or her immediate staff have become a substitute for, not the linchpin of, a substantial Community-wide intelligence warning program.

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intelligence warning is treated as a by-product. This indirect approach for identifying warning intelligence is inadequate.

### NFIP Program Managers

While the GDIP Program Manager has a very extensive intelligence warning system in place, the other Program Managers do not--beyond the mission of flagging an impending strategic attack against the United States. All Program Managers sponsor watch center operations, which contribute to the warning mission to a considerable degree. On a day-to-day basis, however, these centers emphasize current intelligence reporting, which more often than not addresses intelligence warning implicitly rather than explicitly. Their topical coverage is also open-ended rather than focused on specific consumer warning needs. The DCI centers play important intelligence warning roles when a foreign development becomes a crisis management situation. Overall, however, there is little organized production in any of the Programs devoted to long-term strategic warning issues.

### National Warning Staff

The National Warning Staff is not now staffed or positioned to act as a major national player in the Community for intelligence warning. Its role needs clarification, and its relationship within the Community needs to be strengthened through better personal communications and mutual coordination of efforts.

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~~SECRET~~ [REDACTED]**Summary Assessment**

This is not to say that there is no organized and effective national intelligence warning work underway in the Community. The efforts and products of the NIO/W, including his immediate staff and the NWS, were repeatedly praised by consumers on the NSC Staff, in Defense, and by the Congressional Intelligence Oversight Committee staffs as often being very insightful and generally out in front of emerging threats. The regional NIOs and all Agencies make important contributions to the steady flow of intelligence to consumers which results in a continuing awareness of foreign developments, the most basic form of intelligence warning. The NID and PDB are clear standouts on this score. The Defense Intelligence Warning System provides an active warning network with a global mission to support the CINCs as well as the National System. And under crisis management conditions, the Community invariably rallies and focuses on warning assessments that support departmental needs as well as the collective national security process. Nevertheless, these activities are not sufficiently coherent and do not have enough consistent integrity to be regarded as a National Intelligence Warning System. This weakness is very apparent to the consumers, who both exploit and disdain what they generally perceive to be, with respect to warning issues, a fractionated and indecisive Intelligence Community.

**ANALYTICAL ISSUES****Relevant On-going Analytical Improvements**

The Task Force does not have a simple solution to the formidable challenge of changing the analytical environment in large intelligence agencies to foster more insightful intelligence warning on a routine basis. We note that the steps directed by the DCI to improve National Estimates are very complementary to this end. We particularly endorse the new emphasis on including more alternative views and on encouraging more adversarial explorations of available data in the analytical processes supporting National Intelligence Estimates. The guidance to include a worst case scenario in draft estimates should directly result in improved intelligence warning assessments of possible emerging threats. While moving in the right direction, however, the Task Force does not believe that these efforts, by themselves, will sufficiently improve intelligence warning.

**Differing Analytical Techniques**

A question the Task Force explored in some depth is the issue of whether the analytical process for deriving intelligence warning is different from routine, all-source finished intelligence production. This question is important because if there are fundamental differences in analytical approaches, then the structural solutions for intelligence warning should cater to the unique approaches of intelligence warning that seem to work-- in order to optimize the process. On the surface, it appears that both types of analysts follow the same fundamental

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analytical processes, i.e. they both commonly apply the principles of deductive and inferential logic, they build evidential cases based upon the same type of data sources, and they rely on experience-derived expertise for developing conclusions based on proven precedents. The explanation of why warning analysts are more likely to identify threatening developments lies in the fact that they approach a problem with the objective intent of doing so, and other analysts most often do not.

### Leveraging Targeted Collection

The Task Force found that all elements in the Community who are concerned with intelligence warning need to pay more attention to collection requirements management. Beside the personal efforts of the NIO/W--and for traditional threats, e.g., North Korea--there appears to be little current interagency coordination, or any central approach for developing a comprehensive collection strategy on warning concerns before they become crisis management problems. On-going Community restructuring plans, which include several changes for more effective collection management, and the naming of a VC/NIC with collection responsibilities, make it an opportune time to develop imaginative collection programs in support of intelligence warning. Along with existing collection systems, the planned expansion in HUMINT [REDACTED] potentials for acquiring raw intelligence that has high value for intelligence warning. Better leveraging the full complement of US intelligence collection capabilities for global intelligence warning could be an important step toward enhancing the Community's performance in this important sphere.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Proposed Strategy

In view of the high priority senior consumers accord to intelligence warning, and the challenge of the task, the Task Force believes a comprehensive strategy is necessary in order to achieve fundamental improvements in the Community's performance on intelligence warning. The recommendations that follow are a complementary set, designed as the base set of actions needed to launch the strategy. The merit of each recommendation should be judged in this total context.

The Task Force's proposed strategy for improved intelligence warning is keyed to five strategic objectives:

- o Improve the Community-wide support to the DCI, in his role as the nation's principal intelligence warning officer, by establishing a process for developing explicitly articulated warning assessments that are both timely and relevant to the interests, concerns and priorities of senior consumers.
- o Establish accountability for warning intelligence efforts by clearly assigning responsibilities and by conducting periodic performance evaluations.

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- o Establish a base analytical program for warning intelligence production, structured on the premise that warning intelligence is more comprehensive if provided both by line units and by elements dedicated to warning assessments.
- o Facilitate Community-wide sharing of alternative warning assessments, and of related time sensitive intelligence pertinent to national intelligence warning assessments.
- o Improve the quality of intelligence warning analysis throughout the Community through the sustained training of analysts, augmented by methodology research--plus focused management attention to warning intelligence issues.

The Task Force holds that a more institutionalized intelligence warning system than now exists will result from the pursuit of these strategic objectives. That is, substantial analytical programs, routine collection initiatives, and increased inter-agency participation will result and, therefore, give more depth to the National Intelligence Warning System.

**Recommendation One: DCI Endorsement**

The Task Force recommends that the DCI explicitly endorse the above strategy for improved intelligence warning and ask for the complete cooperation of all NFIC principals in its implementation.

**Recommendation Two: Single Individual Accountable**

The Task Force recommends that the NIO/W be named Vice Chairman of the NIC for Warning (VC/NIC/W), to serve as the DCI's principal advisor on warning. Though the aversion to proliferating NIC Vice Chairmen is shared by the Task Force, this status matches and truly reflects the enhanced responsibilities of the NIO/W that we recommend. The VC/NIC/W would not be just a focal point for warning but would be the principal advisor to the DCI on all matters pertaining to warning. We see the VC/NIC/W discharging this responsibility in two ways: (1) The individual in question will be the principal substantive advisor on warning issues to the DCI and to the NFIB; and (2) The individual will provide advice to each of the NFIP components on their respective roles and postures for supporting the National Intelligence Warning System. As the DCI's principal advisor on warning matters, the VC/NIC/W will:

- o Assure that the DCI is provided intelligence warning, in a timely manner, that is relevant to senior policymakers interests and to national level policy issues. The VC/NIC/W's primary responsibility in this sphere is to ensure that a process is in place that supports the DCI with warning assessments on a Community-wide basis--a process that results in: Assessments that are full-ranged regarding all reasonably possible scenarios; assessments that are either prepared by or under the NIOs' direction, or that include their views; and that allow the

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VC/NIC/W to add his or her personal assessment when the VC/NIC/W judges the community product to be incomplete or even misleading.

- o Assure that timely intelligence warnings are disseminated to consumers in a progressive fashion, keyed to the pace of a developing situation.
- o Provide guidance to warning elements of Community components to ensure that all their efforts are mutually complementary, inclusive of the needs of all priority consumers, and responsive to the strategic objectives cited above.
- o Monitor the operations of these Community component warning elements within the context of their participation in the national intelligence warning system, particularly with respect to sharing new and alternative warning assessments and supporting the preparation of national warning products.
- o Advise the NFIP principals and the directors of their components on their operational roles, training programs and overall posture for supporting the National Warning System.
- o Report periodically to the DCI, the NFIC and other concerned Departments on the Community's performance with respect to intelligence warning as well as on future warning intelligence requirements.

#### Recommendation Three: Dedicated Warning Elements

The Task Force recommends that each major NFIP component establish or designate, as appropriate, an element whose mission is to act as the focal point for warning within that organization and to network with its counterparts in the other organizations that collectively constitute the National Intelligence Warning System. Though these elements are under the operational management of their parent organizations, they should be responsive to general guidance provided by the VC/NIC/W. These elements need not be large, but the analysts in them should be experienced individuals with demonstrated skills. The elements do need to be positioned within their parent organization in ways that give them direct access to senior levels of management. With respect to function, these elements should:

- o Perform and monitor investigative intelligence analyses directed at identifying and/or tracking potential warning concerns, in response to guidance provided by, among others, the VC/NIC/W.
- o Make internal line units aware of the dynamic warning interests of consumers in order to better posture these units for initiating warning assessments that are timely and relevant to consumer interests.
- o Act as the organization in question's agent for sharing new and alternative warning assessments, and related time sensitive

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intelligence, with all counterparts in the interagency warning intelligence network and with the VC/NIC/W.

- o Ensure that tailored collection requirements are initiated, and encompass all reasonably possible scenarios that could generate high threat warnings.
- o Support the preparation of national warning products by directly participating in their production or by supporting other elements within their organization in their preparation of such products.
- o Facilitate the establishment of warning intelligence training programs and the development and appropriate use of warning intelligence methodologies within their organization.

#### **Recommendation Four: Streamline The Structure**

The Task Force recommends the following additional structural changes to the current operation of the National Intelligence Warning System in order to improve the effectiveness of these operations and to provide adequate support to the VC/NIC/W:

- o All major Community components should adopt or reinstitute the practice of designating an officer--presumably the Director of its warning element--with specific responsibilities for supporting the National Intelligence Warning System. Other Executive Branch components and departments should be encouraged to, at least, designate a liaison officer as a point-of-contact to the VC/NIC/W staff.

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institute regular--at least monthly--meetings that draw together relevant regional NIOs, plus senior representatives and substantive experts from the Community's warning components. A specific warning document should be issued after each such meeting.

- o The National Warning Staff should be converted into an enhanced support staff to the VC/NIC/W. The duties of the individual members of this new staff should be defined in a complementary fashion so that the VC/NIC/W is assisted by functional experts in all of his or her many responsibilities. It is imperative that the staff be collocated with the VC/NIC/W.

#### **Recommendation Five: Broaden The Scope**

The Task Force recommends that the concept of national intelligence warning no longer be limited to military attacks and the instabilities of foreign national governments. Instead, this concept should be a variable encompassing the full range of current U.S. national interest and security concerns.

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~~SECRET~~ [REDACTED]**Recommendation Six: Revise The DCID**

The Task Force recommends that DCID 6/1 be revised to reflect any and all changes stemming from the above recommendations that the DCI endorses.

**A TASK FORCE CONCERN****The Resource Issue**

The Task Force recognizes that the recommendations offered are challenging and will encompass legitimate management concerns. Nevertheless, we believe extraordinary efforts are required when attempting to make cultural changes, which is the implicit objective of our proposed strategy for improving intelligence warning. We would not have recommended such extraordinary efforts if the priority of the problem did not warrant them and if we did not have confidence in the leadership of the Community to accomplish the tasks called for. Our only major concern is the future resource posture of the Community and its capability to support an enhanced National Intelligence Warning System as envisioned by the proposed strategy. In view of the continuing importance of intelligence warning, plus the increasing complexity of what warning needs to encompass, it would be a national mistake if adequate resources to support the warning mission of the 1990s should not be available.

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