

17 July 1992

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Foreign Intelligence Board  
FROM: Director of Central Intelligence  
SUBJECT: Warning

1. I have reviewed the report of the Task Force on Improving Intelligence Warning and believe that the Task Force has done the Intelligence Community an important service both in highlighting the deficiencies in the present warning system and also in making proposals for a new and invigorated approach to this problem.

2. In keeping with the report of the Task Force, but also drawing on a number of the very useful comments that have been provided from throughout the Community, I have decided the following:

-- First, appropos of both the Task Force report and a number of comments, warning needs to be further defined in order to make the system work and be responsive. Warning is not the same as the entire universe of contemporary intelligence. The term "warning," as it applies to intelligence, means to sound an alarm, to give notice, to give admonishing advice to policymakers. It connotes urgency and implies the potential need for policy action in response. It is a different intelligence function than simply informing policymakers or enhancing their understanding of an issue or development. For the purposes of this decision memorandum, warning would include identifying or forecasting events that could cause the engagement of US military forces (from the scale of embassy evacuations to larger military activities) and of events that would have a sudden deleterious effect on US foreign policy and security (e.g., coups, third party wars, refugee surges, and so forth). The National Intelligence Warning function should be limited to possible developments no more than six months in the future.

-- In keeping with Recommendation 1 of the Task Force report, I explicitly endorse a comprehensive strategy for the Community, including improved Community-wide support to the DCI in this connection; improved accountability for warning intelligence efforts through the clear assignment of responsibilities and periodic performance

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evaluations; establishment of an integrated analytical program for warning intelligence production combining both line units and elements dedicated to warning assessments; the sharing of Community-wide alternative warning assessments; and improved quality of intelligence warning analysis through sustained training of analysts augmented by methodology research.

-- The NIO for Warning (NIO/W) will continue to serve as my and the Community's principal advisor on warning. This individual will be the principal substantive advisor on warning issues to the DCI and to the NFIB, and will provide advice to each of the NFIP components on their respective roles and postures for supporting the National Intelligence Warning System. The duties of this officer will include:

- 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 NIO/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 NIO/W to add his or her personal assessment when the NIO/W judges the Community product to be incomplete or even misleading.
- Influence warning-related intelligence collection both informally and through the National Intelligence Collection Board.
- Assure that timely intelligence warnings are disseminated to consumers in a progressive fashion, keyed to the pace of a developing situation.
- 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.

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- 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.
- 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.
- Coordinate closely with the designated warning elements of the Intelligence Community.
- 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.

I am not persuaded that it is necessary at this point to create another Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council to carry out the warning function. I intend to give the NIO/W the authority necessary to carry out the responsibilities described above. If that proves insufficient, then changes in status can always be made.

- Each major NFIP component should establish or designate an element whose mission is to act as the focal point for warning within that organization and to work with its counterparts in other organizations that collectively constitute the National Intelligence Warning System. These elements will constitute the Warning Community and will remain under the operational control and management of their parent organizations, but should be responsive to the general guidance provided by the NIO/W. These organizations should:
  - Perform and monitor investigative intelligence analyses directed at identifying and/or tracking potential warning concerns, in response to guidance provided by, among others, the NIO/W.

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- 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.
  - Act as the organization in question's agent for sharing new and alternative warning assessments, and related time sensitive intelligence, with all counterparts in the interagency warning intelligence network and with the NIO/W.
  - Ensure that tailored collection requirements are initiated, and encompass all reasonably possible scenarios that could generate high threat warnings.
  - 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.
  - Facilitate the establishment of warning intelligence training programs and the development and appropriate use of warning intelligence methodologies within their organization.
- As suggested by the Task Force, there should be the following additional structural changes to the current operation of the National Intelligence Warning System. 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. The National Warning Staff should be transferred to the NIO/W as enhanced support staff. The duties of individual members of this staff should be defined in a complementary fashion so that the NIO/W is assisted by functional experts in his or her many responsibilities. This staff will be co-located with the NIO/W.
3. An essential change in the warning system is that it not exist in isolation from and parallel to the remainder of the analytical and collection community. It is also imperative that

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the warning system trigger actions by the rest of the Community, with respect to both analysis and collection. There must be a mechanism for vetting warning in such a way as to avoid a significant number of false alarms and at the same time ensure that its warnings cannot simply be brushed aside either within the Intelligence Community or the policy community. Accordingly:

- Warning reports may be initiated either by the NIO/W or, through him, by any warning element of the Intelligence Community.
- Warning reports growing out of the National Intelligence Warning System will be sent in the first instance to the DCI and principals of the National Foreign Intelligence Board. Mechanisms should be created to ensure that such reports are delivered directly to the NFIB principals within the minimum possible amount of time, for example one to two hours after their completion.
- Upon receipt of the warning report, NFIB agencies will provide to the NIO/W a written reaction to the warning report according to a schedule established by the NIO/W, depending on the urgency of the matter. Simultaneously, the Community Management Staff Deputy for Requirements and Evaluation will provide a report to the NIO/W on the status of collection relating to the subject of the warning report.
- The NIO/W will summarize these materials (and forward the reactions as well) for the DCI. Depending on the urgency of the matter, the DCI (or the DDCI in his absence) may authorize the dissemination of the warning report to the policy community.
- The DCI will then decide whether to commission a National Intelligence Estimate on the issue. The warning NIE would address a single warning issue and would be the product of the NIO/W in coordination with the appropriate NIO or NIOs and members of the analytic communities.
- Authorization of dissemination of a warning report to the policy community or the commissioning of a warning NIE will include direction to intensify collection activities on the subject at hand. Warning-related collection management will be enhanced and focused by the appropriate intelligence agencies. The NIO/W will monitor these collection enhancements.

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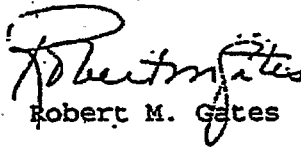
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- With dissemination of a Warning Report or Warning Estimate, the National Intelligence Collection Board will meet to decide on steps for enhancing focused collection on the warning subject.
- Following the issuance of a warning NIE, the NIO/W may, with the approval of DCI or DDCI, issue a National Intelligence Warning Spot Report to keep pace with and identify warning situations.
- Every six months, the Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council for Evaluation will examine the production of the National Warning System and report to the DCI and NFIB on the performance of the system and experience during the preceding period.

4. The weekly "Watch Report" meeting henceforth will be chaired by the NIO/W, with other participants remaining unchanged.

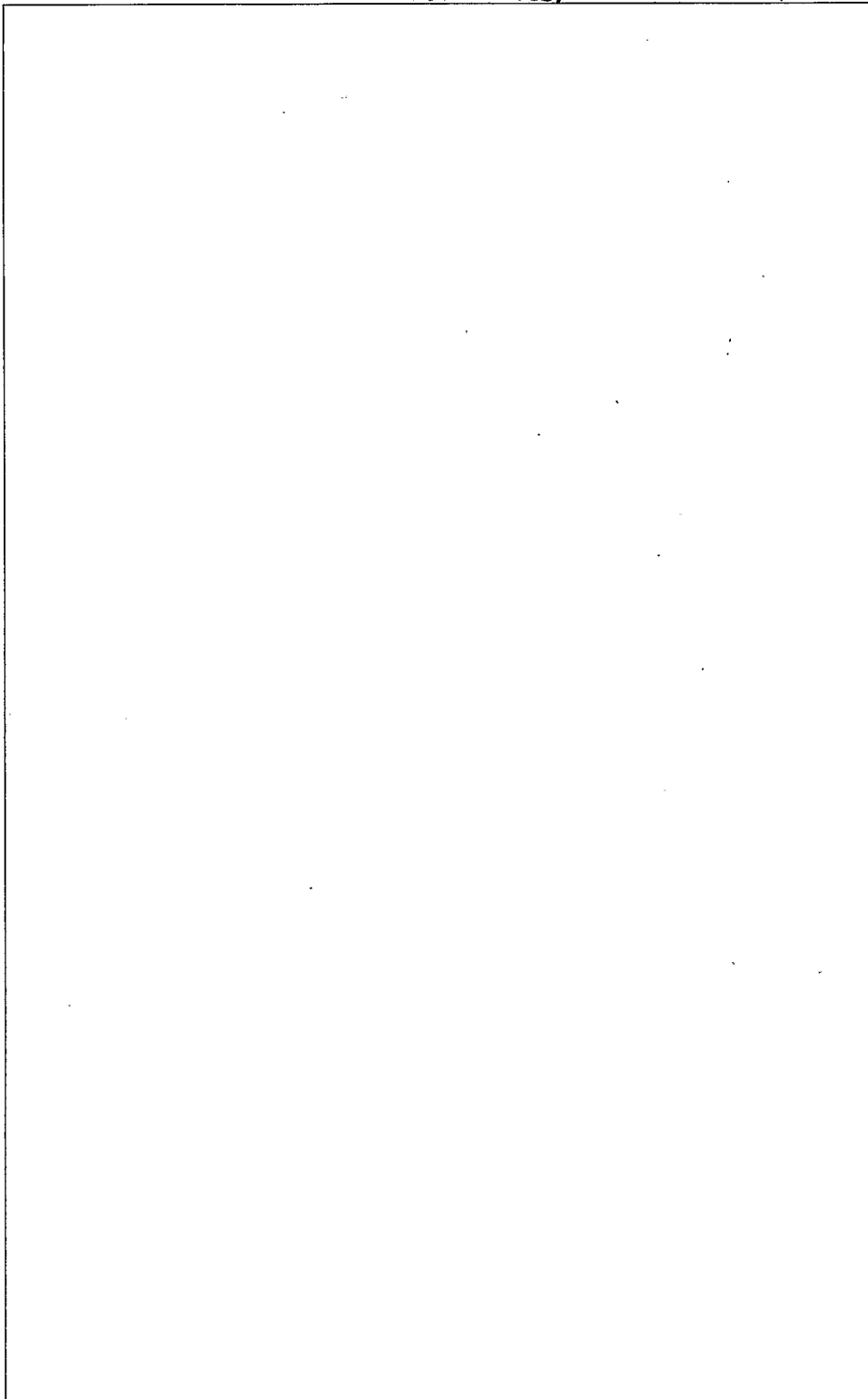
5. It is important in the warning process that regional NIOs and the line analytical elements of the Intelligence Community be involved, at a minimum, in dialogue by the NIO/W to ensure that the DCI is advised not only of the views of the NIO/W, but those of the line analytic components as well.

6. The measures I have described above should be implemented immediately. The Chairman of the National Intelligence Council will provide a report to the DCI and NFIB principals in 90 days on the establishment of the new National Warning System, together with recommendations for further refinement and adjustments to improve performance.

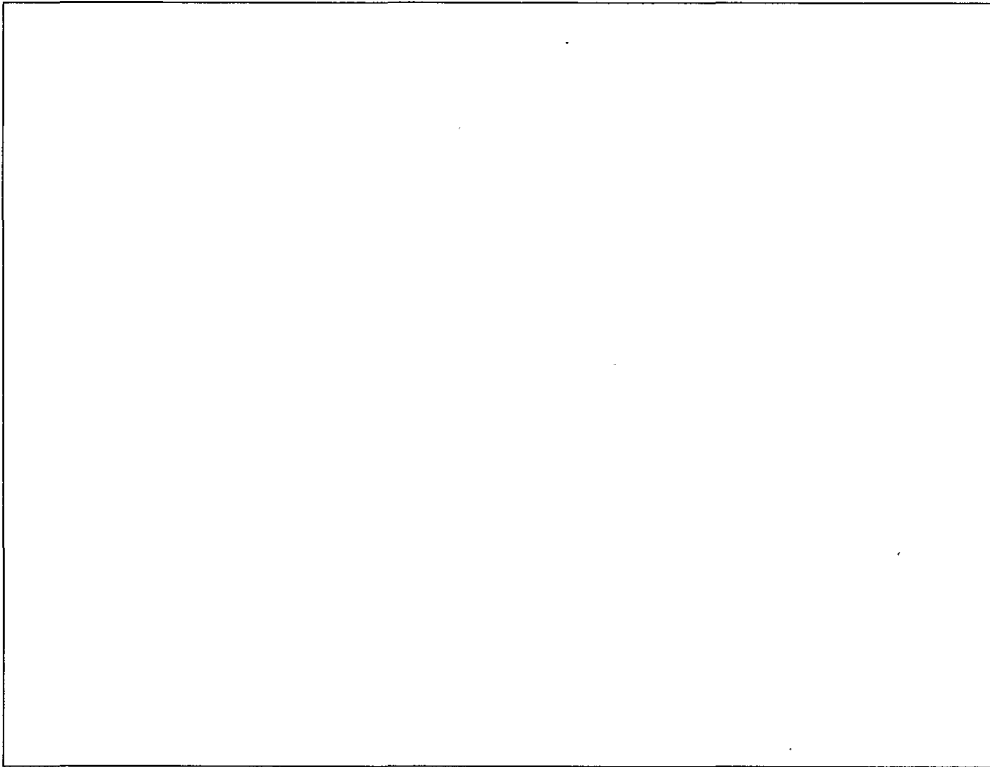
  
Robert M. Gates

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