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**Human Intelligence
Michael J. Sulick**

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Human Intelligence

Michael J. Sulick

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After a twenty-five year career in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Michael J. Sulick retired in 2005 as associate deputy director for operations (ADDO), the number two position in the National Clandestine Service. As ADDO, he managed the operational direction of global covert intelligence operations on terrorism, weapons proliferation, counterintelligence, and regional and country-specific issues. A specialist in Russia and Eastern Europe, Dr. Sulick served in the 1990s as senior CIA representative in Russia and Poland. In the early years of his career he conducted operations at CIA field locations in Asia, Latin America, and the former Soviet Union. He then directed the CIA operational division responsible for Russia, Eastern Europe, and the former republics of the Soviet Union (1999–2002), spearheading intelligence support to U.S. warfighters in the Kosovo conflict. After 9/11, he revitalized intelligence collection efforts to combat terrorism in the Balkans and Central Asia. As chief of CIA counterintelligence (2002–2004), Dr. Sulick integrated counterintelligence into the CIA's strategy to support the global war on terrorism and fostered collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that led to the exposure of some of the most damaging spies in American history. Since his retirement he has been an international consultant to U.S. and foreign corporations and has lectured on intelligence topics at Texas A&M, Syracuse University, the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, and various U.S. intelligence agencies and defense firms. Dr. Sulick holds a Ph.D. in comparative literature from the City University of New York and an M.A. and B.A. in Russian Studies from Fordham University. He has received the CIA Clandestine Service Medallion, the Director of Central Intelligence Medal, the CIA Distinguished Career Intelligence Medal, and the Presidential Order of Merit in Poland.

Oettinger: I take great pleasure in having with us today Mike Sulick, who has had a distinguished career in the CIA, from being in the field to being associate deputy director of operations, so he covers the gamut from action to administration. I'm delighted to have this opportunity to have him share his wisdom with us. Mike, it's all yours.

Sulick: Thanks, Tony. I'm glad to be here. I want to make this as informal as possible, so any questions any of you have, stop me. I know it's after lunch, so some of you may be dozing off. Some of us just had a sumptuous luncheon, so I'm nearly dozing off myself.

I do want to acknowledge that there's at least one distinguished guest in the room. People in my profession have a tendency to tell lots of war stories. I know that some of you here from the military have your own war stories. I thought I could get away with all kinds of fantasies, but unfortunately I find out that there is a guest here, Mr. Joseph Wippl, who is teaching at Boston University, who was one of my colleagues.¹ We served together, so, Joe, please do me a favor: if I'm lying really badly please stop me.

Wippl: Don't worry; I'm checking it all out.

Oettinger: Beware of collusion!

Sulick: Plus they have me strapped up with a microphone because of the record of the seminar. When it comes to technical things, it is known that those of us who are in the Directorate of Operations could mess something like this up in no time.

Wippl: Three-by-five cards are as far as it goes.

Sulick: I've just had lunch with some of the people in the class. I know that some of you are out there doing the job, working in a defense attaché's office or in Marine Corps Intelligence or other organizations in the military. If you think this is perhaps something you already know very well please feel free to challenge me or tell me the way you do it, or that you think I'm getting off course.

What I want to do is give you an idea of HUMINT [human intelligence]—a term that I can't stand. What we're talking about is basically old-fashioned espionage. There are all these INTs you're supposed to learn about, but its mission is the same as that of all the other INTs, whether it's satellite reconnaissance or the NSA [National Security Agency] doing SIGINT [signals intelligence]: providing consumers with timely, relevant, high-quality information. Of course, we get it from human sources.

How do we do that? We conduct espionage. We recruit spies. What I want to run you through a little bit is what we call the recruitment cycle: how we find those spies. Some of you probably have already had some of this in your military training. This is something that Joe and I had in our training, and we still do this with our new trainees. It's basic elements of how to recruit spies, because that's what human intelligence is all about. It's what we call a cycle of spotting, assessing, developing, and then recruiting targets. It's all very common sense.

Spotting is how you identify targets. It's very important nowadays. To show you how important it is, I'm going to go back to the way things were in the cold war. Most of the people in the CIA were under diplomatic cover, working in embassies' political offices or something, which

¹ Joseph Wippl, government executive in residence in the department of international relations at Boston University, has spent a thirty-year career in the CIA's National Clandestine Service.

gave them a reason to live in a particular country. It also gave them some kind of entrée. America was one of the superpowers; now some would say it's the only remaining superpower. As diplomats they had entrée in the particular country where they were stationed to press clubs, diplomatic receptions, think tanks, and seminars: places where they could meet targets of interest, who might be Russians, Chinese, or other Soviet Bloc officials.

We found other ways to meet people outside the diplomatic realm. I'll give you an example from my earlier tour. Joe, am I allowed to say where I was stationed?

Wippl: Absolutely!

Sulick: I don't have to say "a big land mass in Asia" or something like that?

Wippl: No, tell all!

Sulick: Well, not all! (I was going to do that anyway, so I could feel good.) My first tour I was in Tokyo. There was a large Soviet presence there. We had a tip that there were going to be fifteen Soviet officials, including KGB officers, who were going to study judo at a place called the Kodokan, which was the world's center for judo. I was a young, first tour person, and I got tapped to go over and study judo so that I could meet these people. Again, spotting: how do I make contact? I spent two back-breaking weeks with Japanese people larger than any people I'd ever seen in my life throwing me on the floor, on my back, muscles aching, and the Soviets never showed up. That just gives you an example of what spotting is all about. Some will tell you it's often the hardest part of the job: making that first contact with somebody.

Developing, frankly, is just another word for cultivating personal relationships. Targets are unique. I mentioned during lunch that as far as I'm concerned the essential part of espionage is cultivating personal relationships. That's how you get somebody to be a spy for you. You build up trust. They're taking a big leap in their lives: in some cases it could jeopardize their livelihood or even their life. They want to trust you, so it's very important.

There's a myth out there that the CIA or other U.S. intelligence agencies use blackmail. It's not true. Did we ever use it? Yes. In the early 1950s, in the very hot days, if you will, of the cold war, both sides used it. The Russians still use it. There was one case involving a very high-level KGB colonel. He was married, and the CIA found out he was having a romantic liaison with somebody in a particular country. We arranged with our usual technical prowess to take lots of photos that compromised this colonel. We presented them to him to blackmail him, and he looked at them and said "These are pretty good! Can I get some copies? I want to show them to my friends."

The fact is that, aside from my facetious story and moral considerations, blackmail doesn't work practically. If you're a spy and you want an agent, you want somebody who is doing it because he's willing to cooperate. If he isn't, if he's being forced into it by blackmail, he will lie to you, will give you as little information as possible, and be as uncooperative as possible. That's not what we want. We want spies who are doing it because they want to do it.

As you cultivate these people, you're assessing them, too, for a lot of reasons. You're assessing to see if they have access; if they really know what you're interested in finding out about. You could be working in a country of interest and meeting somebody at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—their version of the State Department. You find out this person is dying to be a spy, but he's working in the agricultural department, or the law of the seas department: something you have absolutely no interest in and that has no bearing on American national security.

You also assess if the person can be a spy. Does he talk too much? Does he go home every night and say “Hey, I'm meeting this guy from the embassy. I think he's with the CIA. I've got to tell all my friends!” He's probably not somebody who will be good material for a clandestine relationship.

Most of all, you're assessing someone to see “Would he or she become a spy?” You look for things that have motivated spies over the years. So I'll now ask the question, which almost no one gets wrong: “What do you think is the main motivation for people to spy?”

Student: Money.

Student: MICE.

Sulick: Money is the one that almost nobody gets wrong. “MICE” is an old KGB term. It's often a combination of motives. MICE is money, ideology (often people do it for loftier reasons than money), compromise (which is the blackmail situation), and ego. Ego plays a very important role. The best spies we had in the days of the cold war—and I'll ask my colleague here if he agrees with me or not—usually had some combination of these motives. Money was important. There was also resentment against the system. Sometimes it was resentment against an immediate boss. Sometimes it was just the thrill of it: they wanted to prove they could do it. There was adventure. Some actually did it because they believed in the cause of the United States, and they would not take money. Is that a fair assessment?

Wippl: I would always be careful with people who were motivated by just one thing, because that means that if it's just money someone can buy them for more. If it's just for idealistic reasons, if somehow you disappoint them then the relationship deteriorates. People who are motivated by a lot of different things are just a lot more dependable.

Sulick: People who are only motivated by one thing are also harder to deal with.

Student: After you pop the question about if they want to spy for you or not, what happens if they say no? Where do you go from there, if they already know that you're trying to recruit them?

Sulick: I think that what you want to do is wait to ask until you're almost sure. A lot of us compare it to a marriage proposal. You kind of know when you get there. You may not always be right, but your powers of assessment are such that when you ask “Will you be my bride (or husband, or whatever)?” you sort of know they're going to say yes at that point. But you're not 100 percent sure.

Oettinger: What is known about what motivated Penkovsky?²

Sulick: Penkovsky was a combination. He didn't want money at all. There was certainly ideology. He came from a peasant background, so he felt the common people were just screwed by that government. There was a certain amount of ego involved; I remember there was story that he was given an American officer's uniform or something—not something he could take back to Moscow, obviously—to wear around in his hotel room in London and he was just pleased as Punch. It gave him a feeling of importance: that he was playing a key role in history.

Wippl: I think there was also a little bit of revenge. He got to the rank of colonel and then it was found out that his father had been in the White Army. He felt very strongly that it had become a barrier to further advancement. He married into an important family: his father-in-law was a high-ranking officer—I think a general. Again, there was a potpourri of motives and he was a great agent.

Sulick: That's an example of the kinds of agents we had in the cold war, and today too, who are a combination.

Student: How do you detect people who are double agents at that stage?

Sulick: That's something you always have to watch out about. It was not only true in the cold war; it's true at any time and in any country. Both sides have human beings; a trained CIA or DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] case officer can get his ego stroked by somebody who says "You're great! You're so convincing! I want to be your spy!" You write back to your headquarters and say "I think I landed this guy. Am I great or what?" It's happened.

The example for me was something I'll talk about a little later, but we had a string of intelligence services that essentially pulled the wool over the CIA's eyes in the late 1980s, Cubans among them. Suddenly we were recruiting all these Cubans. We had very little information, because Castro had that island locked up pretty well in terms of letting secrets out. It was very impressive. Suddenly we started recruiting Cubans, and all these officers were getting pats on the back, kudos, and promotions, and were told they were doing a great job. A Cuban defector came in and told us about every one of these agents and said that Castro's intelligence service had run them at us. That wasn't the only one; there were Russians, Iranians, East Germans...

Americans have a weakness: we love to be loved by foreigners. We can't understand why people don't love us. We're such a great country! We have Michael Jordan, Michael Jackson, Apple computers, iPods, so how can you not love us? So we're a little naïve. Even those sharp, dashing CIA and DIA officers have those problems. So we've been snookered on occasion.

Student: Are triple agents kind of fictional? Does that just get too complex?

² Oleg Vladimirovich Penkovsky (1919–1963) was a colonel with Soviet military intelligence (GRU) who passed important secrets to the West in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He is considered one of the best assets the West ever had in the Soviet Union.

Sulick: You're exactly right, it does. Even double agents are complex. It sounds good, but after a while you can only feed so much misinformation, and then you start losing it. To make this guy look good you've got to give him good stuff. Then you start giving up good stuff, and think about tripling back. It's too confusing to the agent, and frankly, in the end, it's kind of the *Mad Magazine* "Spy Versus Spy." You don't get anything out of it as a professional intelligence officer.

Oettinger: You offered advice for people's romantic life; let me offer you a piece of advice for your professional and any other kind of life, which is "Always scrupulously tell the truth and be exactly as you seem," because it so flummoxes most people that it gives you a great comparative advantage. Everybody assumes that you're trying to flummox them, and if you're totally direct and above board it's hiding in plain view. It also has the merit that you can remember what the hell you're doing. One of the difficulties with a double role or even being sneaky in your business or professional relationships is that you have to remember from day to day or hour to hour what story you told to whom, whereas if you're totally above board it's simple, and you make no mistakes or fewer mistakes.

Sulick: That could be very dangerous for us. Are any of you familiar with a case that goes way back to the Soviet days of a guy named Yuri Nosenko? (Joe, you don't count.) Nosenko volunteered in Geneva at the United Nations. He was a KGB officer. The head of counterintelligence at the CIA at the time was a gentleman named James Angleton, who came under the spell of another Soviet, named Anatoli Golitsyn. We didn't know this at the time, but Golitsyn said "Any other Russian who comes after me is a double agent, so don't believe him." So this poor Nosenko unfortunately came in and offered himself, had one meeting, went back home, and came out for another meeting.

In between, a major event happened in American history: the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. A gentleman named Lee Harvey Oswald was accused of this, and it turned out he had traveled to Russia. Remember, all this came out in the press when you read about the Kennedy assassination, so people asked Mr. Nosenko "You were working in Moscow. Do you know anything about this?" He said, "Yes, Lee Harvey Oswald came to us. We decided he was a nut case, so we just threw him out." Others had already determined that Nosenko was a double agent. Now he said that Oswald was a nut, and we were on the brink of World War III, essentially. The United States was a little annoyed that somebody had killed its youthful president, John F. Kennedy. Now there was a Russian angle to the whole thing.

So you have to watch out when you play games with these double agents. In the end, by the way, he was not a double agent as far as I know.

I've gone through the recruitment cycle, but there's something else I want to note, because a lot of Americans find this hard to deal with, although people in other countries don't. The CIA and DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] officers who are doing all this around the world, meeting spies and trying to recruit spies, are breaking the law. Even though this microphone is on, don't go out of here and say that a former CIA guy said it's okay to break the law. That's not what I said. The United States has espionage laws. So do other countries. All these officers who are out there actually inducing others to spy are breaking the laws in those countries. That's another reason why so many of these officers are under diplomatic cover: because they're immune from

prosecution should they be caught. A lot of people don't like to hear that, but that is in fact what they're doing. They're not breaking any U.S. law, but they are breaking the law of the other country.

You also have to realize that you have an awesome responsibility: if you get caught you could jeopardize U.S. relations with that country you're spying in or spying against, and you could also jeopardize that agent. That person has entrusted his life to you in a sense. He may be greedy, he may be a thrill seeker, he may have resentments, but the fact is that he placed his trust in you, so you're obligated to keep that relationship secure. If you get caught, that person could lose his job; in some countries, like North Korea and Iran, he could lose his life. It's no longer true in Russia, but he'd probably be pounding a lot of rocks in Siberia. So it's serious business.

Student: You said that if you have diplomatic cover and you get caught it's okay. If the United States found diplomats of another country actually spying on us would we not prosecute them, but just send them home?

Sulick: If they are diplomats then there is kind of a pact among nations that diplomatic personnel and facilities are sacrosanct. What usually happens is that person is declared *persona non grata* and is expelled from the country. That's what the United States does, and that's what they do to U.S. diplomats who are accused of spying in other countries. They don't do it just for spying. We've had a lot of cases where American diplomats were meeting with dissidents in a particular country for reasons other than espionage, but they were expelled for (the pat phrase is) "activities incompatible with your diplomatic status." So we don't prosecute them.

I'll talk about these other kinds of officers who are not under diplomatic cover. They can go to jail.

Student: How sophisticated is the training you give these targets? I'm sure you don't just recruit them and throw them back into the fire.

Sulick: It depends a lot on the country they come from. If you're in a so-called "benign operating environment" there would probably be less guidance than for somebody in what we call a "denied area": a place where you're under a lot of scrutiny. The places I would put in that category are Russia, Cuba, China, Iran (we don't have representation there, but if we opened it up that would be a place), or Vietnam, so you really have to give a lot of guidance to those agents.

Student: I heard the North Koreans travel in twos. Is that to stymie recruiting efforts?

Sulick: Yes. It's kind of hard to have a one-on-one relationship and build that trust. But they do like to drink (very much), so if one passes out, there you go.

So far I've talked a lot about the cold war and the Soviet Union. Clearly, those things are long past, but I would submit that if the war on terrorism is your major intelligence priority these days, old-fashioned espionage is more important than it ever was in the cold war. People look at me in shock when I say that, but the fact is that terrorists can't be neutralized—you can't catch them—unless you can identify and find them.

Unlike the Soviet Union—one large land mass—the terrorists operate in very small cells. They cross borders easily. They're very compartmented. They screen their recruits probably better than the U.S. government does. They can work in a bank, in the real estate industry, or for an Islamic relief organization. Basically they are less vulnerable as targets to all the other means of intelligence collection the United States has at its disposal. In the cold war, the satellites in the sky could see if Russian missiles were moving between silos or if troops were moving. The NSA was even able to intercept conversations between members of the Politburo as they traveled around Moscow in their cars. You can't do that with terrorists. You don't know where to point those eyes and ears in the sky unless you have a human agent—a spy—who tells you where to direct those things. So, in a sense, human intelligence is probably more important now than it ever was before.

The problem of finding terrorists gets even more difficult year after year, because while Al Qaeda clearly still has a central command, and has recovered from some of the early blows that the U.S. government and military dealt to them after 9/11, there's been an evolution of terrorism into what people sometimes call "franchise terrorism." These loosely affiliated cells are not part of the Al Qaeda command, but operate independently, and that makes it a lot more difficult for organizations like the CIA, DIA, or FBI. There are fewer of those activities that you can intercept or find out about: border crossings, transfers of money, or communications. Remember the London bombings in the Tube a couple of years ago? If they're organized like that was, in a small neighborhood, people don't need to communicate over telephone lines. They walk across the street and talk to each other. It's a lot more difficult for the local police to find that out.

You could even have a source right inside Al Qaeda. Bin Laden himself might one day say "What was I thinking of? Terrorism? I think I'm going to work for the CIA to get this over with." Even he doesn't know all the operations being planned, in a sense, in his name. They're inspired by him but not directly tasked by him.

So I think what we're seeing more of, and we should see more of, is greater reliance on the cop on the beat, local law enforcement, as an intelligence collector. Police officers already do this. They have their snitches, their informants. The system is geared toward crime prevention, but still they know their business. They know their neighborhoods; the residents know them. If the residents see something suspicious they're more likely to tell a police officer—the cop on the beat—than they are to pick up the phone and call the CIA or the FBI. So we're seeing a lot closer fusion between intelligence and law enforcement.

One of the places that's really a model of this is New York City, which has a huge intelligence collection effort in the city itself. It's actually stationed some of its officers as liaisons in key countries around the world to deal with their police counterparts in Israel and a few other places. Beyond that, thirty-eight states have something called "fusion centers" in which state, federal, and local law enforcement have worked together to share information. I'd like to see a closer bond in the future between the CIA and some of the local law enforcement people, because almost anything that a local police force finds out in dealing with terrorism has some kind of foreign connection. Most police departments can't follow that up; that's why you need the CIA and DIA.

Student: Connecting the Soviet era with today, I have a question about the mini-nukes that Graham Allison talks about in his book.³ Can you comment about the suitcases of weaponized mini-nukes that General Lebed talked about, I believe, and then retracted, saying that twelve of them are unaccounted for?⁴ Is this a recognized real threat or is it something that he just made up?

Sulick: I'm not sure. I don't think he was politically forced to retract his statement. Lebed is a real military hero in many respects, but he's not the brightest bulb in the universe. I think he made a mistake with that. Are there such things as mini-nukes? Of course. But as far as I know there's no evidence, at least nothing that I've seen publicly, after Lebed made that claim, that those nukes are still loose and unaccounted for. I could be wrong.

Student: So you don't consider it a threat to the United States.

Sulick: I consider the loss of a mini-nuke, or of nuclear material from Russia, a major threat. In fact, a bigger threat is probably the nuclear material itself, more so than mini-nukes in a suitcase, because there were only a limited number of those. But throughout the Soviet Union, let alone other parts of the world. But there is a lot of material that could be used in a dirty bomb, and that stuff could disappear. Look at the recent poisoning of Mr. Litvinenko in London.⁵ I'm not a scientist, but polonium is not something you can buy at CVS. That's why I'm sure that somebody in Russian intelligence, or somewhere in the Russian government, had to get this tightly controlled material. Apparently it's so tightly controlled that it's spread around British Airways planes, hotels, and teapots. So that's a threat. I don't want to diminish the seriousness of the nuclear suitcases, but there are fewer of them, and there's no proof that any of those are lost.

I wonder where those suitcases are after all? I don't want to alarm anybody. I think I'm going to write a novel about this. It has to be plausible.

Somebody was talking about diplomatic cover before, and people being thrown out of a country. I want to say that there are a couple of new directions taking place in human intelligence, espionage, as a result of changes in targets, as a result of terrorism. Diplomatic cover is what we used very heavily during the cold war. It's a little different now. If I'm working as a diplomat in the American Embassy in Kuwait and I pick up the phone and call the local radical imam and say "You know, I'm really interested in Islam. Could we have lunch?" he's probably going to slam the phone down in my ear. So I think there's been a realization, certainly within the CIA and also in some of the investigative commissions that issued their results after 9/11—the 9/11 Commission itself, the Silverman–Robb Commission, and so on—that the CIA, the DIA, people operating overseas, have to move away from the embassy and use different covers, because diplomatic cover isn't going to get you access to the targets you need to reach in today's war on terrorism.

³ Graham Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe* (New York: Times Books, 2004).

⁴ On 7 September 1997 Gen. (ret.) Alexander Lebed, Russia's National Security Advisor, stated on the CBS program *60 Minutes* that the Russian military had lost track of more than 100 suitcase-sized nuclear bombs, any one of which could kill up to 100,000 people. His claim was never substantiated.

⁵ Alexander Valterovich Litvinenko, a former lieutenant-colonel in the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation and later a Russian dissident and writer, died of lethal polonium-210 radiation poisoning under highly suspicious circumstances on 23 November 2006.

These are jobs that would not be affiliated in any way with the U.S. government. You could be an environmental engineer working in Latin America; you could be working in banking in Europe; you could be a teacher in a Middle East university—anything that gets you access to the targets.

I'll give you an example of how an operation might evolve. Let's say there is a cell of five terrorists arrested here in Boston. The police investigate, and it turns out that two of them are involved with an Islamic relief organization in the Middle East. So that's one new fact. Someone does some further digging, and it shows that this relief organization is funded by a company in the Middle East that buys machine parts, say, centrifuge parts—something that should scare people. Further digging shows that the president of the company has a brother who works in a bank in Europe that provides loans to this company.

You see that as you widen this out that you have several points of entry, none of which a diplomat could get into. You might be able to send an officer who already is working as a banker to approach that bank, or someone who lives in that particular country who has the right cover to approach the relief organization, or somebody who's a salesman to go to that company. None of them has anything to do with diplomatic cover. So that's how an operation like that would evolve: using these people in these different jobs. This is a trend that the human intelligence community is following.

Student: Let's say a CIA agent has a relationship with a private company. Does he disclose that he's a CIA agent when he applies to work there?

Sulick: You have to tell them. You can't tell someone just to apply to that company. They wouldn't take it very well if that person gets arrested and there's a major flap and their business has now gone down the tubes, and they say "Hey, the CIA didn't tell us about that." There would probably be a congressional investigation about that.

Student: Have private companies been willing to work with the CIA?

Sulick: Without going into details, there have always been companies that have been sympathetic, and after 9/11 there was a lot more of an outpouring from a lot of people. One of my best post-9/11 stories is that we got deluged by patriotic Americans everywhere, and one person who is a dentist sent me something saying "I am willing to go anywhere and do anything, and remember: I can inflict pain." This is a normal dentist who just wanted to do his part.

Just to finish up on these officers who work outside an embassy,, you have to remember they have no diplomatic immunity. They're at risk, because, again, they are breaking the laws of these countries, so if they get arrested they have no recourse, in a sense.

I don't know if anyone here remembers an old movie called *Midnight Express*, about a gentleman who was caught selling drugs and did some time in a Turkish prison. After I saw that I figured I'd never do anything without official cover.

So it's risky. You need officers who are qualified in the language, qualified in the culture. As you probably know, the CIA and the DIA are trying to find officers like that.

Student: I'm French, and what I see at the DGSE [Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (General Directorate for External Security)], the French CIA, is that they recruit people mainly from military families, or a type of French aristocracy or nobility, and here within the U.S. agencies I also see recruitment of kind of WASP-y [white Anglo-Saxon Protestant] people with an all-clean image, whereas you need more bad-ass people in the field who know the culture, the languages, the networks....

Sulick: You need more bad-ass?! You don't think I'm bad-ass?! I think the WASP-y part was true in the earlier days of the CIA. If you see that movie *The Good Shepherd* that will kind of tell you about it. That changes, and it will have to change even more. Joe Wippl is of German-American extraction; my name is Sulick and I can tell you that is not a WASP name; it's a Czech name. But you're absolutely right. I recently had a chance to talk to somebody from your counterintelligence organization, who said they're making a lot more effort to go outside of this mold you were talking about: people from military schools and so on. I know what you mean, but I think they've decided to fan out too. I hope so; they should.

Student: You mentioned a couple of movies. I know there have been a number of former CIA officers who have written books; Robert Baer comes to mind.⁶ Do you think any of them capture your business accurately?

Sulick: This will sound strange, but I think there is one book that is really old, called *CIA Diary*,⁷ unfortunately written by one of our traitors, a guy named Philip Agee. It's an excellent reflection of the day-to-day life of an officer, until he starts going bad, and then of course it's totally untrue. It's in diary form; he goes through his tours in Latin America and so on. It was written in the mid-to-late 1970s, and things were different then, but it still kind of describes the job. I don't like to plug Phil Agee; the guy was a traitor, but the book is actually quite good.

Wippl: I agree. I think one of the worst movies is *The Good Shepherd*. To begin with, if I'd been married to someone as morose as Matt Damon⁸ I'd have shot myself...

Sulick: I think that's why she [Angelina Jolie] went to Brad Pitt.

Wippl: Yes, I think that's probably the reason. I also think she's got more botox in her lips than all of California. The movie gives a really false impression.

I kind of agree on that Philip Agee book; it's probably as good as anything on the day-to-day life of a case officer. On movies, I thought *Breach* was actually pretty good.⁹

⁶ Robert Baer, a former CIA case officer, wrote the books *See No Evil* and *Sleeping with the Devil* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2003), which formed the basis for the 2005 film *Syriana*.

⁷ Philip Agee, *CIA Diary: Inside the Company* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975).

⁸ Matt Damon plays the protagonist of the film, Edward Wilson, supposedly modeled on James Jesus Angleton.

⁹ *Breach* (2007) is based on the case of Robert Hanssen.

Sulick: Yes, but Hanssen wasn't like that. I know; I was involved in that case. In the movie he comes across as very cynical and flouting authority. He was totally obsequious right up until the day he got caught. It was just a different image.

Wippl: *The Tailor of Panama* is not too bad. I thought that was a pretty good film, but that's about the only one I can think of that was really interesting.

Sulick: The best one is *No Way Out*; Burton Gerber's favorite.¹⁰ See that one: it's got a nice twist at the end.

Oettinger: The picture you portray is accurate to a point, especially the need for more human intelligence in the counterterrorism kind of thing. This is a personal opinion, but I wonder if there is enough time or enough money in the U.S. Treasury to have enough agents, as opposed to figuring out ways of putting greater reliance on professional societies, businesspeople, and so on who in the normal course of events have access and knowledge, because it's what they do day by day. How does one exploit those kinds of sources?

Sulick: That's why we have a domestic division that does that, and, frankly, that's where we get some of those people we hire in those specialties I mentioned whom we might want to use for an operation, because they come from precisely that world. There's no way you can rely on the people inside the Agency to have the expertise. Clearly you need relationships with professional societies, companies, and organizations in the science and technology area to find out about developments in certain countries, or what countries might be interested in stealing from us. There's no way we can develop that on our own.

Fein:¹¹ If you're running the CIA and trying to plan for future operations, and you know it takes some time to develop various capacities, how do you look at the world to begin to assess what you're going to need five, seven, or ten years out so that you can develop those kinds of capacities?

Sulick: That's traditionally one of the biggest failings of our clandestine service, because it's so focused on the here and now. I think there's a realization that you have to do that in the future. Some things you can predict now. It takes a long time to build networks in some of these places. For example, if you start with the assumption that the world is running out of oil, China is thirstier and thirstier for it and so is India, then you might want to think "Who produces the oil? What power does that give them? What are they going to keep secret, and how are we going to plan for that?" That's just one example of looking downrange, and, again, it takes a while to develop those networks in those countries. That's why we're having such a hard time with terrorism. It's hard enough as it is, but developing these kinds of networks takes time. Terrorism

¹⁰ Burton Gerber is a retired case officer who spent thirty-nine years with the CIA, primarily in operations related to the former Soviet Union and the former Warsaw Pact countries. With Jennifer Sims he edited the book *Transforming U.S. Intelligence* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

¹¹ Dr. Robert A. Fein is a forensic psychologist who specializes in threat assessment and the prevention of targeted violence.

is still going to be with us, there's no doubt about that, but oil would be one thing I would suggest we look at.

Student: Did the CIA predict the rise of Islamic fundamentalism? If we did, when we did we do it? Is there any way we measure that?

Sulick: It came gradually. There were certainly people following it. It's not so much whether people at the CIA or DIA predicted it as "Did policy makers pay any attention? Should CIA leaders have screamed louder about this?" There were a lot of other things going on in the world. I'm not trying to excuse anybody, but, frankly, I think it's off the mark when I hear people asking George Tenet, George Bush, or Bill Clinton "What were you doing about this in 1993–1994?" There was a bombing of the World Trade Center, but people were focused on barbarism in Europe: Bosnia and Kosovo. Were there people watching fundamentalism? Yes, but I don't think their voices were heard. There were other preoccupations.

Student: Did we see any element of Islamic fundamentalism when we were helping the Mujahedin in Afghanistan when they were fighting the Soviets?

Sulick: I know one analyst—it was only one person—who would say "There might be a downside to dealing with these guys." "Come on, we're knocking the Soviets off! We're driving them out; we're driving them into the ground! We're going to win the cold war! Islamic *what?*" In retrospect, I remember someone was kind of ringing the bell on this.

Oettinger: We supplied arms to Iraq in their war against Iran!

Student: You mentioned the increased effort to recruit people from more nontraditional backgrounds. How effective do you think current efforts are to recruit people of, say, Arab or Asian descent—basically, non-Western Europeans? I've heard that all these efforts are kind of publicly touted, but the actual process of getting people clearances is almost impossible and a lot of good candidates are filtered out. That's the hearsay.

Sulick: There are a lot of advertisements out there. Frankly, there's a lot of suspicion in a number of communities—Asian-Americans, Arab-Americans, Hispanics—for various historical reasons, about the CIA's involvement with one region or another. That kind of works against us sometimes.

The clearance process is an issue. I'd like to see a balance. The problem is that exactly the kinds of people we want have foreign families and affiliations, and they are the hardest to investigate if you want to do a routine investigation. If you were born in Omaha and lived your whole life there it's kind of cut and dried and you get a clearance pretty quickly. It's a little more difficult and time consuming in those cases. Now, are they all going to be spies? No. But do you want to take the chance of having one in there, especially when the threat is terrorism or we don't have time to compensate for it? So I think you have to balance it somehow.

Student: Do you think there is a proper bureaucratic momentum behind solving this problem? Maybe it's allotting more resources to clearance checks or changing the way we do them.

Sulick: There's definitely support at the top levels. The new director of national intelligence [DNI] actually singled this out from all the issues facing him as the one that is near and dear to his heart, and said that we have to figure out ways to do this better. We certainly need that. We are hurting in terms of Arab language and dialects. In the United States we always think "Doesn't everybody speak English in the world?"

Student: How are we doing right now as far as recruiting agents in the Middle East, without getting into specific countries, given that we've had a pretty solid presence around the Middle East for the past four or five years? Are we doing better?

Sulick: I think we're doing better where we're concentrated.

Student: Are you optimistic about the direction in which U.S. intelligence is going in terms of the big picture? Are you optimistic that we understand enough about these networks to prevent the United States and its interests from being attacked?

Sulick: The concept behind the reforms that took place is the right way to go. It was clearly time years ago for the DNI concept: somehow to achieve integration among all these agencies and get them to work together. It was a mess. I'm not sure that the DNI's authorities are even strong enough to herd all these cats together. But it's headed in the right direction.

Do we know enough about the networks? I mentioned before that the decentralization of the terrorist effort is making it more difficult. That's why I'm really a firm believer in this union between the police and intelligence. This is something we need. Intelligence just can't do it all, and if it does, then we start moving toward a police state and obviously nobody wants that. That's why you have to have a line between police and intelligence. One side working on the domestic end, the other side working overseas: that's how you get to those networks, because the tentacles go back to Pakistan, Afghanistan, or other countries.

Student: It seems that the one part of terrorism that we should be able to figure out is state sponsorship of it. There are stories about some kind of roll-up on the Iranians after the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing. It seems like that type of effort should be more possible and more doable than it is.

Sulick: It is. I will say that the countries we're most concerned about—Iran certainly, or North Korea—are about as tough as the Soviet Union. They have those countries locked down from a counterintelligence standpoint. These are oppressive regimes. They monitor their Internet in Iran; North Korea doesn't allow it. So it's still tough to get into those regimes, especially with North Korea, because they don't let their citizens travel, or they travel in twos, as we mentioned. Iran is monitoring travel of its citizens outside its own borders, and when they get back they're interrogated. But you're right: it's easier, because it's one visible country with known people and travel, as opposed to terrorists, who could be from anywhere.

Student: Can you assess the situation with the ISID [Interservices Intelligence Directorate]—Pakistani intelligence—right now? Do you think they really collaborate with us, or are they hiding something?

Sulick: Musharraf is in a tough position, and he still plays a role in it. The ISID is more difficult, because there are far more fundamentalist sympathies there than even in the circle around Musharraf. They are going to cooperate to the least extent that they can get away with. That's my personal view. Am I skeptical about their cooperation with us in western Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan? Yes, I am. Old relationships are hard to break. And are they penetrated by people in the Taliban? Yes, I think they are. That doesn't bode well in the search for Bin Laden.

Student: General [Karl] Eikenberry, or one of the top general commanders around there, acknowledged that the main command and control center for the Taliban is in Quetta, and that's under ISID protection, or at least they know about it. Why don't they help you more with that? Don't you have any means of exerting pressure?

Sulick: Pressure is exerted through Musharraf. Frankly, we've had some problems with the fundamentalist influence in the ISID. It goes way back to the jihadist times in Afghanistan. Personally, I'm not very hopeful about that kind of situation. Joe, do you have any comment?

Wippl: I agree.

Student: I think one thing to remember in the Middle East region, aside from our efforts in developing capabilities there is that the countries in the region have become much more conscious of their need for action internally. They're much more proactive in their counterterrorism efforts than they have been, and that's useful to us.

Student: I have a technical question about the combination of the Global Hawk and Predator armed with Hellfire missiles. Do you think that is very efficient? Do you think it's going to be developed further in the future?

Sulick: Is it efficient? Yes, it's very efficient!

Student: Yes and no, because you're missing targets all the time.

Sulick: But we do get some. I think it will definitely be used in the future, and probably made more accurate. The Predator itself is a drone for taking pictures, and people were very nervous about arming it. After 9/11 it was "Arm that right away!" It's amazing how attitudes change.

Student: In *The One Percent Doctrine*¹² the author said that CIA analysts observed that Bin Laden was trying to make a connection with the Democratic Party to help Bush get elected, because he felt that furthered his interests. That seems kind of absurd. Do you agree that Bin Laden wanted Bush to win?

Sulick: That's why he endorsed him. Bin Laden came out and criticized Bush right before the last election and called him "the great Satan," so everybody took that as "He wants Bush to win." Yes, I think he feels his message probably resonates more, because Bush is kind of saddled with

¹² Ron Suskind, *The One Percent Doctrine—Deep Inside America's Pursuit of Its Enemies Since 9/11* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

Iraq, no matter which way you think about the war there. Al Qaeda makes hay out of it, as do other terrorist groups. I think he probably felt that if a Democrat came in and said “Let’s start afresh; we have to understand the Muslim world better,” his radical message might have been diluted...to the extent that he might care at all. This is a guy with a kidney problem living in a cave, so I’m really not sure how attuned he is to the nuances of American politics. We have to be careful not to kind of impose on them our own view that’s formed in a world where we’re surrounded by instant news. I think sometimes we give them more credit than they deserve.

Oettinger: Do you want to say something about the role of counterintelligence?

Sulick: The old axiom is that you can’t have good intelligence without good counterintelligence. Counterintelligence includes a wide range of things. If I asked everyone here to define counterintelligence I’d get sixteen different definitions. The same thing would happen in the intelligence community.

It’s more than counterespionage—catching spies. It’s ensuring that the information we get from assets, agents, or spies is reliable. Somebody asked me about double agents before. It’s the job of counterintelligence to try to determine if someone is a double agent. It’s about defending your operations: making sure that you’re operating in a way so that your agents don’t get caught. It’s about catching spies as well. It’s been ignored for a long time. I think people don’t see it. They say “It’s counterterrorism, or counterproliferation.” Counterintelligence actually applies to all of those. It’s a discipline that helps you run the operations. If you’re running spies it helps you run them securely. It also prevents you from being penetrated by spies.

I try to combine the two—terrorism and counterintelligence—and ask “What if you met a terrorist spy? What if you had somebody like Robert Hanssen working for Al Qaeda?” Try to imagine that! All the stuff that Hanssen and other spies gave away was in the cold war. Nobody was locked in combat. There was time to compensate, take countermeasures, for what those spies gave away. You’re not going to have that time in the war on terrorism. Imagine that you hire somebody, because you need a speaker of Farsi or Arabic, and that person is a spy. That allows the terrorists to launch attacks a lot more easily when they know what the intelligence community’s capabilities are and who their assets are. That’s my big bugaboo: the terrorist spy.

Student: Let’s say that Musharraf is killed, there are nukes somewhere, Al Qaeda controls them, and a fundamentalist leader emerges in Pakistan. That’s a real threat. Are we going to make policy at that juncture, or do we know what action we would take? You don’t have to tell me the plan.

Sulick: I don’t know if there is one. That probably makes you even less comfortable. It’s the doomsday scenario everyone worries about: A.Q. Khan’s weapons in the hands of Bin Laden. I don’t know what the policy or the plan is. I certainly hope they have one. My little piece of that world is that to help them make their policy we have spies to tell us where those weapons are, how we get to them, and how we neutralize them. That’s what our whole human intelligence model is about. We don’t make policy, but it helps the president make a decision if he knows where they are.

Fein: Several weeks ago General Boykin came to the class and he talked in a very direct way about some of the offensive intelligence capabilities that the Defense Department was developing.¹³ I asked him “Under the law, doesn’t the Pentagon only have the right to do offensive intelligence in battle areas, or theater areas, or preparing the battlefield?” and General Boykin said, “Well, it’s a global war on terror”—in effect saying that the world is our territory to prepare. What’s your experience of how various intelligence agencies work together in offensive intelligence, some of the pluses and minuses, and how you think it ought to be in the future?

Sulick: It worked fairly well before 9/11. After 9/11 none of the agencies wanted to be accused of having missed a tidbit of information if there were a terrorist attack. So everybody decided that they would play in the game, and they weren’t going to trust the CIA or the DIA to give them that information. It was literally Keystone Kops.

I’ll give you a scenario. It’s not a true one, but it’s pretty close to what happened. Try to imagine a country where there’s some terrorist planning an attack against the United States. The FBI has an informant, if you will, here in the United States who comes from that country. The FBI sends him back to that country and says “See what you can find out about terrorism.” Meanwhile, the Defense Department sends a Special Forces team to that country and says “We’re going to prepare the battlefield.” Neither one—the FBI or the Defense Department—tells the ambassador or tells the CIA, which is responsible for coordinating the activities in that country, about its operation.

It all goes fine at first. The FBI informant thinks he’s actually been recruited to join a terrorist cell, but he asks so many questions around town that he’s caught by the local intelligence service. They detain him and say “You’re a terrorist!” “No, I work for the FBI!” “Yeah, right.” Meanwhile, somebody on that Special Forces team is out taking a picture of someplace that turns out to be next to a police station, so he gets arrested. Anyway, you have a major flap in that country. The country is mad; the intelligence service says it will refuse its cooperation, and your chance of getting a potential asset in a terrorist cell is all gone.

So the idea is coordination: they should all talk to each other. That wasn’t happening. I said “I must have the best job in the world, because everybody in the U.S. government wants to do it. I don’t want to fly an F-16 and bomb someplace in Iraq. I don’t want to catch bank robbers and kidnappers, but everybody is trying to do my job, so it must be a great job.” There were a lot of people tripping over each other.

The DNI concept is meant to defeat that, elementary as that may sound. There have been some memoranda of agreement signed so that the children will play nicely in the sandbox. It can be done. If you harness the energies of these people from all the different agencies they can actually do very well. But when they’re working at odds, and one doesn’t know what the other is doing, that’s the real catastrophe.

¹³ See William G. Boykin, “Defense Intelligence and Transformation,” in *Seminar on Intelligence, Command, and Control, Guest Presentations, Spring 2007*, I-07-1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, June 2007), [On-line]. URL: <http://www.pirp.harvard.edu/publications/pdf-blurb.asp?id=617>

Let's say you get an agent, a spy, who knows where those Pakistani nuclear missiles are or how to get rid of them if Musharraf gets kicked out of office. You have three or four different agencies tripping over each other, and through our own U.S. government's mistake that agent gets compromised. Shame on us! That intelligence community should be leveled and start over again. If you lose an agent like that it's unforgivable. That's the danger that can happen when those agencies don't talk to each other, but none of them wants to realize that at the time.

You can't send somebody into a country like Pakistan and then get on the phone and start talking when something happens. If you've got a person in the country the CIA station chief is supposed to coordinate it, because he's on the ground there. It's not that he will say "No, you can't play in my sandbox." He'll let the other people in, but let him know. He can tell you "Avoid this area; there's a police station there," or "We already have an agent in that cell. Why don't you ask your guy the following questions? Then we can work together. I'm afraid that's what's going to happen: we're going to lose an agent who could tell us about a terrorist attack, all because of our own bumbling and turf squabbles. Other than that, I really don't feel very strongly about it.

Student: Could you take us back to the other politically charged event: the invasion of Iraq and the intelligence before that? We talked about the Joseph Wilson issue: I was wondering more in terms of the weapons of mass destruction [WMD]. What was your perception from the inside about whether there was excessive political pressure brought to bear?

Sulick: As the human intelligence guy, I think that if we had more human intelligence it would have been a better situation. People talk about analysts' getting the wrong answer. If analysts aren't given something to work with, if they don't get a lot of good intelligence information, they have to rely more on speculation and open sources. I think the analysts in the first Gulf War were criticized because they underestimated, and they didn't want that to happen this time. I certainly didn't see any political manipulation. Even aside from anyone in the White House, I think there was some predisposition among analysts to think "We're not going to make that same mistake again."

To show you how bad human intelligence reporting can be, did you ever hear of a case called "Curveball"? He's an Iraqi defector who went to "an unnamed European country": Germany. He was giving information about Saddam Hussein's special biological warfare capabilities, and he was never even met, as far as I recall, by anyone in the U.S. intelligence services. His information was given by the Germans to the DIA. No American intelligence officer had laid eyes on him or talked to him. Of course later it turned out he was a drinker and had made some of this stuff up, but unfortunately his information went into the body of reporting that convinced the director of central intelligence, George Tenet, to make the famous comment (which he now regrets) that "the case for weapons of mass destruction is a slam dunk." Basing our reports on this kind of intelligence—people you haven't even met—shows how badly off we were. Shame on us.

Student: We met Chalabi. He fed us a lot of B.S.

Sulick: Yes. On that one I will say that my colleagues in the DIA kind of adopted him. We loved Chalabi in the early 1990s. He was our best friend. He robbed a lot of money from us and told us a lot of lies, and we warned the Defense Department, but they didn't listen.

Student: How did this Curveball get that kind of access? At the same time, didn't we also hear from the Germans that they had a guy in Saddam's inner circle somewhere who said there weren't any WMD? Or did that not all happen at the same time?

Sulick: There is a reported source who said that, but that person wasn't in Saddam's inner circle, so there's reason to doubt that one. That source was never proven. If you get someone in Saddam's government who says "We have no weapons; not to worry" you have to be a little suspicious about that. Granted, it's hard for that source to prove, but that source is not really proven. Joe, do you know anything about that?

Wippl: I know a lot about it, because I wrote the cables.

Sulick: You shouldn't have admitted that! The recorder is on, you know!

Wippl: Basically, it was given to the Defense HUMINT Service, not the DIA, and that's where the reporting went from about 1999 to 2000, maybe even into 2001. The Germans said, in essence, "We figure that it's plausible, but we cannot verify it. We've discussed this with a number of other countries, and no matter what we do we can't verify this information." This was about Curveball. They didn't have another guy. I think what you're referring to is the Iraqi Foreign Ministry type. I think the Germans gave us what they thought, but I don't think that got into the system. I think the "plausible" got in, but not that it wasn't verified.

Curveball was reporting on mobile labs to produce WMD, but what I didn't know was "Is this it?" I didn't know if we had one source, ten sources, or a hundred sources; the chief of station in Berlin doesn't see that traffic. I think there were a couple of others who reported something like this in a very general way.

Also, when you're using intelligence, what are you using it for? Are you using it for a demarche, for sanctions, or for war? There are some real differences in that, and in your standard of evidence. For the Germans themselves—and this was reported—this was a problematic source. They didn't put much force behind his reporting.

Student: Was this the case with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed as well? There are reports that he gave information that Al Qaeda was working with Iraq, and it turned out that he was tortured under Egyptian intelligence. Is that the kind of thing that happened with Curveball?

Wippl: No, that would be a really different type of thing. Curveball was a defector. He wanted to please, and he was imaginative, drawing diagrams and so on and so forth. The Defense HUMINT Service has been blamed for just kind of accepting this and not vetting that source to a greater extent, but when you're dealing with a liaison service a lot of times that's what you basically are doing. You're taking their information, sending it to Washington, and saying "Here it is." You're throwing it in their lap. Then the analysts are the ones who are supposed to look at it and judge it. I think that source was terribly presented, as a matter of fact—not merely not presented well.

Sulick: The problem was that what it showed—and this was criticized later by the WMD Commission—is that there was no standard throughout the human intelligence agencies. If this information had come to the CIA, we would have studied it a lot, vetted it, and so on. I’m not saying that CIA people are geniuses compared to the others, but the fact of the matter is that we had gotten burned so badly in the past, as I mentioned before, by Cuban double agents and East Germans that the CIA developed its own program for asset validation to rigorously study our sources. I’m not trying to blow our horn. We learned it the hard way, but we learned it before the others. We had our own systems. Defense HUMINT didn’t, so they just checked with the analysts and asked “Does this guy’s information make sense?” “Yeah, yeah, somebody else told us that too.” “OK, good.” That alone is not a way of testing somebody’s information: that it’s been corroborated by one other source. So as a result of that, these commissions said, “You guys at Defense HUMINT, FBI, CIA, DIA, have to standardize your procedures. We need to know whether these people are telling us the truth or not.”

Student: Is this information any good if it comes from a source who’s been tortured? What’s the policy on information that has been coerced out of someone? I saw *The Battle of Algiers*, and the French ultimately learned that torture has more unintended consequences and negative effects than actual positive outcomes. You probably can’t talk about it.

Sulick: The U.S. government doesn’t torture anyone. Isn’t that right, Dr. Fein?

Fein: That’s what they say.

Sulick: You’re certainly right. That’s why I mentioned blackmail before. You have to get it from somebody who is not tortured and not blackmailed. One person alone cannot be your source. You have to check it. Especially if you’re talking about going to war or bombing somebody because they might have launched a terrorist attack. You want to make sure all your sources are in agreement: your overhead sources, signals intelligence, and that your human intelligence is corroborated to the extent possible by people who know if someone is lying. One single source telling you something is not enough to go to the bank on when you’re talking about committing American lives.

Oettinger: Even with many sources, getting at truth is not a mechanical game where you can guarantee the results. There’s a fundamental tradeoff between the amount of time, energy, and resources you spend to verify something and using the information for action. You take risks, and history is replete with errors of every type, including perfect intelligence ignored by the policy maker. A classic in that respect is Stalin’s reaction to the intelligence reports he had about Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of Russia. He essentially ignored what turned out to be gold-plated intelligence.

Many sources aren’t necessarily a guarantee. I’m going to steal a bit of your time for an anecdote that has nothing to do with covert action, intelligence, or spying. In the 1950s Senator Hubert Humphrey and any number of other high-ranking U.S. figures for about a year or two had a story that because of a lack of information about Soviet technical progress the United States had spent untold millions of dollars on doing research that wasn’t necessary. The results were already known by the Russians, and if we’d only read their literature we would have known all this.

I followed this story for several years, because the particular technical matter in question was one that I was intimately familiar with: I had used it as an example in my doctoral thesis. I had translated it from Russian to English and used it in successive tests of the technical stuff I was doing. The reason I picked it was that people at Bell Labs and elsewhere who were interested in this said, “Gee, we really want to know what this guy is saying, because it might be interesting.” To a man, the people who looked at it said, “This stuff is inconsequential.” It later turned out that Claude Shannon, one of the eminent American scientists, had obtained that same result ten years earlier, and had published it in his master’s thesis at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology].

What happened is that once that story about our shortcomings took hold each successive user cited the previous one and the evidence kept growing. By the time it got to Humphrey it had been cited in *Fortune* magazine, by people at MIT, and people who were eminent scientists here and there, and there was absolutely no foundation to that story. So the notions of what constitutes solid evidence, how much time you have to accumulate it, and how trustworthy your sources are require a lot of care. If you don’t have the time to do it, you’re likely to get stuck in any number of ways: ignoring truthful information or acting on untruthful information. It seems to me that part of it is that we don’t do enough by way of assessing the risks of going one way or the other.

Sulick: Yes, but if you’re going to make decisions with momentous impact on national security, you want to have as much advantage as possible when you’re evaluating intelligence. You’re right: you’re never going to get all the sources you need, and you’re never going to have perfect answers. Even when you do, those policy makers may ignore it. But to take something from one source whom you haven’t even talked to and say “This is going to contribute to a decision about whether we should have a war or not” is probably not the way to go.

Student: On the intelligence that led to going to Iraq, the newspapers said that the politicians at that time skewed the analysis to fit their own decisions and desires. So after that there was a discussion in the newspapers and on the radio saying that if our intelligence agencies were independent of the executive bodies the country would be better served in terms of getting accurate analysis. What is your opinion?

Sulick: They can’t be totally independent, because they do need the executive to tell them what the policy issues are. There has been a long debate for years, even before Iraq and 9/11, about making the head of intelligence—be it the director of the CIA or the new DNI—like the FBI director, who has a ten-year appointment, so he is not subject to those political pressures. I would agree with that.

Student: The Mujahedin-e Khalq [MEK] in Iraq—the interesting opposition group that is part communist and part Islamist—is very interesting. They gave us some intelligence about the nuclear program in Iran. Now there are rumors that the United States wants to use them as a tool against Iran, but this tool is a very dangerous one that might backfire. Can you comment on that?

Sulick: I don’t know about what’s going on with the MEK, the CIA, and Iran, but you’re right. The worry has been sort of the same as with Chalabi and Iraq: are they telling us the truth?

Whenever you use people to collect intelligence who truly have an agenda in that country you have to have doubts.

Student: This is not about collecting intelligence, but acting on it.

Sulick: Even so, the actions are based on intelligence. I have my suspicions about the MEK as a source of intelligence if we don't have anything else. I don't think it's always true that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, and that's the MEK situation. That's a personal opinion; I don't know what's going on. Maybe I should call them up and give them some advice.

Student: A lot of what we were talking about is National Foreign Intelligence Program-type stuff: it's at the national collection level. With the rise of terrorism, something collected at the national level might actually have tactical value for military units, or threats to a city, or something like that. Can you talk about how that information would have been exchanged before 9/11 and how that gets to the people who need it now, post-9/11? If you at the national level are collecting information that has a tactical use, how do you get it to the people who need to know?

Sulick: My understanding is that there was some experience with this prior to 9/11 with Bosnia and Kosovo. The CIA adopted a new mission called "force protection" and worked with the warfighters on that. I don't think that the CIA is very good at it. The military is much better at that, understandably, because they're raised in that culture, and I think they should be the central ones who should provide that kind of tactical support.

Part of the CIA's problem with it is that the connectivity really didn't exist before. It's gotten a little better. It was horrendous in the first Gulf War, and Schwarzkopf criticized it roundly, with good cause. The connectivity is better now, post 9/11. The problem now is that we're so worried about information sharing and connecting dots that people are suffering from overload. They're going to miss something, not because it wasn't shared, but because it's too much. However, I have talked to some military people just by chance who had been in Iraq and still think it's too slow, or that they don't get the right information at the right time. These are guys on the ground, and they think there's more work to be done. That gentleman there is nodding his head, so he clearly knows.

Student: Sometimes you'd have guys from other agencies working in the same area as you, and they never talked to you the whole time you were there, unless you had a problem because you picked up one of their sources. Then they got on the phone pretty quick.

Sulick: The only reason they're there is to support the warfighters.

Student: I think it's an organizational challenge as much as anything. It depends on where you sit. On our Special Operations side things are a little bit different. They're doing a lot of very quick operations that are very attuned to current intelligence. When you get further away into the conventional force on the ground in Iraq the organization isn't set up the same way to support that. So it's sort of like the National Counterterrorism Center: if you're inside a good organization you get a lot of shared information, but outside the organization it may not necessarily be shared as much.

Sulick: Are you saying that with Special Operations it's the rest of the military that isn't in tune with them, and it's not just the CIA?

Student: It's sort of the mission. The missions that are being run by our Special Operations in many cases need a lot of real-time tactical information. There are only so many resources to go around, and they're applied to the high-priority missions. Unfortunately, the resources don't allow us to tailor all the way across the force.

Oettinger: There is in this an element of all of the above that you should be careful about. I regret not having brought Scott Snook's *Friendly Fire*¹⁴ from the reading list of the course. It addresses this part of the conversation very well in its thorough analysis of a mistake that happened, and traces its roots through several layers of individual action on through top-level organizational issues, doctrinal issues, and so on. What happened in that particular instance may not apply to any other instance, but the notion, the analysis, of not focusing on one person's error or a flaw in organization or in the communication between unit X and unit Y are all components. To avoid mistakes in a particular situation you need to look across the board at all of those elements. Any one of them is capable of screwing things up. The important question is knowing as much as you can about whether everything is lined up across these layers.

One could attribute Schwarzkopf's being pissed off at strategic intelligence to a single individual. His intelligence guy, General John Leide, was an expert in Chinese who had never been to the Middle East. He was the military attaché in Beijing at the time of Tiananmen Square. He'd been educated not only in the United States but also at the PLA's [People's Liberation Army's] military academy. He spoke fluent Chinese, and because of his expertise in Chinese he ended up advising on the Iraq operations. If one wants to assess personal blame one could say, "That's the failure." That's too simplistic. The other factors that you mentioned also enter into it. In any particular situation you need to understand the various layers, and I don't know of any publication that addresses that set of issues with the clarity and the authoritativeness that Snook's book does. I recommend it to you, even though it's not obligatory reading.

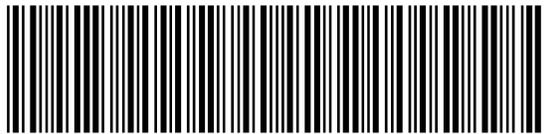
Sir, I thank you so much for an excellent presentation. Here's a small token of our large appreciation.

Sulick: Is this the golden nugget of intelligence?

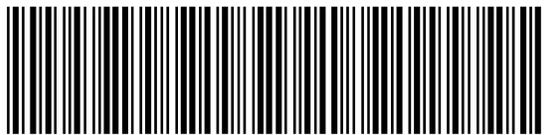
¹⁴ Scott A. Snook, *Friendly Fire: The Accidental Shootdown of Blackhawk Helicopters in Iraq* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Acronyms

ADDO	associate deputy director for operations (CIA)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DNI	director of national intelligence
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HUMINT	human intelligence
ISID	Interservices Intelligence Directorate (Pakistan)
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopaznosti (Committee for State Security, Soviet Union)
MEK	Mujahedin-e Khalq
MICE	money, ideology, compromise, and ego
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NSA	National Security Agency
WASP	white Anglo-Saxon Protestant
WMD	weapons of mass destruction



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