

Strategic Insight

Intelligence and the Department of Homeland Security

by Ralph Norman Channell. Ralph "Norm" Channell is a retired U.S. Navy Captain and a Vietnam Veteran with 26 years of experience in Joint and Naval Intelligence. He also served as a Senior Lecturer at the Naval Postgraduate School where he taught Joint Warfare and Intelligence for over a decade.

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The proposed Department of Homeland Security is being touted as the most significant change in the Federal government since the creation of the Department of Defense and the National Security Council following the Second World War. It is certainly a major reorganization of the numerous agencies involved in U.S. homeland security. It now appears that these existing agencies and functions will be unified in one operational structure and assigned the basic mission of defending Americans in their homes and places of work against foreign and domestic terrorists operating within the United States. Part of this new Homeland Security Department will be devoted to monitoring, analyzing and utilizing intelligence about these domestic threats to national security. But the question remains: How should this new department be organized to utilize existing intelligence assets and to generate new sources and types of intelligence? The U.S. military's recent experience, especially in organizing for joint warfare, might be a place to turn for some lessons.

Intelligence: Organizing for Homeland Security

Intelligence -- timely, accurate and useful information about threats that can be used by police or military units to stop terrorist incidents before they occur -- is the basis of any successful effort to combat the threat of domestic terrorism. Creating a structure so that an array of organizations can generate or analyze valuable intelligence information and provide it to officials and operations officers who can put it to good use is a daunting enterprise. The proven principles of military intelligence are pertinent to this task: intelligence needs to be organized to support the functions of the new Homeland Security Department. An intelligence structure can then be created to support and provide the needed intelligence collection, analysis, and distribution. It would probably be useful to create a capability to monitor and report on every stage of the terrorist "cycle." This is not a new concept. The U.S. Navy, for example, ran a successful Ocean Surveillance Information System during the Cold War that was intended to monitor and track the threat posed by the Soviet Navy. Functions of this system included monitoring long-term trends (e.g., new ship construction or doctrinal debates), fusion of multiple sources of information to track and analyze worldwide Soviet ship movements in near real time and dissemination of useful information directly to U.S. ships at sea. A global effort that unfolded over many months was thus required to provide real-time support to operational units.

The new Department also needs to centralize its command functions in headquarters near Washington, D.C. and to collate and analyze data provided by field offices maintained throughout the rest of the United States. These regional offices could be supplemented by bureaus that specialize in specific functional problems (e.g., monitoring the movement of shipping containers toward the United States or airport security). Each of these offices also needs to establish close liaison with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA), the new North American Military Command and especially the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Liaison with state, city, and other local officials will be crucial because these officials have the resources needed to act on the warning issued by the Homeland Security Department. Local officials are key to the entire process because they detect specific evidence

of terrorist activity that is often uncovered in traffic stops, citizen reports of strange activity or people, or local arrests. These reports could then be passed to a national level organization that would have information drawn from multiple sources so that these individual reports can be placed in a correct context. In theory this sounds simple enough, but in practice close liaison is not without its challenges: local officials may not have security clearances or secure facilities to protect classified data.

Management of the Intelligence Process

Managing the intelligence process within the new department will be challenging. Senior officials should first identify the new agency's intelligence requirements, or Essential Elements of Information (EEI). Once the EEI are identified, then standard procedures can be devised to check available open source and classified databases, the Internet and other agencies to secure the required information. If the EEI are not readily available, then the new agency can request other intelligence organizations to collect specific information. The intelligence structure must keep running assessments, analyses, and correlations, while ensuring that intelligence assessments or even raw information is disseminated quickly to law enforcement and security personnel. Information also could be broadcast periodically to all regional and functional offices to insure that all the members of the organization have access to the same general information.

The new department needs analysts and managers in both headquarters and field offices and liaison officers serving with other intelligence agencies. It needs to be able to reach out to overseas contacts to detect and prevent terrorist attacks. The proposed Homeland Security Department needs to establish its own intelligence information system by building a database and a way to exchange and share information rapidly. The intelligence collection and database management structure must draw on multiple types of information and sources. Tasking and reporting from overseas sources should be included in the all-source mix of information and analysis. Continued focus on information regarding potential terrorists might have helped provide the links to the terrorist cells in Germany and elsewhere. The lack of all-source intelligence contributed to the intelligence shortfalls that made the terrorist attacks of 11 September possible.

Although the FBI and the CIA will not be included in the Department of Homeland Security, the new Department should be able to task these agencies and other members of the intelligence community to produce required analyses or raw data. Although raw information could be provided directly to the new Department by the rest of the intelligence community, it is more likely to receive sanitized summaries, which are not always useful for operational purposes. Officials and analysts at the Homeland Security Department, however, might find themselves at a disadvantage when dealing with the other intelligence agencies because the intelligence community often makes source protection a priority. In other words if officials think their sources or methods might be compromised if raw data is disseminated, then they would be unlikely to disseminate the data. Thus, without the authority to task the entire intelligence community or its own collection assets, the new Department will be at a serious disadvantage when it comes to obtaining the data it requires.

Conclusion

By giving the Department of Homeland Security its own intelligence structure, officials can create the basis for a "unity of effort" when it comes to supporting the new homeland defense mission. The new organization needs to be centralized to create an all-source intelligence picture, but it also needs to be decentralized to ensure that it can react swiftly by disseminating raw data and analyses to field offices that can put it to good use. The management of the intelligence process is crucial, especially the establishment of a secure information system to support databases and the rapid exchange of information. Close liaison with, and the ability to task the intelligence community, especially the CIA, NSA, and the FBI, is required. Liaison also will be important with state and local authorities, and with organizations overseas. Funding will be required to build the database and connectivity, as well as recruit the necessary personnel needed to staff the Department. Intelligence must be proactive and focused on detection and

deterrence. Only a national level structure will be able to provide the intelligence needed to protect America.

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