INTELLIGENCE SKILLS GAP

July 11, 2005

FURTHER READING

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, "The 9/11 Commission," July 22, 2004.

The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, "Report to the President of the United States," March 31, 2005.

Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, *The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Efforts to Hire, Train and Retain Intelligence Analysts*, Audit report 05-20 (May 2005).

Lugar, Richard. "The Lugar Survey on Proliferation Threats and Responses," June 2005.

Hill, Tichakorn. "Does Anyone Here Speak Arabic? (or Farsi, or Pashto?)" *Federal Times*, June 20, 2005.

The July 7th attacks in London are a stark reminder that terrorism remains a very real threat to democracies combating Islamic extremism. With strong intelligence gathering and analysis, it may be possible to head off such an attack here at home. Yet despite nearly four years of work since September 11th, significant gaps remain in the knowledge, numbers and effectiveness of the intelligence personnel who serve as our nation's first line of defense.

HELP WANTED

Efforts are underway to increase our intelligence manpower. For example, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is working to boost its number of intelligence analysts by 50 percent, the Army plans to expand its intelligence workforce by up to 15,000 and the National Security Agency (NSA) aims to hire an additional 6,000 people.

While agencies are working to close the intelligence skills gap, the information available suggests this will be an uphill battle. For example, the 9/11 Commission concluded that in 2001 "66 percent of the [Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)] analysts were not qualified to perform analytic duties." Since then the FBI has struggled to recruit qualified personnel, with a recent report revealing that it met just 39 percent of its hiring goal for intelligence analysts in FY 2004.

Shortages persist in other critical areas, with 123,000 hours of audio recordings from counterterrorism inquiries having gone untranslated from 2001 to 2004 due to the inability of the CIA, FBI and Department of Defense to hire enough qualified linguists. It is estimated that it will take 10 to 15 years to translate the materials recovered from Afghanistan and Iraq.

FIRST STEPS

The above problems are grounded in the shortage of candidates with relevant skills and experience, insufficient coordination across the government's 15 intelligence-gathering bodies, procedures that slow the hiring process and a failure to capitalize on the talents of existing employees.

The *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act*, signed into law in December 2004, was designed in part to address these problems. In addition to creating a Director of National Intelligence (DNI) to facilitate coordination and management across government, the act requires increased hiring of intelligence personnel, the establishment of an intelligence scholarship program, an expedited security clearance process and better education and training.

The recent decision by the new DNI, John Negroponte, to create a Chief Human Capital Officer position in his office improves the odds that these personnel issues will be an important part of his overall efforts to improve our intelligence operations.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Success in the war on terror requires that we solve these workforce problems. While the changes contained in the Intel Reform Act are important strides forward, closing the intelligence skills gap will require following through with sustained funding of its new programs, greater strategic coordination between agencies on personnel issues, and a much stronger commitment from managers to make recruiting, retaining and engaging talented workers a top priority.

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