Intelligence Agencies

Critics of the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) blamed inept structure for failure to stop 9/11. Restructuring into a more centralized network supposedly improved IC’s capacities to fight international terrorism.

**Intelligence agency** – a governmental org that gathers of information (“intelligence”) relevant to security matters from espionage, cryptanalysis, public documents, communication intercepts (SIGINT), interviews, interrogations, …

**Intelligence analysis** – the assembly and interpretation of intelligence information and its communication to public policy officials

What was the IC’s previous structure & why did it fail to prevent 9/11?

How was the IC reorganized after 9/11 to overcome those problems?

What new problems has IC restructuring created? How might they be overcome?

Can the IC adapt to the changing network structure of international terrorism?

Does *Top Secret America* reveal a bloated public & private intelligence system that is wasteful and out of control? How could it be reformed to become more efficient?
Intelligence Firewall Follies

Pres. Richard Nixon used the CIA to block the FBI investigation of the 1972 Watergate break-in. CIA participated in domestic spying & plots to assassinate foreign leaders. Hearings by Senate Select Intelligence Comm, headed by Sen. Frank Church, led to limits on executive branch power & intelligence gathering.

The CIA is prohibited from involvement in domestic law enforcement, but it is supposed to share any information relevant to FBI internal investigations.

CIA claimed it emailed FBI about the 2000 Malaysia meeting involving two future 9/11 hijackers, but FBI denied notification. CIA admitted not telling INS or State Dept, so men’s names weren’t added to terrorist watch list. In July 2001, FBI was allowed to participate in CIA’s review of cables & both names were added to the watch list. But too late – the men had received new visas and had entered the U.S. On 8/23/01 CIA urged FBI to help track the suspects down, but request was denied, citing “wall between prosecution and intelligence as posing a problem.”

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/knew/could/
Before 9/11, only CIA Director George Tenet briefed President Bush daily about intelligence on terror and other international developments.

The CIA chief provided the president with intelligence briefings and provided oversight of the entire intelligence community. Government inquiries criticized the structure for fostering turf battles and poor information sharing.

Characteristics of IC bureaucracies:
- Information-intensive organizations
- Face risks of high failure costs – catastrophic consequences if they draw the wrong conclusions
- Embedded in a network structure with major disincentives for info-sharing; hence, protective of info

Did IC structure & organizational cultures contribute to failure to detect the 9/11 plot, despite field agents’ reports about strange flight-training activities?

Did IC structure problems contribute to erroneous intelligence reports about Iraq’s WMD capabilities before 2003 invasion?
The Reorganized IC Structure

The 9/11 Commission proposed major IC structural change, to unify & centralize 16 agencies under NID & NCTC. See other charts next slide.

FIGURE 1 Unity of effort in managing intelligence
A national intelligence director oversees the entire intelligence community and briefs the president. A counterterrorism center synthesizes information from the community for the director, and an independent board looks out for citizens' civil liberties.

(Chiefs in parenthesis)

**President**

**National intelligence director**

**Privacy and Civil Liberties Board**

**National Counterterrorism Center**

**FOREIGN**

- CIA
- FBI

**DOMESTIC**

- Defense Department
- Parts of other agencies that provide intelligence

**MILITARY**

- Parts of other agencies that provide intelligence

**Department of Homeland Security**

- (Leon Panetta)
- (Robert Gates)
- (Janet Napolitano)

**Acting Director**

- (James Clapper)

**Robert Gates**

**Robert S. Mueller III**

**Janet Napolitano**

**Barack Obama**

**James Clapper**

**Leon Panetta**

**Robert Gates**

**Janet Napolitano**

**Barack Obama**

**James Clapper**

**Director of National Intelligence**

Manages the U.S. government’s national intelligence program and serves as president’s chief intelligence advisor.

**Information Sharing Council**

The panel of representatives from the intelligence community and other agencies is headed by a program manager to create an “information sharing environment” for counterterrorism information among federal, state, and local entities.

**NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER**

Integrates and analyzes all intelligence pertaining to terrorism and counterterrorism. Conducts strategic operational planning by integrating all elements of national power. Seeks intelligence communities share from the NCTC shield.

**FBI and the Department of Homeland Security**

The two agencies exchange threat information with state and local governments through state "fusion centers."

**State Fusion Centers**

Include representatives from state and local law enforcement, public safety and emergency response, with one state federal component.
Hans de Bruijn questioned the validity of two 9/11 Commission propositions:

1. To reduce the fragmentation among IC agencies and to promote greater cooperation, strengthen centralized control under National Director of Intelligence & the National Counterterrorism Center

2. To encourage information-sharing, more incentives must be offered: fewer secrecy classifications, more “connecting the dots”

“Strengthening central control also poses risks: it engenders more battles over territory, it does not improve understanding of the capillaries of the organization – the capillaries being when the primary processes of information gathering, validation, and assessment take place – and it involves the destruction of checks and balances.”

Centralization seeks to reduce “stovepipes” – lack of agency cooperation due to fragmentation – but can generate huge information overloads at the top.

Greater information sharing creates not more intelligence, but greater need for better selection mechanisms to sort and evaluate masses of data.
Why does Hans de Bruijn place greater emphasis on horizontal coordination (networking) and intelligence processes than on formal structural changes?

When would nonsharing of information among IC agencies be justifiable? Give some examples.

Why does he argue that “fragmentation may actually be functional”? How then to overcome stovepiping?

Could redundancy (overlapping tasks) and duplication of agency activities be more beneficial than harmful?

Other dangers in a centralized, info-sharing IC:

- Information may lose its usefulness; infiltrators could acquire info and use it against the IC
- Premature fixation on a single interpretation of ambiguous information
- Choosing the wrong time to share ambiguous info
- Processing only information that agrees with the top agency leaders’ preconceptions
A Race Against Time

HIGH ALERT: Scattered evidence indicates that some international terrorists are planning to strike inside the U.S. Your job is to stop it.

This intelligence agency simulation requires information sharing. Your agency’s goal is to be the first IC member to identify with highest probability of accuracy: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How.

- Every agency has info about only some of these 6 elements
- Each information element has a probability rating: % likely accurate
- Find agencies with “better” info willing to trade for yours: Must use coupons!
- Acquire as much high-probability info as possible on all 6 elements
- Your agency’s budget depends on total of all 6 probabilities: sum of %s
- Agency should “make the call” (identify all elements) as soon as possible
- Agency that most quickly & accurately makes the call will WIN!!!
Intelligence Bloat: *Top Secret America*

*Washington Post* reported that 1,271 government organizations & 1,931 private companies in 10,000 U.S. locations are working on counterterrorism, homeland security, and intelligence. Altogether 854,000 people hold top-secret clearances.


Watch Democracy NOW! report on Frontline’s “Top Secret America” video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBFphj2ErKg&feature=related

Check out *Washington Post*’s interactive online chart below:

http://projects.washingtonpost.com/top-secret-america/network/#/overall/most-activity/
"Through interviews with high-level sources from the FBI, Department of Defense and Homeland Security, and relying on previously undisclosed documents, reporter Lowell Bergman reveals continued inter-agency rivalry, as well as troubling flaws in intelligence operations.” He asks whether we are really "better prepared to prevent another catastrophic attack.”

How did the FBI transformed itself to fight terrorism inside the U.S.?
If there was no evidence of post-9/11 sleeper cells plotting to carry out a “second wave” of attacks, who is the real domestic enemy?
Did the FBI’s Lodi, CA, investigation uncover a case of home-grown terrorism? Were the videotaped confessions mishandled?