



5.4 CREATING AN INTERAGENCY “CRITICAL MASS” FOR U.S. WMD TERRORISM ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

“There is no clear leadership or bureaucratic architecture defining roles and responsibilities for WMD terrorism. This adversely affects analysis, collection, and threat warning.”

— 2005 Robb-Silberman Commission (p. 296)

The threat of WMD terrorism, and especially nuclear terrorism, are among the greatest national security challenges our nation faces. The need for interagency cooperation and in preventing or responding to such an event has never been greater. While there still remain gaps in intelligence and challenges in information sharing, the interagency response to this challenging problem set has improved dramatically in recent years. New organizational alignments, enhanced information sharing, and mission integration has brought greater focus and synergy to our national effort. The positive impact of these changes is most readily apparent in the analytic mission of the Intelligence Community (IC).

In order to better understand some of the progress that has been made in the nation’s interagency posture against WMD terrorism, it is instructive to review a few of the conclusions drawn by the 2005 Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction – also known as the Robb-Silberman Commission. When comparing the WMD terrorism analytic environment today to the Commission’s

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view of interagency interactions in 2005, it is clear that much has changed.

THE EVOLUTION OF WMD TERRORISM ANALYSIS IN THE POST 9/11 ERA

In 2005, the Robb-Silberman Commission described the different yet overlapping roles of two primary analytic voices for WMD terrorism in the IC – one at the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and the other in the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Counterterrorist Center (CTC).

NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER (NCTC)

“Perhaps most significantly in light of the criticisms leveled by the 9/11 Commission, the NCTC is producing analytic products that integrate the comments and concerns of analysts across the Community.”

– 2005 Robb-Silberman Commission (p. 283)

The Commission recognized that the NCTC had created an environment where all of the nation's terrorism intelligence could be jointly exploited and analyzed by intelligence professionals of differing backgrounds and cultures from across the IC. This was especially important for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) terrorism, the “functional” intelligence discipline of WMD terrorism that requires not only “traditional” intelligence analysts, but also subject matter experts (SME) from various fields of science and engineering.

The NCTC CBRN effort provided a balanced approach to intelligence analysis and its technical foundations, while creating a new, unique organization that reflected the best elements of the IC. The NCTC CBRN group was able to work effectively across the IC by relying on the networks and the “reach-back” of its organizationally-diverse analytic cadre. This process bridged cultural divides and respected the equities, missions and expertise of partners, thus making the production of finished intelligence a more comprehensive and inclusive process. Similarly, the challenge of translating the foreign threat into the domestic mission

sphere became a more natural process through the implementation of NCTC's interagency authorities related to the Homeland.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY'S (CIA) COUNTERTERRORIST CENTER (CTC)

“Perhaps most importantly, from an operational perspective it is clear that many of CTC's efforts to disrupt terrorist networks and plots—partially enabled by its in-house analytic cadre—have been extraordinary successes. Put simply, CTC has brought the fight to the terrorists.”

— 2005 Robb-Silberman Commission (p. 284)

The Commission recognized the efforts of CIA's Counterterrorist Center (CTC) as an effective, mission-integrated force against WMD terrorism. This was credited in part to the integration of CIA's WMD terrorism analytic cadre with the corresponding elements of CIA responsible for intelligence collection and operations against WMD terrorism. The Commission valued this direct alignment of analysis with operations in that it not only produced better target-focused operational support, but also provided senior policy customers with a more tactical view of what was being done about the problem.

CIA's WMD terrorism analysts were also supported by CIA's broad portfolio of programs in counterproliferation, regional and terrorist organization expertise, and science and technology. These resources provided solid foundations for strategic analysis that could address complex issues in a broader, more global context. In addition to a large infrastructure and rich organizational heritage, CIA analysts were supported by excellent educational resources and training programs that enhanced their foundations of analytic tradecraft.

ONE TEAM, ONE FIGHT?

While the Commission highlighted accomplishments of several agencies as evolutionary steps indicative of progress in intelligence reform, they were also very concerned by some lack of cooperation and coordination among various analytic elements of the IC, most notably two primary WMD terrorism voices in

the IC – the CBRN analytic cadres of CIA and NCTC. Going well beyond discussions of “bureaucratic battles”, the Commission also observed that senior policymakers at the highest levels were not being served as efficiently and as effectively as possible due to “unproductive competition” between these organizations. At this point, both organizations recognized and began to address some of the significant cultural and organizational barriers that prevented the establishment of an optimized “one team, one fight” approach to WMD counterterrorism that the Commission was looking for.

“Ambiguities in the respective roles and authorities of the NCTC and CTC have not been resolved, and the two agencies continue to fight bureaucratic battles to define their place in the war on terror. The result has been unnecessary duplication of effort and the promotion of unproductive competition between the two organizations.”

– 2005 Robb-Silberman Commission (p. 288)

SEEKING AN ORGANIZATIONAL SOLUTION

As of 2006, the majority of CBRN terrorism analysts in the IC were working in either CTC or NCTC in two separate organizations which essentially functioned independently of each other but yet had significant overlap in their respective missions. Seeing an opportunity to create a much needed “critical mass” on an issue of tremendous importance to national security, senior leaders of both organizations agreed to pool their analytic resources.

What resulted in 2007 is the jointly-managed NCTC-CIA CBRN Counterterrorism Group (CCTG). The missions of both organizations remained the same – CIA didn’t gain a domestic mission, and NCTC didn’t take on a direct operational role – but through a new and unique organizational alignment, the analysts of both organizations were now sitting together, working together, and fully supporting the missions of both organizations. To further build on this model of analytic integration and synergy, this combined interagency analytic cadre was imbedded with the CIA Counterterrorist Center, thus optimizing a continuum of analysis,

collection and operational support in one location against WMD terrorism targets worldwide.

TODAY...

As it approaches the two year anniversary of its creation, CCTG has been able to use its interagency critical mass and subject matter expertise to evolve national leadership in the strategic and tactical analytic mission for CBRN terrorism directed against the U.S. and its allies. Through its unique organizational composition and integrated missions, CCTG has also been able to lead new and effective partnerships across the policy, intelligence, defense & law enforcement communities. This approach has broadened the scope of analytic viewpoints reflected in the IC's daily production cycles, and has allowed IC partners to better knit their unique assets and strengths into the fabric of an "all elements of national power" strategy against WMD terrorism targets.

Strength in Diversity. CCTG represents an organizationally-diverse critical mass of intelligence professionals with unparalleled access to the nation's most sensitive intelligence on the efforts of terrorists seeking to acquire CBRN capabilities. The net result of this approach has been a measurable increase in the quantity and quality of finished intelligence for the policy customer, the nation's intelligence professionals, and military and law enforcement partners. The uptick in counterterrorism operational tempo worldwide has also been well supported by the integrated missions and diverse organizational culture of CCTG.

Enhanced Functional Capabilities. While focusing its intelligence efforts on terrorist organizations and networks that may be pursuing unconventional warfare capabilities worldwide, CCTG has also focused on building and strengthening the IC's foundations for functional analysis in WMD terrorism. CCTG has recruited high level scientific and engineering expertise from across many disciplines, and has integrated this expertise to improve support for technical aspects of intelligence collection while answering serious questions of "what if?" in the CBRN terrorism realm. This process has also served to better connect the IC to solve hard problems using the more comprehensive technical

resources available across the U.S. government, academia, and the private sector.

National Outreach. In addition to classified intelligence products for senior policy audiences and in support of the operator and collector, CCTG, in conjunction with its domestic partners at FBI and DHS, has also developed a large library of unclassified products and training aids in support of the first responder and law enforcement communities. CCTG officers are active in outreach nationally in briefing conferences and educational programs that support the police, fire, and public health professionals who are the nation's first line of defense and response to the threat of CBRN terrorism. These efforts have been recognized by customers as well as members of Congress who have heard positive feedback from constituents across the nation.

New tools. In addition to traditional approaches to the intelligence analysis mission of the IC, CCTG also supports the development of innovations and tools that will allow analysts to more effectively collaborate and while capturing, disseminating and institutionalizing knowledge and experience vital to improving tradecraft. While supporting key working groups for analysts to share information and experiences, CCTG has also been active in developing classified internet-based tools and resources within the IC that mirror the evolving communication and collaboration platforms available to the general public.

Support of Senior Leadership. In response to the creation of CCTG and its integration of analytic resources from across the IC, a number of senior policymakers inquired as to the possibility of creating a parallel effort that integrated the authorities and actions of senior leaders of the IC who had leadership roles in countering the threat of WMD terrorism. As a result, in 2007, the Director of National Intelligence created a "Senior Executive Board" for CBRN terrorism. Chaired by the Director of NCTC, this interagency group meets quarterly to address actions proposed by the IC that support integrated analytic and collection strategies against WMD terrorism in the near and mid-term. This engaged group of senior leaders ensures that potential bureaucratic barriers within the interagency do not prevent critical intelligence

needs from being addressed quickly and efficiently. In the last year, this approach has promoted new levels of cooperation and joint action across the interagency in the fight against terrorist acquisition and use of CBRN weapons.

Protecting the Homeland. The Commission also observed in 2005 that domestic intelligence efforts on WMD terrorism were not keeping pace with the IC's foreign intelligence capabilities. Today, new partnerships between IC and law enforcement entities responsible for WMD terrorism analysis and operations have improved their working relationships and are working to further harmonize critical processes that in the past may have impeded joint capabilities to protect the Homeland from CBRN terrorism. New initiatives in this regard are underway, including further integration of CCTG and FBI resources to address the threat of terrorist CBRN activities as they potentially evolve from being a foreign threat into the Homeland.

CONCLUSION

While the IC has done much in recent years to create a more focused critical mass of analytic and functional expertise for WMD terrorism, there is still much work to be done. Analysis can only be as good as the quality and quantity of the intelligence that is gathered. Progress against terrorist CBRN targets requires continued focused interagency attention and strategies in order to field the most effective broad spectrum intelligence collection capabilities possible. Similarly, a broad analytic view of the elements of WMD terrorism is essential to developing a comprehensive strategy to meet these challenges.

The interagency analytic foundations for WMD terrorism have been strengthened, but continued progress in this regard is essential, and is just one element of a comprehensive strategy in the international effort to deny, disrupt and deter terrorist attempts to acquire and implement chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear capabilities.