



THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
2000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2000



JUN 21 2003

The Honorable Jane Harman  
2400 Rayburn House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Harman:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you and other members of the Committee on June 12, 2003.

During the hearing, you asked me to discuss the Pentagon's so-called intelligence "cell" and to address the various questions that have been raised about it in the press. You also asked me to send you information on this topic that you could provide to your colleagues. I hope this letter will be useful in that regard.

After the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack, my office was required to think through the implications for the Defense Department of the United States being at war with a loosely-organized international terrorist network as opposed to an organized nation-state. We understood that being at war with a network, or, as I see it, with a "network of networks" of terrorist organizations, presented a number of conceptual challenges.

For that reason, we asked some people, first, to review the large amount of information that the intelligence community had already gathered on terrorist networks, and, second, to grasp how the various terrorist organizations relate to each other and how they relate to different groups that support them—in particular, to their state sponsors. The purpose was to help me develop proposals for Defense Department strategies for the war on terrorism, which is a policy exercise, not an intelligence activity.

We set up a small team to help digest the intelligence that already existed on this broad subject. This so-called "cell" comprised two full-time people – other OSD staffers sometimes worked with the team members on matters related to terrorism. After April 2002, the team was down to one full-time person. That is why we think it is rather comical that people have suggested that this was set up as an alternative to the CIA.

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The original two-person team began its work in October 2001. It was not involved in intelligence collection. Instead, it relied on the same reporting on global terrorism from the Intelligence Community that the rest of the government uses. Among its key observations was that terrorist groups and their state sponsors often cooperated across the ideological divides (secular vs. religious; Sunni vs. Shi'a) that some terrorism experts believed precluded cooperation.

Of course, other OSD staff also reviewed relevant intelligence for policy purposes. One discovered a set of reports on Iraq-al Qaida contacts that were not reflected in some finished intelligence products. In some cases, older reports gained new significance in the light of information obtained by debriefing detainees.

This work led, in the summer of 2002, to an OSD staffer working with the remaining team member to review intelligence data on the links between Iraq and al Qaida and briefing the Secretary of Defense. That briefing was then presented to DCI George Tenet and a number of his CIA colleagues. Later, there was a follow-on meeting and discussion between the OSD personnel (including the team member) and about twenty Intelligence Community analysts. The briefing was also given to National Security Council and Office of Vice President staff members.

After the summer of 2002, the remaining team member worked on related issues, including work in support of the interrogation of al Qaida detainees, until demobilizing in January 2003. (This individual subsequently rejoined OSD as a civilian employee.) The team, which in any case had consisted, since April 2002, of only one member, may be said to have dissolved at that time. At present, policy work on the strategy for the global war on terrorism, drawing on the team's completed efforts, goes on in several OSD offices, i.e., International Security Affairs, Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict, and Strategy.

I would also like to take this opportunity to clear up two particular misperceptions that have appeared in the press.

First, it is incorrect to identify this team with the Office of Special Plans. Special Plans was created in October 2002 by expanding the Near East and South Asia Bureau's Northern Gulf section, in order to provide enough manpower to handle policy issues with respect to Iran, Iraq and the Global War on Terrorism. (See attached organizational charts.) ~~It was a policy planning group and not a~~  
~~commander, rather than producers of intelligence.~~

Second, the team had nothing to do with the "Intelligence Collection Program" (ICP), which was transferred from the State Department to the Defense

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Humint Service. The ICP debriefed Iraqi defectors, many of whom escaped from Iraq with the help of the Iraqi National Congress. Reports of these debriefings reached the team, as they reached offices throughout the government, through normal Intelligence Community channels.

Thank you again for this opportunity to set the record straight.

With best wishes, I am

Yours truly,



Douglas J. Feith

cc: Chairman Porter J. Goss

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