

March 6, 1996

The Honorable John Deutch
Director of Central Intelligence
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Director Deutch:

On behalf of my colleagues on the Central Intelligence Agency Historical Review Panel, I am pleased to enclose a report summarizing the results of our meeting on February 5, 1996.

The Panel welcomes your willingness to expand its membership and to give it greater responsibilities than it has had in the past. We are also especially grateful to you for having taken the time to meet personally with us last month.

We look forward to working with you, Brian Latell, and the Center for the Study of Intelligence staff on the issues discussed in our report, and on such others as may arise in the future.

Sincerely,



John Lewis Gaddis
Visiting Fellow

xc: Brian Latell

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**Report
CIA Historical Review Panel Meeting
February 5, 1996**

The Historical Review Panel held its first meeting at CIA Headquarters on February 5, 1996. Attending were: Lewis Bellardo, John Lewis Gaddis, George C. Herring, Robert Jervis, Page Putnam Miller, Robert Pastor, Henry Rowen, Gaddis Smith, and S. Frederick Starr. Ernest May was unable to attend.

During the morning, the Panel heard presentations by Brian Latell, Director of the Center for the Study of Intelligence; Kay Oliver, Chief of the History Staff; John Pereira, Chief of the Historical Review Group; Keith Hall, Executive Director of Intelligence Community Affairs; and Ed Cohen, Director of Information Management. Deputy Director George Tenet briefly addressed the Panel over lunch.

The Panel then went into executive session to formulate its observations and recommendations, which it subsequently summarized orally for Director John Deutch. These are as follows:

1. The Panel recommends that the Center for the Study of Intelligence draft a "master plan" establishing priorities and a precise timetable with respect to the declassification of the materials for which it is responsible. This plan would be reviewed annually to take into account new priorities and difficulties encountered in meeting old ones.

2. First priority within such a plan should go to transferring early CIA records to the National Archives and making them available to researchers. The Panel feels strongly that, although commendable in themselves, the History Staff's publications as well as its cooperation with the Department of State's Foreign Relations series do not substitute for the declassification and opening of the Agency's records in bulk form and in substantial quantity, so that non-government scholars will be in a position to make their own judgments about representativeness and relative significance.

3. The Panel reaffirms its predecessor's recommendation, first made a decade ago, that the Agency should proceed with the declassification of its records according to the principles "top down" and "oldest first."

a. It therefore suggests targeting DCI Office Files for the period 1947-61, an approach that would parallel the already-declassified internal histories of DCIs through Allen Dulles. These files would provide a badly-needed closer look at the critical top-level decisions made during these formative years in the Agency's history. The Panel recognizes the probable difficulties of releasing this material, but points out that all of it is now 35 or more years old. Records such as the minutes of staff meetings, memoranda of conversations, and forerunners of the President's daily briefs are essential for historians seeking a better understanding of the CIA's role. A careful review of what can be released under current declassification guidelines would, the Panel believes, be well worth the effort.

b. Recognizing that a significant number of CIA National Intelligence Estimates and other finished intelligence studies from this pre-1961 period have already been declassified, whether in the Foreign Relations series or in CSI publications, the Panel also recommends a review of all finished intelligence documents 35 years old or older to see which could now be declassified and transferred to the National Archives.

c. The Panel recommends a similar review of Intelligence Directorate analytical studies on the Soviet Union for the period 1947-1991, again with a view to declassification and archival availability.

d. The Panel fully acknowledges the sensitivity of "sources and methods" in the declassification of CIA records. It notes, though, that this sensitivity will diminish with the passage of time; but that scholarly interest in such matters will not. It urges, therefore, that **provision be made for retaining and eventually releasing information on "sources and methods," even if this should not be possible for a hundred years or more.**

4. The Panel reaffirms the importance of CIA cooperation in the preparation of the Foreign Relations series, and commends the progress made in this area in the last several years. FRUS remains the best place to document the way in which other government agencies used CIA information and responded to its initiatives. **The Panel recommends the expansion of FRUS coverage of intelligence activities. It will communicate this recommendation to the Historian of the Department of State, and it encourages both agencies to consult on how best to expedite this work.**

5. **The Panel commends CSI for publishing collections of documents and the interpretive materials accompanying them, since these do provide primary sources not otherwise available. It appreciates the professionalism with which these volumes have been prepared, and their value as teaching devices in the classroom.**

a. **At the same time, though, the Panel reiterates its view that these publications do not substitute for the opening of archives that would allow historians not affiliated with the Agency to work directly with its records. The Panel also notes the criticisms that have been made of these volumes within the academic community: that the topics selected have reflected what some have called a "scattershot" approach, and that there is at present no way**

external scholars can determine how representative the documents published in them are.

b. **The Panel recommends continuing the CSI publications series, but focusing it more systematically on critical episodes in the early history of the Agency, especially the eleven DCI-acknowledged covert actions.** The Panel understands the difficulties that may arise in declassifying material on these events. But it urges attempts to solve or work around such problems in the interest of getting as much information out as soon as possible on these widely-known but still often misunderstood incidents, which do still largely shape public and academic perceptions of the Agency.

c. The Panel also points out that **the credibility of CSI publications would be much enhanced by making available the archival materials upon which each is based as it appears.**

6. **The Panel has only praise for the open conferences on the history of intelligence sponsored or co-sponsored by CSI, and strongly endorses their continuation.** These meetings have played an important role in increasing cooperation and trust between the Agency and the academic community, and they have certainly provided visible symbols of the Agency's new commitment to openness.

7. The Panel took note, with satisfaction, of the Agency's increased efforts to link its declassification efforts with a more energetic effort to monitor information already in the public domain. In this connection, though, it called attention to the growing volume of historically-significant archival and published material on Cold War history now emanating from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the People's Republic of China. **The Panel recommends that CSI maintain close contacts with the Cold War**

International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center, which is monitoring this new material, and with the National Security Archive at George Washington University, which is serving as a repository for it.

8. With respect to the small body of CIA material already transferred to the National Archives, the Panel notes that delays have occurred in making it available to researchers owing to the need for the Archives staff to provide finding aids. **The Panel suggested that CSI work more closely with the Archives on this matter, with a view to sharing whatever internal finding aids the Agency may have maintained on these materials, as well as those to be transferred in the future.**

9. The Panel raised the possibility that it might take on some of the functions that the Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation now performs within the Department of State. These would include frequent meetings -- perhaps every six months -- as well as clearances for members that would allow them some means of evaluating decisions to keep material classified when they arise. **The Panel asked CSI director to determine the feasibility of its operating in a manner similar to that of the State Department Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation, and to report back on this issue at the next meeting.**

10. The Panel expressed its appreciation to Director Deutch for reconstituting and meeting with it personally. It also commended the DCI's commitment to maximum possible openness within the Agency, as well as his support for the declassification of its historically-significant records.

11. The Panel acknowledges that a "clash of cultures" still exists within CIA, that efforts to achieve openness have not and will not in the future come easily. It therefore wishes to recognize the substantial progress that has been

made, and to express its appreciation to all those within CSI who have worked to bring it about. At the same time, it cannot help but note Director of Information Management Ed Cohen's estimate that the new Executive Order on Declassification will require the Agency, during the next five years, to review a stack of documents equivalent in size to 50 Washington Monuments. The Panel makes these recommendations with a view to easing that internal task, as well as serving the interests of those external "consumers" who deserve a clearer understanding of what the Agency has done over the past half century.

The Panel adjourned at 5PM, with thanks to the CSI staff for their hospitality and their willingness to discuss the above issues in a candid and cooperative manner.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Panel,


John Lewis Gaddis
Rapporteur

DCI HISTORICAL REVIEW PANEL

1996

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