

Solutions for reform of the CIA clandestine service within the current system

Ishmael Jones spent his career in multiple, consecutive overseas assignments, as a deep cover officer without benefit of diplomatic immunity. His targets included weapons scientists, money launderers, and terrorists. He pushed intelligence missions forward while dodging the CIA's internal purges, active thwarting of operations by bureaucrats, and the ever-present threat of arrest by hostile foreign intelligence services.

Jones became convinced that the CIA's failure to fulfill its purpose endangers Americans. Attempting reform from within proved absurd, and he resigned from the CIA to make the case for reform.

He met with many political leaders and managers within US intelligence agencies to work toward intelligence reform. He wrote a book as a tool in this process, a book which has been read by most senior people involved in intelligence collection on behalf of the United States.

The book had been blocked by the CIA. It did not contain a single word of a secret or confidential nature, but it was critical of CIA bureaucracy. The CIA sued two years after the book's publication and won through summary judgment, without trial, but won no damages. The net effect of the case was positive in that it brought more attention to intelligence reform. (More extensive commentary on the case is available in the "Articles" tab on this site.)

Jones's positions on intelligence reform are widely known and have produced many positive results. A summary of his proposed solutions for intelligence reform are listed below.

Jones had succeeded in making his case in the academic and policy realm.

He then turned to showing US intelligence collectors how to conduct intelligence operations, by providing consulting services for cleared US Government and approved allied services.

Solutions for reform of the clandestine service

The CIA's clandestine service is meant to be America's early warning system, providing the intelligence that is used to prevent attack. But the CIA's ability to produce human source intelligence is dismal. It has become a bureaucratic creature loyal only to itself, with almost unlimited funds and no accountability. Reliance upon it is our major national security weakness.

To defend Americans, we must have intelligence reform.

First, the CIA must obey existing laws and directives which require it to:

- Get CIA officers out of the United States and overseas into target countries.
- Reduce fraud, corruption and massive waste.

We must obtain the intelligence the President needs to defend America and our allies.

Solutions for reform of the clandestine service within the current system:

1. *Define the mission.* Create a clear, one-line mission statement. Current CIA mission statements are multi-page documents, written by committees, which nobody ever reads. A clear statement, such as, "Provide foreign intelligence that will defend the United States," would help employees measure and direct their efforts.

2. *Focus on the mission.* Recruit and handle high-quality human sources; avoid trivial, easy targets.

3. *Cut layers of management ruthlessly* to speed operations and to put more spies on the street. (See further comments below.)

4. *Get rid of the gatekeepers.* Abandon the geographical station system. Station chiefs are not captains of ships; they are employees located within fortress embassies, seeking to ensure that no flaps occur on their turf. Terrorists and nuclear proliferators don't have geographical boundaries.

5. *Get the CIA out of the United States.* Most CIA employees live and work in the United States. Get the CIA spying on and in foreign countries, where it belongs.

6. *Clarify the chain of command.* Every employee should know his or her direct supervisor, and each employee should have only one supervisor. Supervisors should be senior in grade to their employees. Spouses of supervisors should never be inserted into the chain of command. An employee's annual evaluation should be written by a single supervisor.

7. *Account for the money.* Make certain that the taxpayers' money is spent properly. Don't let secrecy get in the way. Don't be afraid of verifying receipts written in foreign languages in faraway places.

8. *Create a one-line cultural statement.* Do not lie, cheat, or steal unless required to do so in an intelligence operation. Spies need to lie, but only when necessary for operational success. The organization's efficiency and reliability will improve when employees can trust one another to speak the truth.

Recent reforms demonstrate what happens when change is attempted at the CIA. Congressionally-mandated reforms, following the intelligence failures of 9/11, did the three worst things possible, by:

1. *Adding extra layers of management.* They created a new office of the Director of National Intelligence. No successful organizations have as many layers of management as the CIA.

2. *Accepting the CIA's ploy that it just needs a few more years to hire the right people.* The CIA has used this ploy for decades. The CIA has all the qualified people it needs. The problem is that they are poorly led.

3. *Showering the CIA with billions of dollars* in additional funding without transparency or a system of accountability, leading to fraud, waste, and mismanagement.

The CIA is a failed organization that has proven resistant to reform. Therefore, the CIA should be broken up into its constituent parts, and those parts assigned to organizations that already have clear missions and defined chains of command, as follows:

1. *Transfer CIA offices and personnel operating within the United States to the FBI.* The CIA was never intended to be a domestic spy agency. The FBI is designed to handle domestic intelligence operations. The FBI is measured and held accountable by its ability to catch criminals, and this accountability provides the motivation for the FBI to perform.

2. *Transfer all CIA embassy activities overseas to the US Department of State.* The State Department is designed to handle diplomacy. Much of what the CIA now does in its embassies involves diplomacy, such as handling relationships with liaison services. State Department officers are able to make contacts with other foreign government representatives in diplomatic venues. The State Department handled these functions prior to the creation of the CIA in 1947.

3. *Transfer overseas human intelligence collection efforts to the US military.* Focus case officers exclusively on the gathering of human intelligence. The fundamental motivation of the American military—to win wars and to protect the lives of its soldiers—will provide the motivation to ensure that its case officers provide the necessary intelligence and do not become distracted by soft

targets or by designing programs meant to look busy and spend money. The US military already has a large corps of trained case officers, graduates of the CIA's own training course. The US military already has a better ability to place case officers overseas in non-State Department positions. The military's command structure is clearly defined and much flatter than the Agency's.

We should recognize the scope of the problem: The lack of human sources of intelligence has haunted American Presidents since the foundation of the CIA in 1947. The lack of human sources has been the greatest threat to the presidencies and the historical legacies of American Presidents, and to the American people.

1. The Chinese invasion of North Korea in 1950 was a complete surprise and the subsequent handling of the war by President Truman led him to cancel his re-election campaign.
2. The handling of the U-2 incident was President Eisenhower's greatest regret as President.
3. Lack of Cuban human sources contributed to the Bay of Pigs fiasco, which was President Kennedy's greatest failure.
4. The lack of human sources in Vietnam haunted President Johnson in the conduct of the Vietnam War.
5. The Vietnam War was one of President Nixon's greatest challenges as well. The outbreak of the 1973 Arab/Israeli war also took the Agency by surprise.
6. Throughout the Cold War, the Agency's top program, recruitment of Soviet human sources, was a shambles. Lack of intelligence on Soviet intentions nearly led to war on several occasions.
7. President Carter's humiliation and the destruction of his presidency were caused by the Iran hostage crisis and the subsequent failed rescue attempt, both of which featured a lack of human sources.
8. President Reagan's humiliation involved hostages and the ensuing Iran-Contra scandal, both featuring a lack of human sources.
9. President Clinton's legacy was tarnished by the lack of human sources, who could have transmitted information that might have prevented the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Lack of human sources led to a nuclear arms race in the Asian sub-continent.
10. Lack of human sources on Iraqi WMD and on the Iraq war poisoned the George W. Bush presidency. The greatest vulnerability to the President elected in 2008 and future Presidents will be the lack of human sources of intelligence. Terrorists armed with nuclear weapons will kill hundreds of thousands of Americans if we do not improve our human intelligence capability.

Comments on mission drift:

1. Recruiting human sources isn't easy or fun. For the case officer, rejection, humiliation, and loneliness are the byproducts of human intelligence operations. Sitting in a hotel room meeting a man with bad breath for hours at a stretch is hard work.
2. Recruiting human sources does not appear to lead to career advancement. It is the lowest form of work within the Agency, and few top managers have ever recruited a good human source. To have recruited human sources in al Qaeda and in Iraqi WMD, a case officer would have had to be in the field for years, away from Agency stations and HQs. He'd have returned to a dead career, with no management experience and with none of the connections at HQs necessary for personal advancement. A person who wants to advance in the organization does so through lengthy service at HQs, with rare assignments overseas.
3. This leads to mission drift: officers prefer fun things that lead to promotion, such as creating layers of managers, handling liaison operations, building boondoggles, Potemkin offices and elaborate cover mechanisms, and elaborate covert action schemes.
4. The Agency's successes tend to be in areas outside the fundamental mission of gathering intelligence. Success in Afghanistan was a military operation, for example. Convincing Libya to end its WMD programs was a diplomatic success.
5. Mission drift causes the Agency to go after little fish, not big fish. Operations involving little fish then cause bigger flaps when something goes wrong, because the American people don't support espionage operations aimed at seemingly unimportant topics.
6. Human intelligence operations are relatively cheap. Mission drift into more expensive non-human source missions provides openings for corruption.

Comments on the destructiveness of excessive layers of management:

Excessive layers cause delays in the dissemination of intelligence reports, often making those reports worthless. Intelligence collection is peculiar in that it is a one-on-one activity: there is no need for the layers. Management consultant Tom Peters discusses the problem of layers by pointing out that, in a chain of six layers, if each layer makes the correct decision 80 percent of the time, this will result in a correct decision by the six layers 26 percent of the time. (.8 to the 6th power = 26 percent).

Excessive layers increase risk when it becomes difficult to determine who is in charge.

Excessive layers increase the number of people who know secrets, making leaks easier and making it harder to find moles such as Ames.

Excessive layers encourage rule-breaking. I rarely conducted an intelligence operation where I didn't have to break an Agency rule. Had I not broken rules, I would never have completed an operation. Promote case officers by giving them more freedom and responsibility in conducting operations, rather than by making them gatekeepers.

I've never come across the suggestion that the Agency reduce its layers. Yet that is one of the first things a businessman or management consultant seeks to do in improving the operations of an organization.

Comments on motivation:

American businesses are driven by profit, which serves as the motivation to keep their organizations functioning efficiently. It can be argued that the FBI and the US military are bureaucratic, but they too have clear missions—to catch criminals and to win wars—and this helps give them focus. It is less likely that an FBI agent, for example, can rise within the FBI without ever having been involved in catching a criminal.

The US military is motivated to win wars. These motivations drive the FBI and the US military just as the motivation to earn profits drives American businesses. The US military's effectiveness is in part due to "civilian audit, dissent, and self-critique," which are part of the "larger Western tradition of personal freedom, consensual government, and individualism."

Where there is no civilian audit, dissent, self-critique, transparency or accountability, a bureaucracy will thrive, grow, and morph into a monster, such as the CIA is today.

We must acknowledge what drives humans and what motivates an organization.

If the FBI did not need to catch criminals, if the US military did not need to win wars, and if American businesses did not need to earn profits, they would fall into the same rudderless disarray as the CIA. The CIA has no driving motivation and so should be split up and attached to organizations that do have driving motivations.